Course Syllabus

Course title: Methods of Program Evaluation  
Course #/term: SW 685 Winter 2020  
Time and place: Thursday, 2pm-5pm, Room 3816 SSW  
Credit hours: 3  
Instructor: Sue Ann Savas, MSW  
Pronouns: She/her/hers  
Contact info: E-mail: ssavas@umich.edu  
Cell: Phone: 734-649-6776  
Office Hours: SSWB 3848. Tuesday and Wednesday 10am-11am  
And by appointment

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
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.** (Practice Behaviors 3.SPE, 6.SPE, 10b.SPE)

2. **Demonstrate knowledge of the concepts of measurement, reliability, and validity; use these concepts for selecting variables for evaluation.** (Practice Behaviors 2.SPE, 10.a.SPE, 10.d.SPE)

3. **Devise basic designs for evaluation, and contrast their relative advantages and disadvantages to other designs.** (Practice Behaviors 3.SPE, 6.SPE, 9.SPE)

4. **Identify the issues involved in generalizing evaluation results, and devise representative sampling plans and replications for evaluating practices and programs.** (Practice Behaviors 2.SPE, 4.SPE, 5.SPE, 10.c.SPE)

5. **Generate evaluation reports using the criteria and concepts above.** (Practice Behaviors 10.c.SPE, 10.d.SPE)

6. **Discuss common ethical concerns related to program evaluation.** (Practice Behaviors 1.SPE, 2.SPE)

Course Design
This course will include a range of pedagogical methods – short lectures, participatory discussions, written assignments, student presentations, and experiential exercises. Students will have an opportunity to select journal articles of interest that are related to course content and research projects. Guest speakers will be invited to address special topics on evaluating programs. The extent of computer use and use of statistical packages throughout this course will be determined by the individual student when conducting analyses for projects.

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.

**Relationship 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 reviewed as issues that evaluators may be confronted with in program/policy evaluation.

**Teaching philosophy, approach**

I use an engaged active learning approach through community evaluation projects. In addition to the course objectives and the CSWE competencies, we work to develop the following University of Michigan engaged learning student outcomes: (1) self-agency and innovation, (2) collaboration, communication, and teamwork, (3) social/civic responsibility and ethical reasoning, (4) intercultural engagement, (5) creativity.

**Community Partner, Class Sessions at the Agency**

The class will partner with the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living to advance their evaluation measurement and outcome reporting system. The agency identified five areas of focus: (1) Overall strategy for documenting effectiveness, (2) Employment, (3) Information and Referral, (4) Advocacy, and (5) School-based disability workshops. The instructor will hold three lecture sessions at the Ann Arbor agency location to students, CIL staff and consumers. The agency will establish an evaluation work group. They will partner with small teams of students assigned to one of the four program areas. Students will complete a logic model of the program, identify outcome expectations, assess current outcome measurement activity, improve collection through a pilot, analyze outcome data and report results using an impact reporting template. All of the data, the tools, and the procedures developed as a part of the course belong to the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living. The process and products are designed to build agency and program-level evaluation capacity, while advancing the students evaluation competencies.

