I. Course Description

This course will focus on the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods to monitor and evaluate social services. Students will develop skills in choosing and implementing appropriate evaluation strategies and designs to answer policy and practice questions. Emphasis will be placed on how to select and construct measures and assess their reliability and validity. Students will assess service needs of target populations and communities, monitor the implementation and operation of social welfare programs, and evaluate their impact. Opportunities will be provided to obtain practical experience in data collection, interpretation, presentation and dissemination of evaluation results.

II. Course Content

The purpose of this course is to develop students' abilities to use evaluation methods to describe real world situations in social work settings and to make inferences based on that information in order to improve social policy decisions and service delivery programs. Students will develop skills to identify the focus and purpose of the evaluation activities; identify and generate the kind and content of the information needed to meet the purposes for the evaluation; identify and assess the intended sources for the desired information; identify, assess, develop, and pilot the measures or instruments to be used for the evaluation; describe, select, and apply appropriate types of statistical and/or theoretical analyses and the general techniques to be used in the analysis; identify the types of information liable to result from the analysis; assess and
implement additional factors in the evaluation design (e.g. timetables, standards to be used in judging the results of the evaluation, logistics, and client privacy); and develop reporting and utilization strategies.

III. Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Specify goals and objectives for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and practices for individual clients, as well as for aggregates of program participants.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the concepts of measurement, reliability, and validity; use these concepts for selecting variables for evaluation.
3. Devise basic designs for evaluation, and contrast their relative advantages and disadvantages to other designs.
4. Identify the issues involved in generalizing evaluation results, and devise representative sampling plans and replications for evaluating practices and programs.
5. Generate evaluation reports using the criteria and concepts above.
6. Discuss common ethical concerns related to program evaluation.

IV. Course Design

This course will include a range of pedagogical methods—short lectures, participatory discussions, written assignments, student presentations, and experiential exercises. Students will have an opportunity to select journal articles of interest that are related to course content and research projects. Guest speakers will be invited to address special topics on evaluating programs. The extent of computer use and use of statistical packages throughout this course will be determined by the individual student when conducting analyses for research projects.

V. Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes

- Multiculturalism and Diversity: Students will develop the capacity to identify ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age, and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement influence and are impacted by various methods of program evaluation.
- Social Justice and Social Change: The ability to assess policies and programs analytically is necessary if the social work profession is to play an important role in shaping the outcome of ongoing program and policy debates that reflect issues in social justice and change. This course will provide students with the capacity to understand and influence the role that methods of program evaluation play in the formation and implementation of policy, practice, and program development.
• Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation: Prevention, promotion, treatment, and rehabilitation activities are difficult to evaluate, and therefore, raise special challenges in statistical analysis. Students will be exposed to models of program evaluation (e.g., empowerment designs, envelope analysis, responsive evaluations, and reflective focus group techniques), which have particular utility as methods to evaluate promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation oriented social services.

• Behavioral and Social Science Research: This course will focus on how to identify statistical methods that optimize a combination of rigor and feasibility. Students will examine the ways in which social science data is translated into current policy and practice and the consequences, both positive and negative, which emerge. This course will provide students with the capacity to understand and influence the ways in which program evaluation methods impact the formation and implementation of social service programs.

VI. Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

Ethical standards of social work practice (NASW Code of Ethics) and evaluation practice (Program Evaluation Standards) as well as ethical standards for federally funded research will be reviewed as issues that evaluators may be confronted with in program/policy evaluation.

VII. Role of Instructor and Students

The instructor will facilitate critical thinking and constructive student participation during class. She will be available during office hours and by appointment to discuss assignments and answer questions with individual students. She will provide written feedback on students’ written assignments and return them in a timely manner (e.g., within 7-10 days after submission).

Students are required to attend class, complete required weekly readings, complete assignments and be prepared to participate actively in class discussions. If a student is unable to attend class or meet assignment deadlines she/he is required to discuss these problems with the instructor. Students who fail to attend class or complete an assignment by the deadline will earn decreased grade points (i.e., five points each infraction).

