SW 685: METHODS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION
Fri: 2-5pm, School of Social Work 1804

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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.

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 to 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.

Course Objectives:

At the completion of the course, students should 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. Apply knowledge of research ethics and human subjects requirements.

5. Identify and explain challenges related to generalizability, representative sampling, and replication.

6. Analyze data in SPSS

7. Generate evaluation reports using the criteria and concepts above.

**Themes:**

**Theme Relation to Multiculturalism and Diversity**

Students will develop the capacity to identify ways in which the diversity dimensions "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 and are impacted by various methods of program evaluation.

**Theme Relation to Social Justice**

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 that 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.

**Theme Relation to Promotion, Prevention, and Treatment & 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.

**Expectations:**

To facilitate your learning, as well as the learning of others in the class, please:

- be on time; be attentive during class; and treat others with respect
- come to each class prepared and ready to learn
- allow for an open dialogue and encourage others in the class to express their opinions
- ask questions when you do not understand a topic that was covered in class and seek help if you feel like you are falling behind
- complete all assignments and submit them on time
Relevant Policies:

1. Religious Holidays. Students who observe a religious holiday on the same day as class will have access to the class materials covered that day. Students are expected to notify the instructor if they plan to miss class. The official UM policy on religious holidays and a list of possible conflicts with classes can be found at: http://www.provost.umich.edu/calendar/religious_holidays.html

2. Learning Needs and Disabilities. Students with specialized learning needs are encouraged to make an appointment with the instructor to discuss the necessary arrangements. If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please submit the disability certificate prior to the Drop/Add date. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.

3. Attendance. The School of Social Work attendance policy can be found in the Student Guide. You are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the entire class session. If you plan to arrive late, or leave early, please notify me in advance. If cannot be in class due to an emergency, I ask that you contact me as soon afterwards as you can so that we can discuss how to address any missed work.

4. Deadline Expectations. Project assignment due dates are listed in the syllabus. All project assignments must be submitted on the last lecture. Assignments submitted more than two days late will be graded down one full grade (points are calculated by assignment). Exceptions will need prior permission of the instructor.

5. Grading System. A 100-point system is used. At the end of the semester, the points earned will be translated into letter grades according to the following formula:

   A+ 97-100
   A  94-96
   A- 91–93
   B+ 87-90
   B  84-86
   B- 81-83
   C+ 77-80
   C  74-76
   C- 70-73
   D <69 (no credit)

6. Incompletes. Incompletes are not granted unless it can be demonstrated that it would be unfair to hold the student to the normal expectations of the course. The student must formally request an incomplete with the instructor prior to the final weeks of class. Please review the Student Guide section on Ethical Conduct in the University Environment. This section addresses plagiarism, harassment and discrimination policies.
Assignments:

Please see handout for the final class assignment. This assignment has multiple components with due dates throughout the semester.

In addition to the final assignment, the following is due in Week 9:

**Design Proposal (10 points).** For this assignment, please work independently to develop a 1-page summary of a mixed methods or case study evaluation relevant to a current or previous practicum or service opportunity you have had. In your summary, describe the objectives and evaluation question, methods, and potential limitations. Then, provide an explanation (1-2 paragraphs) of why you believe a mixed methods or case study approach would be well-suited to the evaluation question you have in mind. This assignment will be graded as credit/no credit. Late submissions and revisions will not be accepted.

**Laptop Computers:**

In Sessions 5-7, we will work with SPSS to enter and analyze data. Please bring your personal laptop computer to class on these days. You will need to have SPSS installed on your laptop. To purchase and download SPSS, go here: [http://computershowcase.umich.edu/item.php?cat=72&id=4352](http://computershowcase.umich.edu/item.php?cat=72&id=4352). The cost for students is $42.

**Required Text:**

There is one required book for the course. You may purchase either the 3rd or 4th edition:


**OR**


**Recommended Texts:**

Although they are not required, we will draw on content from these two recommended texts. If you are not familiar with SPSS, the Cronk book will be a useful resource:


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>In-Class Exercises and Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>9/7</td>
<td>Introductions; course overview; orientation to evaluation; planning for the class project</td>
<td>Skim Royse Chapters 1-5; Wholey Chapters 6-7; read Royse Chapter 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>Planning and designing evaluations using logic models and theories of change</td>
<td>Wholey Chapters 1 and 3; Mackinnon, 2011</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>Identifying and developing data collection instruments</td>
<td>Royse Chapters 6 and 7; skim Royse Chapter 9</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>9/28</td>
<td>Collecting data for program monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>Wholey et al. Chapters 11-18 read the section introduction on pp. 237-242 and then choose one of the eight chapters in this section to read and summarize for class</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>Research ethics and human subjects considerations; introduction to SPSS and entering data</td>
<td>Royse Chapter 3; Cronk Chapters 1 and 2</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>Analyzing and interpreting descriptive statistics; graphing data in SPSS</td>
<td>Royse Chapter 13; Cronk Chapters 3 and 4</td>
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1.0 Evaluation Assignment (Class Project)

Overview. The primary assignment for this course is a team project that has you and your classmates work in partnership with a community agency to develop an evaluation plan. While it is not required that your group conduct the evaluation, there will be opportunities to engage with the agency around certain components of the project. Details will be worked out on a case-by-case basis. The goal is to have you learn about the process of planning an evaluation, while also providing an important service to the agency.