**Textbook & other readings**

**Required:**

**Other Text Resources:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Readings on Canvas</th>
<th>Relevant Resources on Canvas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L1 Jan 9, 2020</td>
<td>Introduction to course</td>
<td>• NASW Ethical Standards: 5.02 Evaluation and Research</td>
<td>• Student Evaluation Skills Assessment</td>
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| L2 Jan 16, 2020 | Agency and program discovery steps and results to date, logic modeling, interview protocol for agency visit | • The Performance Imperative: A Framework for Social Sector Excellence (2018). Leap of Reason Ambassadors Community.  
  • Logic Model Template and Interview Guide  
  • Council on Accreditation process and service standards |
| L4 Jan 30, 2020 | Review draft discovery reports, Scope of work by project team, Gannt charts, evaluation planning | • Mertens and Wilson Text, Chapter 1. Introduction to Evaluation, Terms and Ethical Considerations, 3-32.  
  • Mertens and Wilson Text, Chapter 7: Working with Stakeholders, Establishing the Context and the Evaluand, 219-260.  
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<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td>Feb 6, 2020 Discovery Report due</td>
<td>Review survey collection tools, datasets, standardized scales, reliability and validity</td>
<td>- Mental Measurement Yearbook (online)</td>
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<td>- Mertens and Wilson Text, Chapter 6: Transformative Paradigm and the Social Justice Branch, 161-216</td>
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<td>- Toolkit for Conducting Focus Groups, OMNI</td>
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<td>- Learning Evaluation Theory: Brinkerhoff’s Success Case Method, WatershedLRS.com</td>
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<td>L8</td>
<td>Feb 20, 2020 Lecture at CIL</td>
<td>Outcome data collection best practices, sampling, and generalizing results</td>
<td>- Toolkit for Conducting Focus Groups, OMNI</td>
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<td>School of Education Computer Lab</td>
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<td>- Mertens and Wilson Text, Chapter 11: Stakeholders, Participants and Sampling, 409-437.</td>
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<td>- Mertens and Wilson Text, Chapter 12: Data Analysis and Interpretation, 439-470.</td>
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<td>March 5</td>
<td>Winter Break</td>
<td>No class</td>
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• Evergreen, S. (2016). Kauffman Evaluation Reporting Guide             | • Evergreen Data Website  
• Schusterman Foundation Data Playbook                                   |
| L12        | Report and Presentation Preparation                                   | • Mertens and Wilson Text, Chapter 14: Meta-evaluation and Project Management, 511-534.  
• Ruff, K. and Olsen, S. (2016). The next frontier in social impact measurement isn’t measurement at all. Stanford Social Innovation Review. | • Small group work session to complete final deliverables, reports, data sets  
• Robin Hood Foundation, counterfactuals  
• Return on Investment calculator.                                       |
| L13        | Student Evaluation Teams present draft final reports for feedback     | • No readings                                                                       |                              |
Final Evaluation Practice Paradigm paper due April 22 (exam week).

Assignments

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Phase I Discovery Report, 15%</td>
<td>Lecture #5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase II Data Collection Deliverables, 15%</td>
<td>Lecture #9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase III Final Impact Report, 30%</td>
<td>Lecture #14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation Practice Paradigm, 20%</td>
<td>Exam Week, April 22</td>
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<td>Course Engagement and Attendance, 20%</td>
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Students will work on assignments in class. Students will have an opportunity to gather feedback on their deliverables in class from their group members and/or the instructor. Individual student work products/assignments will be uploaded to canvas for grading.

Grading

Final grades are based on 100 percentage points. Letter grades are assigned to point totals according to the following schedule:

- **A+**: 100%
- **A**: 94-99%
- **A-**: 90-93%
- **B+**: 88-90%
- **B**: 84-87%
- **B-**: 81-83%
- **C+**: 78-80%
- **C**: 74-77%
- **C-**: 71-73%
- **D+**: 68-70%
- **D**: 64-67%
- **D-**: 60-63%
- **E**: <60%

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<tr>
<td>Course Engagement and Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery Report</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Analysis</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Impact Report</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation Practice Paradigm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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A brief note about grading: Your grade will be a reflection of both your effort and the quality of your engagement and assignments.

Course Engagement and Attendance, 20%
I expect you to be engaged in all in-class activities, including contributing comments and questions in class discussions. Some people naturally speak up in class more than others. I recommend that if you are someone who is comfortable talking a lot, you consider “stepping back,” and if you are less comfortable talking a lot, you consider “stepping up.” However, your engagement score is not predicated on the number of times you speak in class; rather I will focus on your participation in activities and whether it is obvious that you are engaged during class. (Hint: using devices for anything other than classwork ≠ paying attention in class.) Misuse of electronic devices in class will be reflected in your grade.

Class attendance is imperative for both your own learning and the learning of your peers, and certainly for my learning. I expect students to attend class. If you need to miss a class, please contact me in advance to let me know. Excessive absences (more than 2) will result in a lower grade. Routine tardiness will also reduce the attendance grade. If personal or professional circumstances require your absence from more than one class, please contact me as soon as possible. Note that, even if you are absent from a class, you are still responsible for submitting any assignments due that day.

