EVALUATION IN SOCIAL WORK

SW 683, Section 004
Winter, 2011
Office Hours: by appointment

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When and Where: Thursday 2:00-5:00
SSW 2752

Course Description:

This course will cover beginning level evaluation that builds on basic evaluation skills as a method of assessing social work practice and strengthening clients, communities and their social programs as well as the systems that serve clients and communities. It 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.

NOTE: The term “research” will not be used during this course

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 dimensions of diversity (ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender [including gender identity and gender expression], marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation). 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 within 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 strategies that promote involvement of practice/policy communities in disseminating the results of evaluation activities in order to foster changes in programs/policies.

The main goal of the course is to provide students with the practical skills required to conduct program evaluations. This course will focus on teaching these skills.

Course Design:

The course will use multiple pedagogical methods: short lectures, participatory discussions, written assignments, student presentations, and experiential exercises. 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 dimensions of diversity (ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender [including gender identity and gender expression], marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation) 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 participants of evaluation 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 that are 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.

Intensive Focus Statement on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity, and Social Justice (PODS):

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

This course will emphasize the relationship of the NASW’S Code of Ethics, specifically those sections pertaining to the core values and ethical principles of social work as well as the standards of research and evaluation that under gird ethical behavior in the conduct of scientific evaluations. Additionally, this course will emphasize the relationship between the NASW’S Code of Ethics and other ethical codes governing evaluation research such as the Nuremberg Code, Declaration of Helsinki, 1974 National Research Act (PL93-348) and the 1996 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Course Assignments and Expectations:
Students are expected to complete all reading assignments prior to the designated class and to use them as the basis for informed participation in class discussions. **POP QUIZES ON THE READINGS CAN BE EXPECTED PERIODICALLY.**

It is expected that students will submit work promptly. 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 serious 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 written assignments, weighted equally; class discussion, and student presentations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Discussion Facilitation (Date to be assigned)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student presentations (Date to be assigned)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Specification (Due 2/10/11)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measurement Critique (Due 2/24/11)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sampling and Research Design Plan (Due 3/11/11)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (Due 4/21/11)</td>
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**Class Discussion Facilitation:** Each student will take responsibility for developing questions that critique the assigned articles for one class. These questions should be distributed at the beginning of class and the student will lead the class discussion.

**Student Presentations:** Students will be asked to present to the class their progress on such topics as specification of their program, measurement, sampling, etc. Presentations will occur the class before the written assignments are due (2/10; 2/24; 3/17; 4/21). Assignment of student presenters will be made the preceding week. Volunteers will be asked to present; however, if there are no volunteers, the instructor will assign presenters.

Five students will present their work during the last hour of the class. Each will have a maximum of 8 minutes for their presentation, with four minutes reserved for questions and discussion.

**Program Specification:** Students will work with their field instructor or with the course Instructor to select a program or problem within the agency for evaluation.
If the student has any questions regarding the “fit” of their program
evaluation to the goals of the course, he/she should discuss this with the
instructor. 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 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 instrument’s directness, reactivity, sensitivity to change and ease of
administration and completion.

Sampling and Research Design Plan: Students will 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 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 incorporate 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.
Also, 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 at each stage of the evaluation process.

Note that a “Model” of each of these sections combined into a final report can be found on CTools in the Model Report Folder. An example of a published Program Evaluation can be found in the folder: REACH OUT project evaluation. The name of the file is “REACH OUT empirical paper”. In the same folder you can find a step-by-step guide to implementing the program in a real-world agency (“REACH Action Guide Draft”).

All written assignments will be discussed in detail in class prior to their due date. Assignments are due at the beginning of the designated class period – late papers will be accepted only at the instructor’s discretion. Papers must be handed to the Instructor. Papers must also be sent in Word format to the Instructor’s email address (lburgio@umich.edu) on the date they are due. Papers should not be submitted on CTools. Papers will not be graded until both paper and Word copies are submitted to the Instructor.

Since each assignment relates to an important step in the evaluation process, and builds on the assignment that precedes it, student 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 of the paper.

All assignments must be typed, double spaced, and use appropriate American Psychological Association 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 and the use of proper grammar and spelling.

Grading Criteria:

Each assignment is given a letter grade determined by 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) a grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of the assignments, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement; (6) grades between C- 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.