VIII. Assignments, Class Attendance/Participation and Grading Criteria

A. Summary and Presentation of three journal articles. Each article counts for 20 points for a total of 60 points. Beginning with the third week of class, a selected body of students will be required to give an oral presentation on an empirically-based journal article (i.e., an article that uses qualitative or quantitative data) on the weekly course topic. All students are required to summarize their articles (maximum number of pages = 4 double spaced) based on the guidelines attached to the course syllabus. They are also required to submit a copy of the article with the summary. Students are
encouraged to integrate course materials into their oral presentations and to use electronic media to deliver presentations.

Criteria for selecting an article: (1) Published within the last 10 years (1996-2005), (2) has content on the weekly course topic, and (3) related to the student’s research project. The instructor will use the article guidelines to evaluate this assignment (60 points).

Students with last names beginning with A-L will give an oral presentation and submit a written article summary on September 23, October 14, and November 4.

Students with last names beginning with M-Z will give an oral presentation and submit a written article summary on September 30, October 28, and November 11.

B. Written Evaluation Research Project (i.e., scholarly paper with empirical data), outline (optional) and oral presentation (required) (30 points)
   - Outline of evaluation research paper due on November 4th (Optional) and should be submitted as an electronic copy.
   - Oral presentations on December 2nd and 9th
   - Final deadline for submission of evaluation research paper on December 9th

Note: Empirical data may be qualitative or quantitative and taken from archival files, agency records, surveys, focus groups, and field observations.

C. Class attendance/participation (10 points)

D. Grading Scale
Grading will be rigorous but fair. Grades are determined by academic performance, not effort. The grading scale is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-94</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>76-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>72-75</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-71</td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; 70</td>
<td>not passing</td>
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IX. Required Text

NOTE: Required and recommended readings, except those located in Wholey et al., are available through CTOOLS.
X. Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>Scope of the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purposes of evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope of evaluation</td>
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Guest speaker: Dr. James McNally, Director of the ICPSR, will introduce students to data archives of the Inter-University Consortium Political and Social Research (ICPSR). He will also provide a tutorial on data use, access and analysis. Students who are unable to acquire agency data may use archival data after clearance from the class instructor.

**Readings:** None for this week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 16</td>
<td>Theory and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of the evaluator/participant</td>
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<td>Types of evaluation</td>
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</table>

**Required Readings:**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>Cultural issues, social justice issues, ethical issues and values in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>program evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Required Readings:**


Recommended Readings:

NOTE: Students with last names beginning with A-L will present on journal articles and submit summaries to instructor on this date.

September 30  Content

Data collection: Some Common Techniques; Human Subjects Issues
a. Informed consent
b. Anonymity and confidentiality
c. Benefits and costs to participants
d. Participants incentives

Required Readings:

NOTE: Students with last names beginning with M-Z will present on journal articles and submit summaries to instructor on this date.


October 7  Content

Techniques of Analyzing Evaluation Data: Quantitative & Qualitative
a. Statistical applications
b. Data analysis and interpretation
c. Statistical power and effect sizes
d. Qualitative analysis
e. Reporting/Disseminating results
Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

October 14

Content

Designing, Implementing and Monitoring Evaluations

Required Readings:
NOTE: Students with last names beginning with A-L will present on journal articles and submit summaries to instructor on this date.

October 21
No class. Students are expected to use class time to collect data for evaluation research project.

October 28
**Content**

Designing and Implementing Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs in Evaluations
Validity and Feasibility Issues

**Required Readings:**

Recommended Readings:

NOTE: Students with last names beginning with M-Z will present on journal articles and submit summaries to instructor on this date.

November 4
**Content**

Measurement in Evaluation
a. Measuring program outcomes
b. Using multiple measures
c. Developing and testing new measures
d. Validity and reliability issues in measurement

**Required Readings:**
Recommended Readings:


NOTE1: Students with last names beginning with A-L will present on journal articles and submit summaries to instructor on this date.

NOTE2: Students who opt to do the outline for their evaluation research projects are expected to submit it on this date.

