1. Course Description

This course will focus on the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods to monitor and evaluate social services. Students will develop skills in choosing and implementing appropriate evaluation strategies and designs to answer policy and practice questions. Emphasis will be placed on how to select and construct measures and assess their reliability and validity. Students will assess service needs of target populations and communities, monitor the implementation and operation of social welfare programs, and evaluate their impact. Opportunities will be provided to obtain practical experience in data collection, interpretation, presentation and dissemination of evaluation results.

2. Course Content

The purpose of this course is to develop students’ abilities to use evaluation methods to describe real world situations in social work settings and make inferences based on that information in order to improve social policy decisions and service delivery programs. Students will develop skills to: identify the focus and purpose of the evaluation activities; identify and generate the kind and content of the information needed to meet the purposes for the evaluation; identify and assess the intended sources for the desired information; identify, assess, develop, and pilot the measures or instruments to be used for the evaluation; describe, select, and apply appropriate types of statistical and/or theoretical analyses and the general techniques to be used in the analysis; identify the types of information liable to result from the analysis; assess and implement additional factors in the evaluation design (e.g. timetables, standards to be used in judging the
results of the evaluation, logistics, and client privacy); and develop reporting and utilization strategies.

3. **Course Objectives**

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

1. Specify goals and objectives for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and practices for individual clients, as well as for aggregates of program participants.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the concepts of measurement, reliability, and validity; use these concepts for selecting variables for evaluation.
3. Devise basic designs for evaluation, and contrast their relative advantages and disadvantages to other designs.
4. Identify the issues involved in generalizing evaluation results, and devise representative sampling plans and replications for evaluating practices and programs.
5. Generate evaluation reports using the criteria and concepts above.
6. Discuss common ethical concerns related to program evaluation.

4. **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 and are impacted by various methods of program evaluation.

- **Social Justice and Social Change:** The ability to assess policies and programs analytically is necessary if the social work profession is to play an important role in shaping the outcome of ongoing program and policy debates to reflect issues in social justice and change. This course will provide students with the capacity to understand and influence the role that methods of program evaluation play in the formation and implementation of policy, practice, and program development.

- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation:** Prevention, promotion, treatment, and rehabilitation activities are difficult to evaluate, and therefore, raise special challenges in statistical analysis. Students will be exposed to models of program evaluation (e.g., empowerment designs, envelope analysis, responsive evaluations, and reflective focus group techniques) which have particular utility as methods to evaluate promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation oriented social services.

- **Behavioral and Social Science Research:** This course will focus on how to identify statistical methods that optimize a combination of rigor and feasibility. Students will examine the ways in which social science data is translated into current policy and practice and the consequences, both positive and negative, which emerge. This course will provide students with the capacity to
understand and influence the ways in which program evaluation methods impact the formation and implementation of social service programs.

5. 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. Guest speakers may be invited to address special topics. The extent of computer use and use of statistical packages throughout this course will be determined by the instructor.

6. Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values

Ethical standards of social work practice (NASW Code of Ethics) and evaluation practice (Program Evaluation Standards) as well as ethical standards for federally funded research will be used to review issues commonly confronted in program/policy evaluation.

7. Assignments and Grading Criteria

A. In-class examination on key concepts (Short Essay) on October 9th (30 points)

B. Three 1-2 summarized articles submitted and discussed in class
   Last names with A-C on September 11th, October 16th, November 6th
   Last names with D-Z on September 25th, October 23rd, November 20th
   Please include a copy of the article with the summary.

   Criteria for selecting an article: (1) Published within the last six years (1997-2002), (2) has content on the weekly course topic and (3) related to the student’s research project. (30 points)

C. Research project (i.e., scholarly paper) and presentation (40 points)
   • First part of research paper due on October 30th
   • Oral presentations on December 4th and 11th
   • Final paper due on December 11th
D. Grading Scale
Grading will be rigorous but fair. Grades are determined by academic performance, not effort. The grading scale is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>76-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>72-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 70</td>
<td>not passing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Required Text

NOTE: Required readings in journal articles are accessible through the URL for electronic reserves [http://www.lib.umich.edu/socwork/eresf03.html](http://www.lib.umich.edu/socwork/eresf03.html)

9. Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>Scope of the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purposes of evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope of evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None for this week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 11</td>
<td>Theory and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning and monitoring the evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role of the evaluator/participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Required Readings:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last names with A-C submit and present articles on planning/monitoring programs on this date.

| September 18 | Content                                      |
Qualitative methods in evaluation research
Combining qualitative and quantitative methods
Ethical issues in evaluation research

Required Readings:

September 25

Content
Data analysis and interpretation
Statistical applications in evaluation research
Statistical power and effect sizes

Required Readings:
- HPPE, Ch. 17, pp. 389-416.

Last names D-Z submit and present articles that use a statistical technique in evaluation on this date.

October 2

Reporting/Disseminating results
Policy significance of results

Required Readings:
- HPPE,
- HPPE, Ch. 19, pp. 456-488, Ch. 22, pp. 534-548, Ch. 23, pp. 549-575 & Ch. 24, pp. 576-589.