Final grades will be determined by adding the items on the top of page 4. Issues of student attendance and participation in class will also be factored into this score after this calculation has been completed.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY
Academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to university regulations. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, giving/receiving information on an exam, having unauthorized possession of exams, submitting another person’s work as your own (“turnitin.com” will be used for this purpose), tampering with the work of another student, or illegally removing material from the library.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION
If you are in need of special assistance or classroom material because of a documented disability, please contact the instructor so that arrangements can be made to accommodate your needs in the best possible manner. Dr. Burgio encourages meeting with him separately, outside of class, if additional problems are encountered or if the student requires additional assistance.

Class Structure
The class will be segmented into three hourly intervals:
1. The first hour will be the instructor’s lecture
2. The second hour will consist of student-led discussion of assigned articles
3. The third hour will focus on increasing practical evaluation skills. This will be done in two ways. First, students will be asked to present to the class their progress on such topics as specification of their program, measurement, sampling, etc. There are numerous steps in conducting a program evaluation, and it is critical that students do not fall behind. By presenting their ideas, students will receive valuable feedback from their peers; also, the knowledge that they can be asked at any time to present their ideas (with one week notice), students will be more likely to keep up with their assignments. Second (and time allowing), during classes when the students are not giving presentations the instructor will provide a practical demonstration from his own research that reflects the topic being discussed in class that day. Students will be guided through the steps of a single program evaluation (REACH OUT) from beginning to end.

Required Text:

All text and journal article assignments are required reading.

The text is available through the University of Michigan book stores. The supplemental and required articles are available on CTools.

Topical Outline (an asterisk indicates readings for class discussion):

Jan. 6 Introductions and Course Overview
Instructor’s synopsis of the REACH program Evaluation (presentation)

Jan. 13 Assessing the Need for a Program, Stakeholders, and Ethics
Readings

This paper will be discussed by the class. Students will be expected to generate 3 examples both from this chapter and from their work in agencies showing how mismeasurement can have adverse consequences for clients and society as a whole.

*Royse, Thyer, & Padgett, Chapter 1 (Introduction), Chapter 2 (Ethical Issues in Program Evaluation, and 3 (Needs Assessment)

**Jan. 20** Dissecting and Specifying Programs
(Hint: The instructor considers this one of the most important chapters in the book).

Readings
*Weiss: Chapter 3 (Understanding the Program)


  *Social Work with Groups, 20: 71-88.*


**Students assigned for presentations next week**

**Jan. 27:** Measurement: Part 1

Readings
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett, Chapter 11 (Measurement Tools) and Chapter 12 (Illustrations of Instruments)


See also Sally Haines’ U-M/SW website: Locating Psychological & Educational Tests and Measures http://guides.lib.umich.edu/content.php?pid=29265

**Student presentations on their Program Specification**

Feb 3  Measurement: Part 2

(Program Specification Written Assignment Due)

Readings
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett: Chapter 7 (Client Satisfaction)


**Students assigned for presentations next week**

Feb. 10  Formative and Process Evaluation

Readings
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett: Chapter 5 (Formative and Process Evaluation)


**Student presentations on their Measurement Strategy**

**Feb. 17**  
Sampling  
(Measurement Written Assignment Due)

**Readings**  
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett: Chapter 8


**Feb. 24:**  
Group Research Designs

**Readings**  
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett: Chapter 9 (Group Research Designs)


**Students assigned for presentations next week**

**March 3:** Spring Break

**March 10**  Single Subject Research Designs

**Readings**
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett: Chapter 6 (Single System Research Designs)


**Student presentations of their Sampling and Research Design**

**March 17:** Qualitative Methods *(Sampling and Research Design Written Assignment Due)*

**Readings**
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett: Chapter 4 (Qualitative Methods in Evaluation)


**March 24:** Data Analysis

**Readings**  
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett: Chapter 14 (Data Analysis)


**March 31:** Writing and Presenting Evaluation Proposals and Results

**Readings**  
Royse, Thyer, & Padgett: Chapter 15 (Writing Evaluation Proposals, Reports, and Journal Articles)


**Students assigned for presentations next week**

**April 7:** Cost and Pragmatic Issues in Evaluation

**Readings**


**Student presentations of their Final Papers**

April 14: (Final Paper Due). There will be no class. Papers should be submitted to the instructor via his email address. You must confirm that the Instructor is in receipt of the final paper.

April 29: Grades Due to Registrar