November 11  

**Content**

Role Playing/Sampling in Evaluation

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


NOTE: Students with last names beginning with M-Z will present on journal articles and submit summaries to instructor on this date.
November 18  

**Content**

Using and Disseminating Evaluation Results

Guest speaker(s) invited on this date.

**Required Readings:**


November 25  Thanksgiving Break

December 2  **Student Presentations on Evaluation Research Projects**

December 9  **Student Presentations on Evaluation Research Projects**

Class evaluations
Article Assignment

Goal of assignment: To increase learning and understanding of current knowledge relating to critical topics in program evaluation. Articles may be based on qualitative data, quantitative data or both types of data, and should be published within the past 10 years (1996-2005).

Criteria for grading article summaries (no more than 4 single spaced pages):

1. Student addressed the following components when summarizing the article:
   ___ Purpose of the study including specific evaluation research questions/hypotheses/goals/objectives
   ___ Design and methods of the study
   ___ Results
   ___ Limitations and strengths of the study
   ___ Implications for policy/practice

2. Thoroughness (i.e., addressed all of the above and included a complete citation of the article)

3. Reflected critical thinking (e.g., addressed course concepts, when relevant; used course materials to address strengths/weaknesses/ethical issues in the article)

4. Selected an appropriate article
   ___a. Related to student’s research project
   ___b. Published within past 10 years
   ___c. Has content on the weekly topic

5. Timely submission

6. Writing style: Clear, concise and coherent writing; use of active voice; related ideas are together (clauses and phrases are placed close to words they modify); relatively free of redundant, awkward and colloquial words/phrases; accurate spelling; good punctuation
Scholarly Research Paper Assignment

The goal of this assignment is consistent with the six course objectives on page two of the course syllabus. Students are referred to these objectives. This assignment may be based on qualitative methods, quantitative methods, or a combination of both methods. It may focus on process, outcomes or both process and outcomes in program evaluation. Students are required to use data and, if appropriate, to conduct statistical analyses for the results section of this assignment.

Guidelines for grading this assignment will include the following:

The student:

1. Defined a researchable (i.e., can collect empirical data), relevant (i.e., will increase understanding/open new lines of inquiry/important to policy and practice evaluation) evaluation problem
2. Formulated clear, concise research questions/hypotheses/goals/objectives
3. Stated the significance of the problem (i.e., how it will contribute to policy/practice)
4. Presented a critical, selective literature review relating to the evaluation problem
5. Use of the literature to formulate assumptions/hypotheses
6. Included a method section with:
   - Research design and Sample description with Statistics
   - Recruitment of participants
   - Description of data collection techniques
   - Conceptualization and operationalization of measures (i.e., process and outcome; proximal and distal)
   - Discussion on measurement reliability and validity
   - Method of analyses
7. Results
8. Discussion (i.e., integration of results and prior literature, threats to internal/external validity, limitations, strengths, ethical issues, implications for policy, practice and future evaluation research)

6. Writing style: Clear, concise and coherent writing; use of active voice; related ideas are together (clauses and phrases are placed close to words they modify); relatively free of redundant, awkward and colloquial words/phrases; accurate spelling; good punctuation

7. Paper falls within 20-25 (double-spaced) pages excluding references
8. Paper submitted on due dates for Part 1 and Part 2
9. Student presented evaluation project
Examples: Topics of Evaluation Projects Conducted by Students in a Prior Class

1. A comparative analysis of elder abuse law in three states: Michigan, Illinois, Indiana
2. Assessing the benefits and costs of Michigan’s family preservation vs. out-of-home placement
3. An analysis of service effectiveness: Clients’ perspectives
4. Speaker’s bureaus: one way to counteract biphobia, heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia
5. The effect of Michigan domestic violence laws on Washtenaw County’s domestic violence project/Safe House
6. Evaluation of discharge outcomes at Christ Child House
7. Strong families/safe children: What is it?
8. Evaluating the effectiveness of anti-gang law enforcement interventions
9. Cost-benefit analysis of part-time child care workers: A view into one agency