PROGRAM EVALUATION
SOCIAL WORK 831/PSYCHOLOGY 773/SOCIOLOGY 865
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Mondays 11-2
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on theoretical and strategic issues in designing and implementing formative or summative evaluations of preventive interventions including assessment of fidelity to a model and assessment of impact, with special attention to the effects of the socio-cultural context in which the intervention takes place. Our working definition of culture is the sum total of the knowledge passed from generation to generation within a given society including language, religion, political structure, economic and legal systems, norms of behavior, ideas about illness and healing (Castillo, 199x). Our focus on socio-cultural context includes attention to the interface with race, gender, and poverty. Topics include: (1) translation of theory into measurement and specification of variables, (2) experimental and quasi-experimental designs, use of qualitative methods in formative evaluation, (3) appropriate development of measurement tools that are both stable (reliable) and sensitive to change, (4) alternative data sources (observational, self-report, archival data including clinical records and management information systems, focus group, key informant), (5) development of timely and ongoing stakeholder and community involvement in design and implementation of evaluation, (6) methods to enhance the utilization of evaluation for change at both policy and practice levels, (7) ethical issues, and (8) where appropriate, sampling issues.

The course is interactive. We will use a mix of lecture, guest lecture and student led discussion to provide examples and applications of course concepts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
1. Understand the implications of social and cultural factors on program evaluation.
2. Assess the evaluability of a program or project.
3. Develop an experimental and a quasi-experimental design to evaluate a program.
4. Select or develop appropriate measurement tools.
5. Understand the strengths of and weakness of a variety of data sources.
6. Choose and translate applicable theories to operationalized constructs/variables of interest
7. Identify appropriate stakeholders and their role in evaluation.
8. Understand methods to enhance utilization of evaluation
9. Have a critical grasp of ethical issues at each stage of the evaluation process, including a working understanding of means to address these issues.

TEXTBOOK:

OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
The course grade is based on the following:
(1) Active participation in class discussions (20%)
(2) Each student will select a class session and prepare 1-2 discussion questions on the assigned readings. The discussion questions need to be posted on Course Tools no later than noon on Sunday preceding that week’s Monday class (20%)
(3) A short paper (5-8 pages) will be due midway through the semester. The short paper should represent a first draft or a section of the longer paper due at the end of the class. For the short paper, students are expected to:
a. Select a prevention program of interest to you – this could be a program that you have worked on, your own design (for advanced students), a program in the published literature, etc.
b. Provide a concise description of the program and its operation, including purpose, intended participants, staffing, setting, activities, service intensity, etc.
c. Construct a logic model which charts a process evaluation for the intervention; that is, covering inputs, throughputs and outputs. Include a description of how culture and other social context features are relevant and will be assessed.
(4) Short verbal presentation (5-10 minutes) providing an overview of your final draft evaluation design for the last paper.
(5) Evaluation design for a prevention intervention. See last page for details. [NOTE: Students who were enrolled in SW 817, Prevention Research, Winter 2003, are expected to build on and not duplicate work from the prior class. Thus, in most cases, these students would be expected to develop a process and outcome evaluation design, based on their previous work in specifying program theory]
EXPECTATIONS:
Class interactions - All students are encouraged to fully participate in class, especially if they do not understand the material. This evaluation course should be a fully interactive one; no question will be regarded as a stupid one by the instructor. (However, the instructor will reserve the prerogative of asking students to meet separately if discussion or questioning is so extensive that it infringes on the topics which other students need to have covered.) Please provide the instructor with feedback if points are not clear or if presentations are not providing useful information. The classroom should be an open forum for free exchange of differences of opinion and for discussions of these differences and for promoting understanding.

Attendance - Students are expected to attend every class session. Students should inform the instructor in advance of expected absences which are unavoidable. If any emergency arises, students are expected to notify me or leave a message at my office as soon as possible.

Written products - Students are expected to make use of acceptable citation, reference and bibliographic systems such as the one developed by the American Psychological Association. Other systems are also acceptable--as long as they are consistently used.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND SPEAKERS:

1. Overview of the class, overview of program evaluation, Sept. 8 [Oyserman]
   What is the purpose of evaluation?
   Types of evaluation/outcome research: efficacy vs. effectiveness vs. replication
   Evaluation and culture/diversity

2. Evaluation theory in context, Sept 15 [Mowbray]
   Roots of program evaluation, early evaluation theorists, what is an evaluation theory?
   What are the bases for differences in evaluation theories? How has the practice of evaluation evolved? Alternative approaches to program evaluation
Readings: Weiss, Chapt. 1
Assignment: Complete IRB certification

   Evaluability assessment, implementation evaluation, logic models
Readings: Weiss, Chapt. 2
   Battle Creek, MI: Author. [http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/lmcourse]

4. Program theory, Sept. 29 [Mowbray]
   Deconstructing a model, evaluating multiple components
Readings: Weiss, Chapt. 3 & 4
   Optional reading (if you aren’t familiar with the idea of program theory):

