Evaluation in Social Work: Course Description

This course will cover beginning level evaluation that builds on basic research knowledge as a method of assessing social work practice and strengthening clients, communities and the social programs and systems that serve them. It will also address the evaluation of promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services. Students will learn to assess and apply evaluation methods from various perspectives, including scientific, ethical, multi-cultural, and social justice perspectives.

Four Curricular Themes

Multiculturalism and Diversity
- Identify ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement influence the evaluation processes and outcomes.
- Because a collaborative, participatory process is critical to evaluation, attention to diversity is imperative for proper implementation of evaluation in social work contexts.

Social Justice and Social Change
- Analyze impact & efficiency of services and policies as they relate to social change and social justice.
- Develop services and programs that could plausibly serve these functions.
- Participatory, collaborative, change-oriented evaluation processes promote achievement of social justice and change.
- Examination of role of power in evaluation.
- Development of knowledge, skills and capacities that evaluation participants can mobilize to shift imbalances of power and resources.

Promotion and Prevention
- Develop and evaluate prevention and promotion programs designed to reduce risk and onset of problems and promote healthy development

Social Science
- Strengthen capacity to use social science literature, both research-based and theoretical, to develop appropriate interventions and evaluations that are feasible, relevant, and scientifically sound.

Intensive Focus
- Privilege
- Oppression
- Diversity
- Social Justice

Course Objectives
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Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:
1. Plan an evaluation of social work practice by appropriately applying the phases of evaluation process (i.e., assessment, type of evaluation, design, implementation, monitoring, and analysis) to evaluate services, practices, programs, and relevant populations.
2. Apply evaluation methods that are appropriate to the evaluation context, such as problem definition, developing questions, development of appropriate methodology and analysis plans.
3. Identify ways in which power, privilege, gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement influence evaluation processes and outcomes.
4. Analyze impact and efficiency of services and policies as they relate to social change and social justice.
5. Implement participatory, collaborative, change-oriented evaluation processes that promote achievement of social justice and change.
6. Development of knowledge, skills and capacities that evaluation participants can mobilize to shift imbalances of power and resources.
7. Develop and evaluate prevention and promotion programs designed to reduce risk and onset of problems and promote healthy development
8. Strengthen capacity to use social science literature, both research-based and theoretical, to develop appropriate interventions and evaluations that are feasible, ethical, accountable, useful and scientifically sound.
9. Critically evaluate programs and services using the models and tools covered in existing evaluation documents for their consistency with the values reflected in the curricular themes.
10. Implement dissemination strategies that engage policy/or practice communities with evaluation proposal, results and findings of evaluation activities

Course Content:
This course will focus on the direct application of the analytical skills and knowledge associated with developing and implementing evaluation designs that are appropriate for social work practice. Students will examine the theoretical foundations of the evaluation of social work practice with particular attention to populations at risk, including people of color, women, and gay and lesbian groups. Students will be introduced to models of evaluation derived from social science and social work theory and research. They will learn to apply these models as they develop skills in critically assessing evaluation methods and their fit with the social context.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:
Ethical standards of social work practice (the NASW Code of Ethics) and evaluation practice (The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation’s Program Evaluation Standards) will be used to review issues commonly confronted in the evaluation of social work practice, programs and services. The ethical themes of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, fidelity, and justice will be emphasized and discussed. In particular, several topical areas related to evaluation will be covered, including confidentiality and informed consent procedures; protection of evaluation participants, staff, and agencies from unwarranted physical or mental discomfort, distress, harm, danger, or deprivation; and accurate and appropriate reporting and dissemination of results. Emphasis will also be placed on the social workers’ ethical obligation to use scientifically sound practice and to continually evaluate practice and programs.
Course Design: The instructor will select required and recommended readings. In addition this course will include a range of pedagogical methods such to promote students understanding of the course materials including, lecture, participatory discussions, small groups work, mock exercises, guest lectures and a variety of assignments (oral, written, presentations and meeting participation)

