



# SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

<b>Course title:</b>	Data Visualization
<b>Course #/term:</b>	SW - 672, 001, Winter, 2023
<b>Time and place:</b>	Wednesday, 9am - Noon, B798
<b>Credit hours:</b>	3
<b>Instructor:</b>	Brian Perron, PhD
<b>Pronouns:</b>	he, his, him
<b>Contact info:</b>	Slack
<b>Office:</b>	SSW-2728
<b>Office hours:</b>	By appointment

## 1. Course Statement

**NOTE:** *This syllabus is used for administrative purposes. Please refer to the CANVAS for all course-related policies, schedule, and assignments.*

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### a. Course description

In an era of evidence based practice, community workers, advocates, and evaluators will likely find that they need to interpret and visualize data from a wide variety of sources. Understanding, interpreting and visualizing data can make the difference in successfully or unsuccessfully advocating for communities, clients or programs, and for understanding the impact of programs on clients. Increasingly, data relevant to community, participant and client well-being are available from a broad range of sources, whether those be databases of volunteers and donors, the Census, the World Bank, in addition to many others.

### b. Course content

Students will learn some of the major analytic and quantitative tools used by practitioners in assessing or evaluating human service programs or systems, which include a range of specific programs. The theme of this course is how to increase the rationality of the planning, analysis, and evaluation process, particularly of programs intended to serve the underprivileged or oppressed populations. Students will learn that human service organizations include a wide variety of programs of diverse size and complexity, with respect to their activities and goals.

This course will impart skills which can be applied at various levels of analysis in different contexts.

### c. Course objectives and competencies

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

- 1) Demonstrate beginning level competence in the use of some major analytical tools that are most commonly used to assess and evaluate complex systems of services.
- 2) Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of two analytical tools and their application in

the human services field.

- 3) Identify the limitations of rational analysis and be able to determine when rational choice processes are desirable and feasible to use.
- 4) Discuss typical ethical concerns related to the use of analytic methods in social policy practice. Describe ways in which diversity dimensions such as "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, as well community of residence" have an effect on the analytical tools that are most commonly used to assess and evaluate complex systems of services.

## Course design

The instructor will use lecture and discussion with students working in teams on contemporary issues. In addition, the instructor will include participatory discussion, written assignments and experiential exercises related to course materials.

### d. Curricular themes

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity:** Students will develop the capacity to identify ways in which diversity dimensions such as "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, as well community of residence" and other forms of social stratification and disenfranchisement influence and are impacted by the social policy practice process.
- **Social Justice and Social Change:** This course will provide students with the capacity to participate in the social policy process and the ability to approach policy analytically by virtue of social work practice and ethics. Students will learn that social work practice and ethics play an important role in shaping the outcome of ongoing policy debates to reflect issues in social justice and change.
- **Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation:** Students will learn that policies in human services are too often implemented in reaction to an issue, not proactively, due to changing social, economic, and political circumstances and influences. Promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation activities are difficult to evaluate and therefore raise special challenges in social policy implementation. Students will be exposed to innovative evaluation techniques (e.g., forecasting and simulation models) that can be used to analyze and evaluate promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation activities prior to the development, implementation, and analysis of any relevant policy issue or initiative.

- Behavioral and Social Science Research: Policies in human services are in a constant state of flux owing to changing social, economic, and political circumstances. Thus, any review of existing policy may be quickly outdated and has limited use as part of the training social work students carry into their careers. Therefore, students will be provided with social science models and theories that can be used as tools to analyze and evaluate any policy issue encountered in the course of their professional activities. Examples of the use of social science in policy development will be presented (e.g. Coleman report on education).

e. Relationship to social work ethics and values

Ethical standards of social work practice (e.g. possibly NASW Code of Ethics) and evaluation practice (Program Evaluation Standards) will be used to review issues commonly confronted in evaluation practice. The ethical themes of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, fidelity, and justice will be particularly emphasized and discussed.

## 2. Class Requirements

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- a. Text and class materials: All class materials are posted on CANVAS
- b. Class schedule: The class schedule will follow the FALL calendar (2022)
- c. Assignments: All class assignments are posted on CANVAS
- d. Grading

**Participation:** Students are expected to attend class at the scheduled time, be sufficiently prepared for class, and actively engage in course activities. Students can supplement their participation efforts by making positive contributions to the course, such as taking and posting notes from course sessions, helping peers solve problems.

**Attendance:** Attendance is a requirement for this course. Given the complications of COVID, students are allowed to miss up to three sessions without any consequence to their grade. Missing more than 2 class sessions will result in the reduction of a full letter grade. Class sessions will start promptly at 2:00pm -- attending class on time is a course requirement. If you attend late, please avoid disrupting any groups that are already in progress

The United States Department of Education requires that academic institutions develop a written credit hour policy that conforms to the definition of a credit hour. More recently the University of Michigan has

instructed us that our School must create such a policy. The School of Social Work definition of a credit hour formalizes compliance with federal expectations and assists with consistency through the School of Social Work. As such, the School of Social Work utilizes a ratio of one hour of classroom instruction to two hours of out-of-class activity. Specifically:

- One credit is equal to approximately 45 hours of total work over the semester.
- Three credits is equal to approximately 135 hours of total work over the semester.

**Accommodations:** If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. 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.

- Religious/spiritual observances
- Military deployment
- Writing skills and expectations
- Academic *integrity and plagiarism*