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 thus addresses 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 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 evaluation of social work programs with particular attention to populations at risk, including people of color, women, the poor, 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.

Course Objectives:

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

1. Identify and choose the type of evaluation that is appropriate to answer questions consonant with a program’s developmental stage.
2. Specify a program for evaluation and its theory of change.
3. Recognize and apply evaluation and data collection methods that are appropriate to the evaluation context.
4. Plan an evaluation of social work practice.
5. Understand dissemination strategies that engage the policy and/or practice communities with the results and findings of evaluation activities in order to foster changes in policies and programs.
6. Critically evaluate existing evaluation studies for their consistency with the values reflected in the curricular themes.

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.

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, sexual orientation, age, and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement influence evaluation processes 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. Participatory, collaborative, change-oriented evaluation processes, and appropriate dissemination activities, can 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, as well as rehabilitation programs, designed to reduce risk of onset of problems and promote healthy development.

- **Social Science**: Students will strengthen their capacity to use theoretical and empirical social science literature to develop and understand whether interventions are appropriately designed and scientifically sound.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Specification</td>
<td>Oct. 17</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement Critique</td>
<td>Oct. 21</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling and Design Plan</td>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>Dec. 13</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentations/</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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**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 model, including its assumptions, theoretical base, empirical base, and practice rationale; 3) a description of the major program processes and/or activities; 3) a listing of the program’s stated goals and objectives 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 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 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 stakeholders 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 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 impacted by its visual presentation, the use of proper grammar and spelling, and other ‘pride of authorship’ issues.

Grading Criteria For Written Assignments: Each written 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.
Class Presentations, Participation, and Discussion

In order to meet the final course objective, (i.e. that student’s will be able to critically evaluate existing evaluation studies for their consistency with the values reflected in the curricular themes) a set of readings, indicated as “Applied Readings” in the Topical Outline, are included for each major subject heading. Students will be divided into six groups, and each group will be responsible to report on one or more of these applied readings. For each topic area, students will be given a series of questions to answer regarding the applied reading prior to the time the instructor covers the topic in lecture.

After the lecture on a given topic, during class time, students will meet in groups to discuss their assigned “applied” reading(s) (you may also meet outside of class time to prepare for your presentation) based on the questions that have been distributed. After these small group discussions, each group will report to the class on their applied readings and respond to any questions from the instructor or their classmates. Once all six groups have reported on their specific readings, a class discussion will take place that will center around one of the curricular themes and how the particular stage in the evaluation process relates to it.

Final Grades

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 of Readings Required of All Students

One of Six Supplemental Course Packs of Applied Readings
TOPICAL OUTLINE

Session 1 – September 5, 2002
Introductions, Class Overview and a Discussion of Program Evaluation

Session 2 – September 12, 2002

Basic Readings

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


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

Session 3 – September 19, 2001
Newer Thinking About the Purposes, Conduct and Use of Evaluation – Inclusion, Social Justice, and Issues of Cultural Competence

Basic Reading


**Applied Reading**


**Session 4 – September 26, 2002**

*Needs Assessment*

**Basic Reading**

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 4.

**Applied Readings**


**Sessions 5 and 6 – October 3 and 10, 2002**

*Dissecting and Specifying Programs and their Components*

**Basic Readings**

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapters 3, 5.


**Applied Readings**


Sessions 7 -- October 17, 2002
Measurement Issues in Program Evaluation

Program Specification Due

Basic Readings


Applied Readings


Session 8 — October 24, 2002
Program Monitoring and Improvement

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 6


Applied Readings


Sessions 9-11 – Oct. 31, November 7, 14, 2002
Outcome Evaluations

Measurement Critique Due -- Session 9, October 31

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapters 7-10.


Applied Readings


Session 12 — Nov. 21, 2002

Cost Analysis

Sampling and Design Plan Due

Basic Readings

Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey, Chapter 12.

Applied Readings


Sessions 13 -- December 5

Issues of Implementation, Dissemination and Utilization

Basic Readings


-December 13 – Final Paper Due