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend and to be prepared to take part in each class session. This includes completing all assigned reading before class, to reference for informed class participation, attending class on time, and participating in all class activities. Class attendance is important for you to keep up with course work. It is expected that students will attend all classes unless legitimate and/or special reasons exist for absences or tardiness. Legitimate absences include those due to health problems that can be documented, unanticipated family emergencies and observance of religious holy days. Missing three classes will reduce your final grade; one-half grade (e.g. an A would be reduced to an A-) and each additional absence will reduce your final grade an additional half grade. Excessive absences may result in failure of the course. Coming to or leaving class mid-way is considered an absence. As adult learners, I expect you to make appropriate decisions about attending class, this includes coming to class late and leaving class mid-way. Any absences or tardiness should be discussed directly with the instructor and it is the student’s responsibility to obtain any notes, materials, handouts or exercises from the missed session from one of your classmates and make arrangements to complete class work, which is missed. Please be cognizant of the disruptive nature of coming to class late. If you are delayed, please enter the classroom as quietly as possible and wait until break to catch up with what is going on.

There are three required papers, a presentation of your final paper and four take home assignments. Each paper and the presentation are integrated and are to be based on a program at the student’s field placement. A brief description of each assignment follows. A more detailed description of each assignment will be handed out in class.

Paper 1: Program Description – due February 6, 2006 (15%)
You will work with your field instructor to select a program within the agency for evaluation. You will design a logic model for the program and answer a series of questions about the program. The paper will include a literature review and describe (1) the purpose, goal(s) and objective(s) of the program, (2) who the program serves, (3) how the program is implemented, (4) program-client interactions, (5) sociocultural context of the program (6) the program theory and rational for the program and (7) what you plan to evaluate.

Paper 2: Research Questions, Design and Measurement – due March 20, 2006 (15%)
This paper will discuss the specific questions to be answered in an evaluation of the program. Further, the type of evaluation, research design and measurements that will be used to address these research questions will be described. Support for the choices of the question, design and measurements and how these choices address issues in the four curriculum themes and issues of privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice will be provided through appropriate literature review.
Paper 3 (Final Paper) – Evaluation Research Design – due April 17, 2006 (40%)

You will prepare a complete evaluation research design of the placement program which you have been studying this term. You will build on the two previous assignments (this is your opportunity to use the feedback that you have gotten on them to improve your work.) You will briefly review the program, and provide a justification for doing an evaluation of the program. You will state your revised research questions. You will describe in detail your research design including sampling methods, concern for human subjects, measurement instruments and other data collection, an analysis plan, reporting of the results and limitations of the study. You will discuss the ways in which the evaluation directly addresses or does not address the issues of multiculturalism and diversity, social justice and social change, promotion and prevention, social science and ethics. Finally, you will discuss how the evaluation might be applied to practice, to the program and to policy.

Class presentation - April 10 and 17 [and April 24 if needed] 2006 (20%)

You will make a 10-15 minute presentation of your evaluation proposal to the class. Prepare 2 handouts: (1) Outline describing the program and (2) an outline describing your evaluation plan.

Take home weekly assignments: due 1/23, 2/20, 3/6 and 4/3, 2006 (10%)

There will also be 3 assignments involving exercises or study questions on the material in this course to be done during the week. All weekly assignments will be discussed before the due date. There will be 1 assignment that will allow for a draft of some of the key areas required for paper 2. These assignments have been designed to assist you in both learning the course content and writing your papers. They are tools to help you and therefore the focus in grading them is not so much on the content, but on the effort made to do the assignment. They will be graded on a pass/fail basis. A grade of “pass” will be converted to an “A” for computation of the final grade.

In addition to the above, your class attendance and participation will be considered in determining your grade. Assessment of your participation does not depend solely on the quantity of your involvement in class discussion and class exercises, but also on the quality of your contributions.

Format of papers
All papers must be typewritten and double-spaced using a 12-point font and one inch margins. Use APA* for your papers, including proper headings, citations and appropriate referencing. Papers should have page numbers, a running header and should be proofread prior to submission, since the quality of the paper will be impacted by its visual presentation, the use of proper grammar and spelling, and other ‘pride of authorships’ issues.
I grade all papers for my classes anonymously. With each paper submission, include a title page without your name on it, and provide a separate duplicate title page with your name. Only after I have read and graded all the papers, will I determine which paper belongs to whom.