Please review the Policy on Class Attendance found in the MSW Student Guide.

Phase I Discovery Report:
- Individually, students will write a report (3-4 pages, 1.15 spacing, 1 inch margins) documenting the first phase of the community evaluation project.
- The report will document the Discovery Phase of the community evaluation project.
- Students will describe the agency, funding, and evaluation expectations.
- Students will attach their program logic model, including expected outcomes.
- The report will include a review of the challenges with current outcome measurement and reporting system and a plan for proceeding with the work.
- Students are also expected to attach the metric matrix, gantt chart, brief literature review of outcome expectations, and results from initial key informant interviews.
- The report should reflect professional report writing style and format.

Phase II Data Collection Deliverables:
- Individually, students will develop a one-page snapshot describing the data collection process and results.
- The slide should include the purpose of the program, the target population, catchment area, the services provided, program length, expected outcomes.
- The slide should include relevant data results presented using data visualization principles. Data results could include numbers served, description of the participants, service utilization rates, satisfaction levels, and outcomes attained.
- The slide will be presented to the CIL evaluation team.

Phase III Final Impact Report:
- As group, the students will develop a slide-doc report using data visualization principles and guidance from the Kauffman Foundation Guide to Evaluation Reporting.
• The report will be submitted to the CIL evaluation team for data interpretation and planning.
• The report will reflect the team’s evaluation activity and results, along with other project products (handouts, datasets, surveys, protocols).
• The agency-based members of the evaluation team need to recognized on the deliverables.
• The deliverables need to be presented in a professional style and format.

Evaluation Practice Paradigm:
• Individually, students will write a 2-3 page reflection paper (single spaced, 12 pt font, 1 inch margins) identifying the paradigm and approach to evaluation that best reflects their intended practice plan.
• Look into various paradigms, such as positivist, pragmatic, constructivist, and transformative. Which aspects of these paradigms resonate with your evaluation practice plan?
• Look into various approaches to evaluation such as utilization-focused, developmental, empowerment, emergent. Which principles of practice resonate with your evaluation practice plan?
• Content from text chapters and readings expected, with references.

Late Assignments
Assignments are due at or before the dates listed on the syllabus and on Canvas, except where noted. Please submit all work on time. Except where indicated, late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for the first day past the due date and time, and a full letter grade for each additional day thereafter. I am not inclined to waive this policy, though I do understand there may be exceptional circumstances.

Grade Dispute Process
If you believe you have been graded unfairly on an assignment, I ask that you please wait 24 hours before contacting me. In general, I do accept challenges to grades. However, challenges must be in writing (not verbal); must be specific, and must be based on substantive arguments (or mathematical errors) as opposed to nebulous references to “fairness.” I reserve the right to re-read, and re-grade, the work in its entirety in the case of a challenge. The grade may be adjusted upwards or downwards.

Expectations for Written Work
Development of professional writing is a goal of the course, and I will consider writing quality in grading. Proofread written work carefully; I strongly recommend that you have a colleague read your documents for clarity, typos, omitted words, etc.

Purdue University’s OWL website https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/ is an excellent resource for general writing and formatting advice.

The Sweetland Writing Center (SWC) is located at 1310 North Quad (corner of W. Washington and State St.). Graduate students are eligible for seven sessions per semester. For help with your paper, please free to consult them for writing support. They can help you develop your argument, improve your paper organization, correct grammar mistakes, and craft effective prose. You can register with them on line and schedule an appointment: Website: http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/

In addition, social work students can receive individual writing assistance from Betsy Williams, Writing Skills and Study Skills Coordinator, through the UM SSW Career Services office. Students may schedule
an appointment and bring a draft of their paper (at any stage) along with the text of the assignment and any questions or concerns they may have. Email ssw-cso@umich.edu or call 734-763-6259. Finally, another resource is the English Language Institute: http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli

Additional Course Information and Resources

Safety and emergency preparedness
All University of Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures and protocols for both inside and outside of the classroom. In the event of possible building closure (i.e. severe weather conditions, public health notices, etc.) you may contact (734)764-7793 for up-to-date school closure information.

