Evaluation in Social Work
SW 683, Spring/Summer 2006
Monday: 1pm – 5pm

Instructor
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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 the 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, multicultural, and social
justice perspectives.

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 Program Evaluation Standards) will be
used to review ethical issues commonly confronted in evaluation.

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 the evaluation process and outcomes. Because a collaborative, participatory process is
critical to evaluation of social work interventions, attention to diversity is imperative for proper
implementation of evaluation on social work contexts.

Social Justice and Social Change: Students will develop the capacity to analyze the impact and
efficiency of services and policies as they relate to social change and social justice. They will learn
to develop services and programs that could plausibly serve these functions. Participatory,
collaborative, change-oriented evaluation processes promote the achievement of social justice and
courage and therefore are emphasized in the class. Also important are an examination of the role of
power in evaluation, and the development of knowledge, skills, and capacities that evaluation
participants can mobilize to shift imbalances of power and resources.

Promotion and Prevention: Students will develop the capacity to develop and evaluate prevention
and promotion programs designed to reduce risk of onset of problems and promote healthy
development.
**Social Science:** Students will strengthen their 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 on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice**

This course will provide students with an intensive focus on privilege, oppression, diversity, and social justice. This will include knowledge about social justice, systems, and mechanisms that create/support oppression and privilege. Students will learn skills for disrupting these. The course will examine ways in which mechanisms that support oppression and privilege intersect with each other (occur differently depending on the multiple and intersecting social categories that people occupy). Illustrative intersections include cultural and ethnic differences, social construction of race, economic class, disability status, sexual orientation, gender, religion, age, immigrant status and other relevant dimensions.

Students will develop definitions for and visions of what social justice could look like, and learn evaluation-relevant practice approaches to move in that direction. Attention to diversity and knowledge of different types of human differences and how they interact with each other is necessary, but not sufficient. Students will need to work within cultural and other social group contexts and understand that these differences are linked to issues of societal power, access to resources and mobility. Students must understand diversity, as it is present both within and between different groups. Students must recognize the strengths and resilience of different groups. Students will learn to recognize their own beliefs, positions, or “lenses” as central to understanding privilege and difference, and working with others in transactional ways. The course will pose multiple perspectives and approaches and critically examine underlying assumptions with movement toward social justice as the ultimate outcome.

**Course Design**

The instructor will select required and recommended readings. In addition, the instructor will include a range of pedagogical methods, such as participatory discussions, written assignments and experiential exercises related to course materials. Students will complete tasks as assigned. Guest speakers may be invited to address special topics.

**Course Content**

This course will focus on the direct application of the analytical skills 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 practice 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.

**Course Objectives**

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

1. Identify and choose the type of evaluation that is appropriate to the context of the situation and the questions that need to be addressed.
2. Choose the design and methodology appropriate to conduct a needs assessment.
3. Identify the process of program specification in the evaluation process.
4. Plan and critique the measurement, design, sampling, and analytic issues in process and outcome evaluations.
5. Describe ways in which to monitor one’s own practice in social work.
6. Analyze issues of implementation and utilization in program evaluation.
7. Plan an evaluation of a social intervention.
8. Identify the ethical issues present in the performance of program evaluations.
9. Apply a collaborative, participatory, change-oriented process, in designing an evaluation.
10. Identify, assess, and address ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, social class, age and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement influence evaluation processes and outcomes.

**Attendance and Participation**

Attendance will be monitored throughout the semester. Students are expected to attend all lectures and prepare by completing the assigned readings prior to class. Students are expected to participate in the following class activities: Q & A discussions, small group applications, computer lab sessions, and mock exercises. Coming to or leaving class mid-way is considered an absence. Attendance and participation in class are 10% (10 points) of the final grade.

**Deadline Expectations**

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date listed in the course outline or will be completed as an in-class assignment. The assignment will be graded down one full grade (points are calculated by assignment) when the assignment is submitted late. Assignments submitted more than two days late will not be accepted; the student will be assigned zero points. Exceptions will need prior permission of the instructor.

