

The University of Tennessee  
College of Social Work

SW 547: Evaluation Research  
Instructor: Rod Ellis, Ph.D.,

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**Code of Conduct:**

It is the student's responsibility to have read the College of Social Work Ethical Academic and Professional Conduct code that is in the College of Social Work MSSW Handbook ([www.csw.utk.edu](http://www.csw.utk.edu))

**The Honor Statement:**

An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity. (*Hilltopics, 2002*).

**Disability Statement:**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact the University of Tennessee Office of Disability Services at 191 Hoskins Library at (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

**Course Description:**

This course is one of the three required core courses for Management and Community Practice concentration students. It focuses on the history and philosophies, conceptual approaches, techniques and methods, and issues in the practice and utilization of evaluation research as applied to the development and evaluation of social work programs and policies. The course utilizes an experiential format, integrating issues in the course with actual program evaluations in the field.

**Rationale:**

Social workers in a variety of management and community practice roles must be able to understand, appreciate and use diverse research and research methods in order to develop and implement ethical, efficacious, and accountable programs and policies. Toward that end, it is essential that social work administrators and planners have the advanced knowledge and skills necessary to retrieve and critically evaluate existing program and policy research and the tools to carry out advanced evaluations of programs and policies. Therefore, this course focuses on the understanding and application of diverse advanced program and policy research methods

in order to prepare students to provide the most effective policies and programs to clients and to contribute to the program and policy knowledge base of the profession.

## **Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate, through course requirements, the following knowledge and skills:

1. Knowledge of the history, definitions, and philosophies of evaluation research;
2. Skills in accessing relevant evaluation research literature, and how to critically interpret, synthesize, and use it in the development of social work programs and policies;
3. Skills in conducting evaluability assessments, determining program goals and objectives, and determining the needs of populations served;
4. Knowledge of the principles, logic, strengths, and limitations of advanced sampling techniques relevant to evaluation research, and be able to select appropriate sampling strategies for particular evaluation circumstances;
5. Knowledge of the principle, logic, strengths, and limitations of advanced experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, and qualitative research designs, and be able to select appropriate research designs for particular evaluation circumstances;
6. Knowledge of the strengths and limitations of measurement techniques relevant to evaluation research, and be able to select appropriate measurement techniques for particular evaluation circumstances;
7. Skills in data collection, preparation, manipulation, analysis, and presentation of evaluation research data using a microcomputer and statistical software;
8. Skills in appropriate ways to report and disseminate evaluation research results;
9. Knowledge of ethical, political, and organizational factors involved in the conduct of evaluation research;
10. Skills in conducting evaluation research within the ethical guidelines of social work and related codes of ethical behavior;
11. Knowledge of potential biases in evaluation research with minority and disadvantaged groups and the skills to avoid these biases.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### Readings:

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings for the class and to be prepared to participate in class discussions of reading materials.

### Assignments and Evaluation:

The course grade will be based upon three elements:

1. Mid-term Examination (30% of course grade)- The mid-term will include both objective and essay-type questions and will be administered in class.
2. Final Examination (40% of course grade)- The final will include both objective and essay-type questions and will be administered in class. It will cover only materials presented after the mid-term evaluation.
3. Electronic Presentation of Small Group Results (30% of course grade)- During the course of the semester you will work in small groups to conduct an evaluation of an imaginary program that will be provided by the instructor. During the last two class session students will present the results of their work in electronic form (PowerPoint, Corel Presentation, or similar media). Presentations should not exceed 15 minutes.

### C. Textbooks:

Peter Rossi, Howard Freeman, and Mark Lipsey. Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, California: Sage Publications, 1999. [Designated by **RFL** in Course Outline].

United Way of America. Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach. 1996. [Available from the Instructor. Designated by **UW** in Course Outline].

## **CLASS POLICIES:**

1. Students are expected to attend class regularly. They are expected to arrive on time and to remain in class until the completion of the class period. Any student missing more than 3 classes will receive a failing grade.
2. Incompletes will be given only according to the rules specified in the UT Catalogue. Please refer to the catalogue for additional information.
3. All written assignments are due at the beginning of the class period of the date specified on the course outline. Assignments received after that time will be marked down significantly.

4. Assignments are to be completed correctly at the time of submission. The instructor will be available to discuss papers and group assignments until one week prior to their due date. After that no assistance will be given. No papers or assignments may be resubmitted once a grade has been given.

5. Cheating and/or plagiarizing will not be tolerated. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be subject to the disciplinary procedures outlined in the UT Student Handbook.

6. University policy regarding religious holidays will be observed. As stated by the UT student handbook, any student may request to be excused from class to observe a religious day from his/her faith.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **WEEK 1: TUESDAY, AUGUST 27- Introduction to the Course**

Introduction of class members

Review of syllabus

Discussion and questions

#### ***Readings for next class:***

RFL, Chapter 1- Programs, Policies, and Evaluation

UW: Pp. 1 -9- Introduction to Outcome Measurement

Parsons, P. (1998) Evaluation of empowerment practice. In Gutierrez, L., Parsons, R. & Cox, E. (1998) Empowerment in Social Work Practice: A Source Book. Pacific Grove:

Brooks/Cole

### **WEEK 2: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3- Introduction to Program Evaluation**

#### ***Lecture:***

Purpose and history of program evaluation

Overview of evaluation process

Uses of evaluation in practice

Levels of preparation for evaluation

Program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes

Steps to successful evaluation

#### ***Group exercise:***

Identify inputs, activities, and outcomes in case study

Discuss steps for evaluation

#### ***Report on results of group activities***

#### ***Readings for next class:***

RFL- Chapter 2- Tailoring Evaluations

UW- Chapter 1- Get Ready

### **WEEK 3- TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10- Identifying Issues and Formulating Questions**

#### ***Lecture:***

What makes a good evaluation question?