Each team will be assigned a primary contact at a partnering agency. This person will be available throughout the semester to provide materials and to answer questions from your group. It is expected that you will have at least 3 contacts with the agency during the semester. One or more of these contacts must be face-to-face either in-person or using online video-conferencing technology.

All members of your team must contribute equally and share in the preparation of materials for each component of the project. I will be available to help organize your work and to address concerns or issues with your team, if there is a need.

Structure of the Assignment. The assignment as four components, each of which will be graded for completion when it is turned in (due dates listed on the course outline and table of readings and assignments). Dates assigned to each component are intended to help you structure your work so that all components of the assignment will be completed by the end of the term. To receive credit, you must hand in assignments when they are due. All members of your team will receive the same grade. In most class sessions, you will be allowed time to work with your team on this assignment so that group meetings outside of class are minimized.

Revisions. Once each component is submitted, I will review your team’s work and provide feedback. If revisions are required, I will indicate that in my written comments. No credit will be given until all revisions are completed and approved by me. You may submit revisions throughout the semester, although I encourage you to revise your work promptly after I return comments. Points assigned to each component are listed below.

Components of the Assignment:

1.1 Project Overview (10 points). DUE Week 4. Please work with your team to develop a written overview of your evaluation project, including a description of the agency, the program to be evaluated, and the questions that will guide your evaluation.

1.2 Program Logic Model (20 points). DUE Week 5. Developing or refining a logic model is a critical step to planning and executing an evaluation project. Please work with your team to
develop a logic model that shows the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes for the program you have chosen for evaluation. If the agency already has a logic model, please review/summarize it and identify areas where refinements may be needed. Comments should be documented and explained in writing. A copy of the logic model should be submitted with your summary.

1.3 Design and Data Collection Methodology (20 points). DUE Week 7. With your team, list the guiding questions of your evaluation plan, design, sampling strategy (if relevant), and data collection instruments (e.g., survey, focus groups, interviews). Note: Measures and methods described in this section should align to the logic model/summary you submit for 1.2. If proposing a qualitative approach, explain the method and provide a rationale for the method you chose. If proposing a quantitative (e.g., survey) approach, select an instrument and explain why you chose that instrument. For both qualitative and quantitative approaches, elaborate on how you would analyze your data after it is collected.

1.4 Design Challenge (10 points). DUE Week 8. In the course of planning an evaluation, design challenges are common. Please present a design challenge that your team has encountered in working on your final project, including but not limited to issues related to sampling, measurement, or data collection/analysis. You may also pose questions about the overall logic of your evaluation plan, or even broader questions about the role of evaluation in the agency you’ve been assigned. The goal is for your team to have an opportunity to present, discuss, and engage your classmates in a problem-solving exercise that will help you move along in your work. Please submit your design challenge in writing (1-2 paragraphs).

1.5 Contributions and Limitations (10 points). DUE Week 11. Work with your team to enumerate the potential contributions of this work for the agency and its relevance to social work practice more generally. Please also list and describe any limitations of the evaluation you have proposed, including threats to internal and external validity, if relevant.

1.6 Final Report and Presentation (20 points). DUE Week 13. With your team, provide a final report and presentation to the class. Your report should include: (1) a brief (1-2 paragraphs) overview of the project, including a description of the agency/program being evaluated, (2) purpose of evaluation (1-2 paragraphs), (3) rationale and methodology, including the proposed design, sampling strategy, and measures (1-2 pages), (4) contributions of the work to the agency and field more generally (1 page), and (5) possible limitations or challenges of the evaluation strategy (1 page). Please also discuss recommendations for strengthening the evaluation design and provide recommendations for future planning (1 page). Total length of the report should be approximately 6 pages. Your presentation should highlight points from each section of the report and be about 20 mins in length. We will allow for 10 mins of questions after each presentation.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading(s)</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. 10/19</td>
<td>Analyzing and interpreting inferential statistics in SPSS</td>
<td>Wholey et al. Chapter 20; Cronk Chapters 5 and 6</td>
<td>ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1.3 Design and Data Collection Methodology</td>
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<td>Analyzing data in SPSS (inferential statistics) using data from Session 5 [**laptop and SPSS software required]</td>
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<td>8. 10/26</td>
<td>Anticipating and overcoming challenges in evaluation</td>
<td>Wholey et al., Chapter 23</td>
<td>ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1.4 Design Challenge</td>
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<td>9. 11/2</td>
<td>Case study and mixed methods approaches</td>
<td>Wholey et al. Chapter 8; Kratochwill et al., 2010; Creswell &amp; Clark, 2011</td>
<td>ASSIGNMENT DUE: 2.0 Mixed Methods</td>
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<td>10. 11/9</td>
<td>Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses</td>
<td>Wholey et al. Chapter 21; Henry et al., 2007; Kuo et al., 2009</td>
<td>Class project planning</td>
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<td>11. 11/16</td>
<td>Meta-analyses and systematic reviews</td>
<td>Wholey et al. Chapter 22; Durlak et al. 2011; Steinka-Fry et al., 2013</td>
<td>ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1.5 Contributions and Limitations</td>
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<td>12. 11/30</td>
<td>Multisite and community-embedded evaluation designs</td>
<td>Wholey et al., Chapters 10 (and 11)* Chapter 11 available in 4th edition only</td>
<td>Class project planning</td>
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<td>13. 12/7</td>
<td>Team presentations</td>
<td>No readings assigned</td>
<td>ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1.6 Final Report and Presentation</td>
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