**Grading System**

Grades are earned by successfully completing the work on the assignments, demonstrating understanding of the evaluation concepts, attending and participating in class. A 100-point system is used. At the end of the term, the numerical grades earned for each written assignment will be translated into letter grades according to the following formula:

- A+ 97-100
- B+ 87-90
- C+ 77-80
- D <69 (no credit)
- A 94-96
- B 84-86
- C 74-76
- A- 91-93
- B- 81-83
- C- 70-73

Incompletes are not granted unless it can be demonstrated that it would be unfair to hold the student to the normal expectations of the course. The student must formally request an incomplete with the instructor prior to the final weeks of class. Students with specialized learning needs are requested to make an appointment with the instructor to discuss the necessary arrangements. Please review the Student Guide section on Ethical Conduct in the University Environment (pp. 50-52). This section addresses plagiarism, harassment and discrimination policies. Students are expected to complete assignments on their own.
Assignments

1. Program Specification Using Logic Model (20 points)
This written assignment requires the articulation of a program’s theory of change using a one-page logic model. The logic model will include (1) a description of clients and system conditions that led to the need for the program, (2) major program components, (3) detailed activities, and (4) expected client outcomes. Include relevant theories, curriculums, and/or research that inspired the development of the model. Include a Reference/Resource page to identify published references (theorists, research studies) and other source materials (i.e. program handbooks, interviews with program staff) used in the development of the model. The Program Evaluation Plan (assignment #5) will be written using this same program. The logic model will be re-submitted as part of the Program Evaluation Plan at the end of the semester.

2. Customer Satisfaction Survey Quiz (10 points)
Students will complete a quiz on customer satisfaction domains, closed and open-ended items, rating scales, and other issues relevant to survey development.

3. Evaluation Study Critique (10 points)
Students will read a brief article of an evaluation prior to class. In class, students will determine the quality of the study and treatment effect size using an evaluation quality rating form (provided by instructor).

4. Data Analysis and Executive Summary Report (20 points)
Students will analyze quantitative or qualitative data using SPSS or other relevant applications. A 1-2 page “executive summary” report of results will be generated. Graphics are optional.

5. Program Evaluation Plan (30 points)
Students will design a 3-4 page Program Evaluation Plan for the program specified in the first assignment. Components of the plan will include (1) the purpose of the evaluation and evaluation approach, (2) type of evaluation components planned and relevant key evaluation questions, (3) evaluation design selected, explanation of appropriateness, reasons why other more rigorous designs were not feasible, limitations of the design, (4) data collection schedule and narrative of measurement tools including an abstract (written by student) of a standardized outcome measure, (5) data analysis plan, and (6) a plan for reporting and utilizing the results. The program logic model and references are required attachments. The references should include published evaluations conducted on a similar population, similar program, and/or using similar methods.

Required Text

Other Text Resources


Lecture 1, May 8th
Introduction to course, expectations, research knowledge, program and evaluation experience, evaluation standards. Program theory of change, logic modeling,
T Chapter 1: Setting the Scene
T Chapter 2: Purposes of Evaluation

Lecture 2, May 15th
Specification of target population, system conditions, components/activities and expected outcomes. Review logic model drafts. Begin evaluation approaches and planning,
T Chapter 3: Understanding the Program
T Chapter 4: Planning the Evaluation
T Chapter 5: Roles for the Evaluator

Lecture 3, May 22nd
CQI, accreditation, consumer satisfaction surveys, quantitative measures, psychometrics, sampling.
T Chapter 6: Developing Measures

May 29th No Class due to UM Holiday
Lecture 4, June 5th
Qualitative measures, needs assessment and coverage/bias evaluations, sampling, interviews. Focus Groups.
T Chapter 7: Collecting Data
T Chapter 11: Qualitative Measures

Lecture 5, June 12th
Process evaluations, program monitoring, treatment integrity evaluations.

Lecture 6, June 19th: Evaluation Practice in the Field

Lecture 7, June 26th
Data analysis planning, descriptive and bi-variate statistics. SPSS application of dummy data set.
T Chapter 12: Analyzing and Interpreting the Data

Lecture 8, July 3rd: Evaluation Practice in the Field

Lecture 9, July 10th
Interpretation of data analysis output, report writing, executive summary format, utilization of results. Role Play: Presentation of the Report to Executives.
T Chapter 13: Writing the Report and Disseminating Results
E West, P. and Graham, K. Clients Speak: Participatory Evaluation of a Non-confrontational Addictions Treatment Program for Older Adults. Journal of Aging and Health. 11(4), 540-564.
Lecture 10, July 17th

Outcome monitoring evaluations, single group designs, threats to validity, evidence-based practice. Outcome and impact evaluations, comparison group designs, random assignment.

T Chapter 8: Design of the Evaluation
T Chapter 9: Randomized Experiment

Lecture 11, July 24th

Cost designs, evaluation planning using the data collection chart, reflective practice. Review Data Collection Charts, consents, human subject protections, evaluation work plans, evaluation budgets. Evaluator’s Writing Workshop – second half of class.

T Chapter 10: Extensions of Good Designs
T Chapter 14: Evaluating with Integrity

Final Assignment (Program Evaluation Plan):
- Due on July 25th by 5pm
- Submit final assignment to Office #3760 SSW in door mailbox
- Graduates interested in receiving feedback should attach an addressed envelope with postage.