Course Design

The course will use diverse pedagogical methods, including lectures, participatory discussions, written assignments, student presentations, and experiential exercises related to course materials. Guest speakers may be invited to address special topics.

Course Assignments and Expectations

Students are expected to complete all assigned reading assignments prior to the appropriate class and to use them as the basis for informed participation in class discussions. It is expected that students will submit work on schedule. Failure to meet these expectations may result in reduction in grades.

It is further 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. Any such absences or tardiness should be discussed directly with the course instructor, and students must make arrangements to complete class work which is missed. Students with more than two unexcused absences may risk failure.

Course expectations include completion of four assignments, that will be weighted in the following manner along with class participation:

- Program Specification: (Due 10/24/01) 20%
- Measurement Critique: (Due 11/7/01) 10%
- Sampling and Design Plan: (Due 11/28/01) 10%
- Final Paper: (Due 12/15/00) 50%
- Class Participation: (Ongoing) 10%

Program Specification: Students will work with their field instructor to select a program or problem within the agency for evaluation. They will be asked to design a logic model for the program and to answer a series of questions about the program including: 1) the client and/or system conditions that the program attempts to address; 2) a delineation of the major program components including their assumptions, theoretical base, empirical base, and practice rationale; 3) a listing of the program’s stated goals and objectives; 4) a description of the major program
processes and/or activities; and 5) an enumeration of both the expected immediate and long-term outcomes and a rationale for why these are expected to occur.

**Measurement Critique:** Students will be asked to identify an instrument that they might use in the evaluation of the program described in the first assignment. They will then be asked to discuss the theory base used in the development of the instrument; the populations/samples upon whom the instrument was developed and/or standardized; the steps taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the measure; and the instruments directness, reactivity, sensitivity to change and ease of administration and completion.

**Sampling and Design Plan:** Students will be asked to identify a design and sampling plan that they might use in the evaluation of the program described in the first assignment. The design part of this paper will include a description of the research design which will be used and, if applicable, how the student would form the proposed research groups. Students will also asked to discuss the strengths and limitations of the chosen design in terms of its ability to answer the evaluation question under study. In the sampling part of this paper, students will be asked to formally identify the population of interest and the sample they would use in their evaluation, including a discussion of the type of sampling to be utilized, a description of how this sampling technique will be implemented, and anticipated problems in gathering the sample or with sample attrition?

**Final Paper:** Building upon and augmenting the work already done during the semester, and utilizing readings and classroom activities, students will be asked to present a final evaluation proposal. It will incorporate information from the program description, measurement, and design and sample papers already completed. In addition, students will be asked to do a number of additional tasks, including an articulation of the major research questions, the assumptions of the proposed study, the probable data collection strategy, as well as an analytic plan. In addition, students will be asked to discuss the limitations of their proposed study, as well as to report on how they propose to using program staff in at each stage of the evaluation process.

All assignments will available to the students at least two weeks before they are due, and will be discussed in detail in class prior to their due date. Assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class section — late papers will be accepted only at the instructors discretion.

Since each assignment relates to an important step in the evaluation process, and builds on the assignment that precedes it, students are urged to contact the instructor if they wish to discuss their ideas prior to submission or to discuss issues after their papers are returned to them. It is strongly suggested that students follow the outline provided by the instructor when completing each of the assignments, as these will be detailed and provide the student with a blueprint for successful completion.

All assignments must be typed, double spaced, and, when appropriate, use appropriate referencing and bibliographic formats. Papers should have page numbers 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 authorship’ issues.

Grading Criteria

Each assignment is given a letter grade. The grade of A+ will rarely if ever be used, and, in general, students should not expect to receive this grade on an assignment, for it signifies work that clearly goes beyond the content of the course and the expertise students are expected to master. Other grades will be determined based on the following criteria: (1) grades of A or A- are reserved for student work which not only demonstrates very good mastery of content but which also shows that the student has undertaken a complex task, has applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or has demonstrated creativity in her or his approach to the assignment. The difference between these two grades is determined by the degree to which these skills have been demonstrated by the student; (2) a grade of B+ is given to work which is judged to be very good -- this grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-competent understanding of the material being tested in the assignment; (3) a grade of B is given to student work which meets the basic requirements of the assignment -- it denotes that the student has done adequate work on the assignment and meets basic course expectations; (4) a grade of B- denotes that a student's performance was less than adequate on an assignment, reflecting only moderate grasp of content and/or expectations; (5) variations of the C grade reflect a minimal grasp of the assignment, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement; (6) grades between D and F are applied to denote a failure to meet minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of a student's performance on the assignment. Late assignments accepted by the instructor will be graded down by at least one step in the grading scheme.

Final grades will be determined by multiplying the worth of the assignment (or class participation or presentation) by the following grade points: [A+ = 4.3]; A = 4.0; A- = 3.7; B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; B- = 2.7; C+ = 2.3; C = 2.0, etc., and rounding the score to the nearest letter grade, with some discretion left to the instructor to round up if other factors come into play. Issues of student attendance and tardiness will, if necessary, be factored into this score after this calculation has been completed.

REQUIRED TEXTS/MATERIALS


Course Pack
TOPICAL OUTLINE

Session 1 – September 5, 2001
Introductions, Class Overview, and a Discussion of the Social Context of Program Evaluations

Session 2 -- September 12, 2001

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapters 1, 2, 12.


Various Handouts on Ethical Considerations – Portions of the NASW Code of Ethics, the Nuremberg Code, and AEA Taskforce on Principles, and sample consent form.

Session 3 – September 19, 2001
Needs Assessment

Basic Reading

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 4.

Applied Readings


Sessions 4 and 5 – September 26, 2001; October 3, 2001
Dissecting and Specifying Programs and their Components

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapters 3, 5.


Applied Readings


Sessions 6 and 7 -- October 10 and October 17, 2001
Measurement Issues in Program Evaluation

Readings


**Applied Reading**


**Session 8 — October 24, 2001**

**Program Monitoring and Improvement**

**Program Specification Due**

**Basic Readings**

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 6

Applied Readings


Sessions 9-11 – October 31, November 7 and November 14, 2001

Outcome Evaluations

Session 10 – Measurement Critique Due

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapters 7-10.

Applied Readings


Session 12 – November 21, 2001
Single System Designs – Evaluating Effectiveness with Individual Clients

Basic Readings


Applied Readings


Session 13 — November 28, 2001

Cost Analysis

Sampling and Design Plan Due

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 12.

Applied Readings


Sessions 14 and 15 — December 5 and 12, 2001

Issues of Implementation and Utilization

Readings


December 15 — Final Paper Due