On which questions should the evaluation focus?

Organizing evaluation questions and setting priorities

- Preparing a workgroup
- Identifying outcomes
- Developing a time line
- Distribution of the evaluation plan

*Group exercise:*

- Identify workgroup identities and roles
- Identify possible outcomes
- Develop a time line
- Plan distribution of evaluation plan

*Report on results of group activities*

**Readings for next class:**

**RFL- Chapter 4- Assessing the Need for a Program**

#### **WEEK 4- TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17- Needs Assessment**

*Lecture:*

- Diagnosing social conditions and service needs
- Defining social problems
- Identifying the target population
- Specifying the scope of the problem
- Identifying targets of intervention
- Describing the nature of service needs
- Identifying and describing the delivery system

*Group exercise:*

- Developing a problem statement
- Planning delivery system information gathering
- Identifying targets of intervention

*Report on results of group activities*

#### **WEEK 5- TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24- Expressing and Assessing Program Theory**

*Lecture:*

- The evaluability assessment perspective
- Eliciting and expressing program theory
- Assessing program theory
- Recommendations for changing program theory

*Group exercise:*

- Identifying program theory
- Expressing program theory
- Assessing program theory
- Preparing recommendations for program theory change

*Report on results of group activities*

**Readings for next week:**

**UW- Chapter 2- Choose the Outcomes You Want to Measure**

#### **WEEK 5- TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1 - Expressing and Assessing Program Theory**

*Lecture:*

- Levels of outcomes
- Gathering ideas for outcome measures
- Constructing a logic model
- Issues in defining outcomes
- Prioritizing outcomes
- Getting feedback

*Group exercise:*

- Planning to locate sources of outcome measures
- Accessing some sources
- Constructing a logic model
- Prioritizing
- Planning to get feedback

*Report on results of group activities*

***Readings for next week:***

**RFL-** Chapter 6- Monitoring Program Process and Performance

## **WEEK 6- TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8- Monitoring Program Process and Performance**

*Lecture:*

- What is program monitoring?
- Monitoring service delivery and utilization
- Monitoring organizational functions
- Monitoring program outcomes
- Collecting and analyzing data

*Group exercise:*

- Planning service utilization monitoring
- Planning the data collection process
- Planning for data analysis

*Report on results of group activities*

***Readings for next week:***

**RFL-** Chapter 7- Strategies for Impact Assessment

## **Week 7- TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15- Strategies for Impact Assessment**

*Lecture:*

- What is impact assessment?
- Selection of design
- Qualitative vs. quantitative
- Selecting an impact assessment strategy

*Preparation for the midterm examination*

## **WEEK 8- TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22- Midterm Examination**

*In-class midterm examination*

***Readings for next week:***

RFL- Chapter 8- Randomized Designs for Impact Assessment  
UW- STEP 3- Specify Indicators for Your Outcomes

**WEEK 9- TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29- Indicator Selection and Research Design**

*Lecture:*

Specifying indicators  
Identifying confounding factors  
Units of analysis  
Experimental design

*Group activity:*

Specifying indicators  
Identifying confounding factors

*Reports on group activities:*

***Readings for next week:***

UW- Step 4- Prepare to Collect Data on Your Indicators  
RFL- Chapter 9- Quasi-Experimental Impact Assessments

**WEEK 10- TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5- Data Collection/Quasi-experimental design**

*Lecture:*

Identifying sources of data  
Designing data collection methods  
Developing data collection procedures  
Pretesting your instrument  
Quasi-experimental research design

*Group activity:*

Identifying data sources  
Designing data collection methods  
Selecting a research design

*Reports on group activities*

***Readings for next week:***

UW- Try Out Your Outcome Measurement System  
RFL- Assessment of Full-Coverage Programs

**WEEK 11- TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12- Collecting Data/ Full-Coverage Programs**

*Lecture:*

Develop a strategy  
Train the data collectors  
Track and collect data  
Monitor the process  
Full-coverage programs  
Reflexive controls  
Shadow controls

*Group activity:*

Planning data collection and monitoring

*Report on group activities:*

***Readings for next week:***

UW- Step 6- Analyze and Report Your Findings  
RFL- Chapter 11- Measuring Efficiency

### **WEEK 12- NOVEMBER 19- Reporting Results/Measuring Efficiency**

*Lecture:*

Enter the data  
Clean the data  
Tabulate the data  
Analyze the data  
Explain the data  
Prepare a presentation of the data  
Efficiency analysis  
Cost-benefit methods

*Group activity:*

Data analysis and reporting  
Selecting a CBA method

*Report on group activities*

***Readings for next week:***

UW- Step 7- Improve Your Outcome Measurement System  
RFL- Chapter 12- The Social Context of Evaluation

### **WEEK 13- NOVEMBER 26- Improving Measurement/ Social Context of Evaluation**

*Lecture:*

Reviewing your pilot  
Monitoring your system  
The context of evaluation

*Group activity:*

Planning for internal and external uses of results  
Tailoring your report to your audience

*Report on group activities*

*Student presentations*

***Readings for next week:***

UW- Step 8- Using Your Findings  
UW- Appendix: Issues in Developing Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

### **WEEK 14- DECEMBER 3- Using Evaluation Findings/ Developing Data Collection**

*Lecture:*

Internal uses of findings  
External uses of findings  
Tailoring your report or presentation  
Archival records  
Questionnaires  
Trained observer ratings

*Group activity:*

Internal uses of findings  
External uses of findings

Tailoring your report or presentation

*Report on group activity*

*Student presentations*