5. Fidelity and measurement, October 6 [Mowbray]
   Deciding on measures of process and outcome
   What is fidelity? How to measure it? Development, use and validation of fidelity criteria
Readings: Weiss, Chapter 6

OPTIONAL PAPER DUE: Present Program Theory or Logic Model

October 13 – Fall Study Break

6. Qualitative methods in evaluation, Oct. 20 [Mowbray]
   When to use, for what purpose?
   Semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observational methods, narratives
Readings: Weiss, Chapt. 7 & 11

Read one of the following:


Optional reading for people who want more detail on conducting focus groups:


Speaker: JENNIFER GREENE, Professor of Educational Psychology, Univ.Illinois-U/C

7. Evaluation designs, Oct. 27 [Oyserman]

   Outcome evaluations: experimental vs. quasiexperimental vs non experimental
   Advantages and limitations of randomized clinical trials

   Readings: Weiss, Chpts. 8 & 9


8. Longitudinal evaluation (I), Nov. 3 [Mowbray]

   Issues in tracking and locating, data collection and analysis
   Attrition, selection bias, methods to increase participation rates
   Changing measures in longitudinal designs – when to do it and how?

   Readings: Weiss, Chapt. 12


9. Longitudinal evaluation (II), November 10 [Oyserman]

   Dealing with missing data, alternative statistical analysis methods

   Readings: To be identified by Deb Bybee


Speaker: DEB BYBEE, Associate Professor, Dept. of Psychology, Michigan State Univ.

10. Design challenges, Nov. 17 [Mowbray]
Community-based services, self-help programs

Readings: Weiss, Chapt. 13, & 14

Speaker: SANFORD BRAVER , Professor of Psychology, Arizona State University

11. Newer evaluation approaches, Nov. 24 [Mowbray]
   Empowerment evaluation, participatory evaluation

Readings: Weiss, Chapt. 5
   Readings via David Fetterman:
   http://www.stanford.edu/~davidf/pattonscriven.html
   2. Timothy Wild's review of Empowerment Evaluation:
   http://www.stanford.edu/~davidf/wild.html
   3. (a)See the videos of the empowerment evaluation projects available at:
   http://homepage.mac.com/profdavidf
      (b)(To be able to do this, you will need to download the latest version of Quicktime for windows or macs - it is free at the Apple web site.)
      (c)They should read the Arkansas project and the Hewlett Packard $15 million dollar project and view the videos.

OPTIONAL:
   He also sent the latest version of a book chapter that he has written, titled: Branching Out or Standing on a Limb: Looking into our roots for insight. Since this chapter is not yet published, he would like to keep distribution at a minimum - So if you would like a copy - please e-mail Nick Yoder (nyoder@umich.edu) and he will send you a copy.

Speaker: DAVID FETTERMAN – Professor of Education, Stanford University, via video conference
12. Presentation of a prevention program evaluation, Violence Prevention in Schools, Dec. 1

[Oyserman]
Readings: To be identified by speaker

Speaker: ROWELL HUESMANN

13. Student presentations, Dec. 8th [Oyserman]


General sampling methods as in the Kalton monographs, and illustrate the ideas with methods from the book chapter.

Readings: Weiss, Chapt. 10
Sage monographs by Graham Kalton, "Introduction to Survey Sampling" (no. 35, published in 1983).

Speaker: JAMES LEPKOWSKI
Final Paper - Evaluation Design for a Prevention Intervention

The final paper is expected to be 10-15 pages long (not including references, figures, or tables) and cover the following:

1. Background information – concisely provide necessary information on the agency, the program, micro and macro context, etc. (adapted from the earlier paper).

2. Specify the program theory, that is, the mechanisms through which the intervention is expected to produce its intended outcomes; this usually includes a model of the independent and dependent variables, the proximal and distal outcomes, mediating and moderating factors.

3. Present the focus or aims of the evaluation study, including specific hypotheses or evaluation questions. Provide a rationale for why this focus has been selected.

4. Overview of the evaluation design (experimental or quasi-experimental) and a rationale for its selection, including how the evaluation design will operate, selection of research participants, etc.

5. Identification of indicators that will be utilized, rationale for their selection, how and when indicators will be obtained. You do not need to specifically identify which scales, measures or instruments will be used. However, you should provide definitions of the key dependent and independent variables, both in conceptual and operational terms. Discuss possible alternative sources of information. Specify how program fidelity will be assessed.

6. Detail how culture and social context are handled in design and measurement. Identify possible limitations, including participant availability, likely biases or confounds, the effects of gender, race/ethnicity, age, etc., considerations on evaluation outcomes. Discuss the feasibility of the evaluation design; what barriers are likely to be encountered? How will these be overcome?

7. Discuss potential ethical issues in evaluation design, data collection or analysis.

8. Describe the plan for involving stakeholders and for disseminating results: how will the chances of utilization be maximized?