Be prepared. Familiarize yourself with the emergency card posted next to the phone in every classroom/meeting room. Review the information on the emergency evacuation sign (located nearest the door) and locate at least two emergency exits nearest the classroom.

Each SSW classroom is equipped with door locks. Pressing the button (located on the door handle) to lock the door from within the room.

If you are concerned about your ability to exit the building in the case of an emergency, contact the Office of Student Services (Room 1748) at (734) 936-0961 or via email at ssw-ADA compliance@umich.edu.

All University of Michigan students, faculty and staff are required to familiarize themselves with emergency procedures and protocols for both inside and outside of the classroom. Click here to read more about the School of Social Work’s emergency policies and procedures.

Additional resources:
- Report a hate crime or bias-related incident
- Register for UM Emergency Alerts
- View the annual Campus Safety Statement

Mental health and well being
The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and well being of all students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact:
  - Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312
    - The SSW embedded CAPS Counselor is Meghan Shaughnessy-Mogill, LLMSW. She is dedicated to supporting the wellbeing of social work students and the SSW community and offers short-term, solution-focused individual therapy. All services are free and confidential. Contact her at (734) 763-7894 or via email at mshaughm@umich.edu.
  - University Health Service (UHS) at (734) 764-8320
  - Additional campus health and wellness resources

The Office of Student Services’ Health and Wellness Program provides supportive services to MSW students which promote wellness, self care and maintenance of a healthy academic and mental health balance, as well as to increase disability awareness.
Teaching evaluations
The best way for me to learn how students are experiencing the class is...from you! Please fill out the mid-semester survey and the end of semester evaluations. You are “paying it forward” for students who come after you by completing the end of semester evaluations. I take them very seriously and adjust my courses accordingly. Teaching evaluations are administered via Canvas and will be emailed to students during the last weeks of classes. Student identity is completely anonymous, and instructors cannot view evaluation reports until after grades are submitted.

Proper use of names and pronouns
All students will be referred to by the names and pronouns they use (e.g. she, they, ze, he). If you have a name that differs from the one that appears on the roster, please inform me before the second class period so that I use your correct name and pronouns. Students can designate their personal pronouns on the class roster via Wolverine Access: Student Business > Campus Personal Information > Gender Identity.

There are two inclusive restrooms in the SSW building: room 1784 (1st floor, near Registrar’s Office) and B833T (Lower Level). Click here for the Spectrum Center’s map of gender inclusive restrooms on campus.

Accommodations for students with disabilities
If you are in need of an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. Additional information about accommodations for students with disabilities, as well as a list of appropriate accommodation forms, is available here. Please present the appropriate paperwork at least two weeks prior to the need for the accommodation (test, project, etc.).

For more information, contact:
Services for Students with Disabilities
G-664 Haven Hall | 505 South State St.
(734) 763-3000 | ssdoffice@umich.edu

Religious/spiritual observances
An overview of the process for students who have conflicts with religious observances:
● Students are responsible for work acquired during their absence
● Students will have a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete any academic work
● Reasonable notice must be given to faculty before drop/add deadline of term
● Any concerns or conflicts should be brought to the Dean or Ombudsperson

Please click here to find more information about the University’s policy concerning religious holidays as well as a non-exhaustive list of religious holidays.

Military deployment:
Please click here for more information and resources for students called to Active Duty status while enrolled at the University of Michigan.
Writing skills and expectations: Strong writing and communication skills are essential to students’ academic success and professional career. The Writing Coordinator for the School of Social Work is open to meeting with students during any phase of the writing process. The Writing Coordinator’s office is housed within the Career Services Office. The Career Services Office also offers workshops, resources and individual assistance to help improve skills and confidence in written communication.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact:
SSW Writing Assistance
Career Services (Room 1696; (734) 763-6259; ssw-cso@umich.edu)

Academic integrity and plagiarism
Plagiarism is prohibited in any academic writing at the University of Michigan. More information on academic integrity policies can be found in the MSW Student Guide.