General Expectations for Written Work
I expect that in all written work that students will adhere to the following NASW editorial policy:

In the interest of accurate and unbiased communication, the NASW publications program subscribe to a belief in the importance of avoiding language that might imply sexual, ethnic, or other kinds of discrimination, stereotyping, or bias. NASW is committed to the fair and equal treatment of individuals and groups, and material submitted should not promote stereotypic or discriminatory attitudes and assumptions about people.  (*Health and Social Work, 11:3, Summer 1986.*)

**Plagiarism** – not referencing another’s words or ideas – is a violation of academic integrity and will be grounds for failure on an assignment. In addition, papers or journal entries completed for another course are not acceptable and will be assigned 0 points. Please refer to your Student Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program 2005-2006 for further discussion of plagiarism.  

**Deadline Expectations:** All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates specified. Incomplete grades are assigned only through negotiation with me and that negotiation must occur before the assignment’s (paper’s) due date. Unless an extension contract has been arranged between a student and me, before the due date of the assignment, any assignment that is not completed on the due date will be assigned 0 points. All assignments for this course must be completed and handed in to the instructor to successfully complete the course.

**Grading**

Each assignment will be given a letter grade. The criteria for each grade are as follows:

- **A or A-** Mastery of subject content, demonstration of critical analysis, creativity and/or complexity in completion of assignment. The difference between A and A- is based on the degree to which these skills are demonstrated.
- **B+** Mastery of subject content beyond expected competency, but has not demonstrated additional critical analysis, creativity or complexity in the completion of the assignment.
- **B** Mastery of subject content at level of expected competency – meets course expectations.
- **B-** Less than adequate competency, but demonstrates student learning and potential for mastery of subject content.
- **C or C-** Demonstrates a minimal understanding of subject content. Significant areas needing improvement to meet course requirements.
- **E** Student has failed to demonstrate minimal understanding of subject content.

Both content and format will be considered in assigning grades. Though content is more heavily weighed in grade assignment, format, and presentation are also important. Failure to follow APA guidelines for referencing and for headings will result in a lower grade. For assistance with writing, you may go to the Writing Workshop, 1139 Angell Hall, (734) 764-0429.

I suggest that you have someone who is unfamiliar with your subject read your paper before you turn it in. An outside reader can tell you if your writing is not clear, if you omitted a word or phrase, or if you used the wrong word. Spell checkers and grammar checkers are useful tools, but not as reliable as a human reader.

The course is challenging and demanding. Grading will be rigorous but fair. Final grades will be determined by multiplying the worth of each assignment, weekly assignment/class participation
by the following grade points: A = 8, A- = 7, B+ = 6, B = 5, B- = 4, C+ = 3, C = 2, C- = 1, less than C- = 0. The numerical scores for each assignment will be summed.

I understand that the assessments of your work are subjective in nature and I strive to reduce that subjectivity in two ways. First, as noted above, I grade all papers anonymously. Second, based on the assignment outline I use a template within which I set my expectations for the assignment. I compare your submissions to that template, not to one another.

If you read my comments to you and believe that I have erred, please discuss your findings with me within one week of getting your assignment back. It may be that you do not understand what I have told you, or that I have made a mistake. In either case, I am certain that the situation will be rectified; either you will better understand what I want you to know, or I will correct my error.

**Course materials**

There is one required text, several required readings from materials/journals available in the library or on-line and handouts to supplement the lecture topic.

It is highly recommended you obtain a binder to organize the tools/handouts you will be given throughout this course.

**Required Text**


**Additional Reading:**

Recommended resources or on reserve at the SSW Library (*) that may be helpful to you as you prepare your assignments.


OR


Ware, J. E et al. (1987). *Health outcomes for adults in prepaid and fee-for-service systems of care. Results from the Health Insurance Experiment.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.


