Winter 2002

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Office Hours: By Appointment


Coursepack: A coursepack of all the readings will be made available. Arrangements for disseminating the coursepack will be discussed by the instructor.

Some materials for the course will be distributed through the coursetools system available at: https://coursetools.ummu.umich.edu/mycourses

Course Description:

This course will cover the theory and practice of evaluation as a means of assessing social work practice, and strengthening clients, communities and the social programs, and the systems that serve them. It will 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.

Course Content:

This course focuses 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, gay and lesbian groups, and people with severe psychiatric disabilities. Students will be introduced to models of evaluation derived from social science theory and research, and 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 social work practice context of a specific evaluation.

2) Apply evaluation methods that are appropriate to the evaluation context, such as problem definition, and development of appropriate methodology and analysis plans.

3) Plan an evaluation of social work practice.

4) Critically evaluate—using the models and tools covered in class—existing evaluation documents for their consistency with the values reflected in the curricular themes.

Course Design:

The instructor will select the 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 carry out appropriate evaluation tasks as assigned.

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 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 in 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 change 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.
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.

Course Assignments and Expectations:

Students are expected to complete all assigned reading assignments prior to the appropriate class. While the content of each reading may not be explicitly discussed in class, readings will form 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.

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

- **Program Specification**: (Due Session 7) 20%
- **Measurement Critique**: (Due Session 9) 10%
- **Sampling and Design Plan**: (Due Session 11) 10%
- **Final Paper**: (Due April 18th 2002) 50%
- **Class Participation**: (Ongoing) 10%

**Program Specification**: Students will work with their field instructor to select a program 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 list 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.

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1 This grade includes participation in the occasional short online poll administered through the coursetools system.
**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 be 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 use program staff in each stage of the evaluation process.

All assignments will be 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 instructor’s 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 affected 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
participating 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.
### Semester Schedule

**Session 1 – week of January 7**
*Introductions, Class Overview, and a Discussion of the Social Context of Program Evaluations*

**Session 2 – week of January 14th**
*An Overview of the Field of Evaluation and Ethics in the Evaluation Process.*

**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.

**Week of January 21st – no class – Dr. Martin Luther King Day**

**Session 3 – week of January 28th**
*Needs Assessment*

**Basic Readings**


Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 4.

**Applied Readings**


Sessions 4 and 5 – Weeks of February 4th and 11th
Dissecting and Specifying Programs and their Components

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapters 3, 5.


Applied Readings


Session 6 – Week of February 18th
Measurement Issues in Program Evaluation

Readings


Week of February 25th – Spring Break

Session 7 – Week of March 4th

Program Monitoring and Improvement

Program Specification Due

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 6


Applied Readings


Sessions 8-10 – Weeks of March 11th, March 18th, March 25th

Outcome Evaluations

Session 9 – Measurement Critique Due

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapters 7-10.

Applied Readings


**Session 11 — Week of April 1st**  
*Single System Designs – Evaluating Effectiveness with Individual Clients*

**Sampling and Design Plan Due**

**Basic Readings**


**Applied Readings**


**Session 12 — Week of April 8th**  
*Cost-Benefit Analysis*

**Basic Readings**

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 11.

**Applied Readings**


Session 13 – Week of April 15th
Issues of Implementation and Utilization

Readings


April 18th – Final Paper Due