October 9  
**Content**  
*In class quiz* on key concepts (1.5 hours)  
Issues of diversity in evaluations  
Impact assessment  
Natural experiments

**Required Readings:**  
- HPPE, Ch. 6, pp. 119-132.  

October 16  
**Content**  
Quasi-experimental designs  
Validity issues  
Ethical and feasibility issues

**Required Readings:**  
- HPPE, Ch. 7, pp. 133-154.  

Last names A-C submit and present articles on quasi-experimental design in evaluation on this date.

October 23  
**Content**  
“True” Experimental designs  
Validity issues  
Ethical and feasibility issues  
Replication
Required Readings:
- HPPE, Ch. 8, pp. 155-197 & Ch. 18, pp. 417-455.

Last names D-Z submit and present articles on “true” experimental design in evaluation on this date.

October 30

Content
Measurement
Measuring program outcomes
Using multiple measures
Developing and testing new measures
Validity and reliability issues in measurement

Required Readings:
- HPPE, Ch. 5, pp. 96-118.

November 6

Content
Monitoring process and performance
Sampling in evaluation research
Issues of inclusiveness in sampling

Required Readings:
- HPPE, Ch. 3, pp. 40-68

Last names A-C submit and present articles on process and performance on this date.

November 13

Content
Collecting data
Sources of data collection
Role of stakeholders
Issues of informed consent
Anonymity and confidentiality issues
Benefits and costs to participants
Participants incentives

Required Readings:
- HPPE, Ch.10, pp. 239-270, Ch. 11, pp. 271-292, Ch. 14, pp. 338-349, Ch. 15, pp. 350-373 & Ch.16, pp. 374-386.

November 20

**Content**
Responsibility issues with focus on vulnerable people
Empowerment evaluation
Benefit-cost analysis
Measuring costs and benefits

**Guest speaker: Steve Szilvagyi**
**Topic:** "Using empowerment evaluation for program dissemination"

**Required Readings:**

Last names D-Z submit and present articles on benefit-cost analysis in program evaluation on this date.

December 4

**Content**
Student project presentations

December 11

**Content (Final Class)**
Student project presentations
Class evaluations

**Article Assignment**

Aim of assignment: To increase learning and understanding of current knowledge relating to critic topics in program evaluation. Articles may be based on qualitative data, quantitative data or both types of data, and should be published within the past six years (1997-2002).

Criteria for grading article summaries (no more than 2 single spaced pages):
1. Student addressed the following components when summarizing the article:
   ___ Purpose of the study including specific research questions/goals
   ___ Design and methods of the study
   ___ Results
   ___ Limitations and strengths of the study
   ___ Implications for policy and practice

2. Thoroughness (i.e., addressed all of the above and included a complete citation of the article)

3. Reflected critical thinking (e.g., addressed course concepts, when relevant; used course materials to address strengths/weaknesses/ethical issues in the article)

4. Selected an appropriate article
   ___a. Related to student’s research project
   ___b. Published within last 6 years
   ___c. Has content on the weekly topic

5. Timely submission

6. Writing style: Clear, concise and coherent writing; use of active voice; related ideas are together (clauses and phrases are placed close to words they modify); relatively free of redundant, awkward and colloquial words/phrases; accurate spelling; good punctuation

Note: The professor will return papers in a timely fashion—typically one week after submission.

**Scholarly Research Paper Assignment**
Aim of this assignment is consistent with the six course objectives on page 2 of the course syllabus. Students are referred to these objectives. This assignment may be based on qualitative methods, quantitative methods, or both types of methods. It may focus on process, outcomes or both process and outcomes in program evaluation.

Guidelines for grading this assignment will include the following:

The student:

1. Defined a researchable (i.e., can collect empirical data), relevant (i.e., will increase understanding/open new lines of inquiry/important to policy and practice evaluation) social problem
2. Formulated clear, concise research questions and goals
3. Stated the significance of the problem (i.e., how it will contribute to policy/practice)
4. Presented a critical, selective literature review relating to the problem
5. Use the literature to formulate assumptions/hypotheses
6. Included a method section with:
   - Research design and Sample description
   - Recruitment of participants
   - Description of data collection techniques
   - Conceptualization and operationalization of measures (i.e., process and outcome; proximal and distal)
   - Discussion on measurement reliability and validity
   - Method of analyses
7. Results
8. Discussion (i.e., integration of results and prior literature, threats to internal/external validity, limitations, strengths, ethical issues, implications for policy, practice and future evaluation research)
9. Writing style: Clear, concise and coherent writing; use of active voice; related ideas are together (clauses and phrases are placed close to words they modify); relatively free of redundant, awkward and colloquial words/phrases; accurate spelling; good punctuation
10. Paper falls within 20-25 (double-spaced) pages excluding references
11. Paper submitted on due dates for Part 1 and Part 2
12. Student presented evaluation project

Examples of Evaluation Projects Conducted by Students in Fall02 Class:

1. A comparative analysis of elder abuse law in three states: Michigan, Illinois, Indiana
2. Assessing the benefits and costs of Michigan’s family preservation vs. out-of-home placement
3. An analysis of service effectiveness: clients’ perspectives
4. Speaker’s bureaus: one way to counteract biphobia, heterosexism, homophobia and transphobia
5. The effect of Michigan domestic violence laws on Washtenaw County’s domestic violence project/Safe House
6. Evaluation of discharge outcomes at Christ Child House
7. Strong families/safe children: What is it?
8. Evaluating the effectiveness of anti-gang law enforcement interventions
9. Cost-benefit analysis of part-time child care workers: a view into one agency