Journals that include materials of interest include, but are not limited to the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation and Program Planning</th>
<th>Social Service Review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Problems</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Journal of Public Health (AJPH)</td>
<td>American Journal on Community Psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Affairs</td>
<td>Behavioral Research Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and Social Work</td>
<td>Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal</td>
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<td>Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)</td>
<td>Cognitive Therapy and Research</td>
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<td>Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law</td>
<td>Community Mental Health Journal</td>
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<td>Maternal and Child Health Journal</td>
<td>Mental Health Services Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Review (MMWR)</td>
<td>Psychiatric Services (JAPA)</td>
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<td>New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)</td>
<td>Research on Social Work Practice</td>
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<td>Public Health Reports</td>
<td>New Directions for Program Evaluation</td>
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<td>Social Work and Health Care</td>
<td>Social Justice</td>
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**Course Conduct**

This class adheres to the following Ground Rules for the Class:

1. Our primary commitment is to learn - from the instructor, from each other, from materials and from our work. We acknowledge differences among us in skills, interests, values, scholarly orientations and experience.

2. We acknowledge that racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination exist and are likely to surface from time to time.

3. We acknowledge that one of the meanings of societal oppression and discrimination is that we have been systematically taught misinformation about our own groups and especially members of devalued groups and populations of color. The same is true for sexism, ageism, sexual orientation and other alternative lifestyles - we are taught misinformation about ourselves and others regarding forms of difference and discrimination.

4. We acknowledge that our notions of privilege - privilege of ethnicity, religious belief gender, sexual orientation and class - can distort our understanding of individuals, families, communities, organizations and infrastructure, and can undermine the development of authentic relationships and understanding.

5. We cannot be blamed for the misinformation that we have heard but we will be held responsible for repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
6. Victims are not to be blamed for their oppression.
7. We will assume that people are always doing the best they can, both to learn material and to behave in socially just and honest ways.
8. We will actively pursue opportunities to learn about our own groups and those of others, yet will not enter or invade others' privacy when unwanted.
9. We will share information about our groups with other members of the class, and will not demand, devalue, or 'put down' people for their experiences.
10. We can have an obligation to actively counter the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls, which prohibit group cooperation and group gain.
11. We want to create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. Thus, at times, members of the class may wish to make a comment that they do not want repeated outside the classroom. If so, the person will preface the remarks with a request and the class will agree not to repeat the remarks.

**Housekeeping**

**Electronic Devices**
In consideration of your classmates, and due to their disruptive nature, I request that all students turn off all telephones and pagers while you are in my class. This is *your* time and I want you to be able to protect it. I prefer that you receive no messages during class time, however, if you must be on call for an emergency, please let your home or office knows that you are only available for emergencies that no one else can handle. If you must carry a pager, please set it to vibrate only.

**Special Circumstances**
If there are any circumstances that require that I and/or the class adapt to your special needs, please consult with me at the beginning of the semester so that I may adequately address these needs.

**Religious Observances**
Please notify me if religious observances conflict with class or due dates for assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.
**Class Schedule: SYLLABUS**—This Course Schedule is tentative, thus subject to change. All changes will be discussed in advance so that you will have sufficient time to make adjustments in readings & assignments.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week &amp; Date</th>
<th>Class Content/Topic</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
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| 1 1/9/06    | Introductions, class overview & available resources | 1. Rossi and Freeman: Chapter 1 (Available on-line U of M Library-electronic resources).  
| 2 1/16/06   | Martin Luther King Jr. day No Class |  |
6. Supplemental Handouts |
8. Supplemental Handouts |
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<tr>
<td>7 2/20/06</td>
<td>Research designs: experimental, quasi-experimental, Single subject, Feasibility Sampling, protection of human subjects &amp; informed consents</td>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Rossi and Freeman: Chapters 8 and 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Supplemental Handouts</td>
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**Take home assignment 2 due:** Research Protocol & Human Subjects

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<tr>
<th>8 2/27/06</th>
<th>Spring Recess NO CLASS</th>
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<tr>
<td>9 3/6/06</td>
<td>Measurement in evaluation &amp; Issues in measurement. Data collection and management</td>
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**Take Home Assignment 3 due**-questions, design, sample & lit review
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<th>Week &amp; Date</th>
<th>Class Content/Topic</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>14 4/10/06</td>
<td>Class Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 4/17/06</td>
<td>Last day of class Class Presentations/Wrap up</td>
<td>Final Paper Due- Evaluation Research Design</td>
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<td>16 4/24/06</td>
<td>Exam Period Class Presentations as needed</td>
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