

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

SW 547 EVALUATION RESEARCH

Course Outline

Fall 2008

Social Work 547
Evaluation Research
Credit Hours: 3
Class Hours: TR 12:20 – 3:20 PM (206 Henson Hall)
Office Hours: TR 10:30 – 11:30 PM (4 Henson Hall)

Instructor: Cynthia Rocha, PhD
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I. Texts and Software

Required Text:

Posavac, E. & Carey, R. (2006). *Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies* (6th Ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Optional Text:

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2008). *Research Methods for Social Work* (6th Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Software: SPSS 16 (Students can access this software on the computers in the computer lab located in Henson Hall. Alternatively, they can access it remotely through the UT citrix server: <http://analysis.utk.edu>.)

II. Course Instructions and Requirements

- All journal article assigned readings are available on Blackboard.
- Please complete all readings prior to the class for which they are assigned on the course outline.
- Submit all written assignments using Blackboard's digital dropbox. Submit each assignment at any time prior to the beginning of the class on which it is due. I will not accept paper submissions. Please contact me if you are unfamiliar with Blackboard or require special accommodations.
- Attendance is mandatory. Please contact me if you cannot attend class.
- Participate in class discussions substantively.
- Please contact me via email and allow 24 hours for a response.

III. Assignments

Readings: Students will complete all required readings (textbook and articles) listed on the outline prior to each class. We will use the readings as the foundation for class discussion. Class participation will be based primarily on the student's ability to contribute to class discussions with knowledge gained in the readings. Completing assigned readings will substantially improve student's performance on the final exam and the research paper.

Evaluation proposal and final paper: Students will complete a quantitative evaluation project of their field placements. This will involve two written assignments. (1) A detailed proposal documenting the purpose of the evaluation. (2) A final paper that builds on the proposal. It documents the evaluation methodology, reports the findings and discusses the results. The exercise requires the use of a specific set of criteria provided by the instructor and posted on Blackboard. The evaluation proposal is due Sept. 29. The final paper is due Dec. 5.

Class presentation: Students will present their evaluation projects including the methodology and findings to their peers. Student will present during class on Nov. 30.

Evaluation article critique: Students will complete an article critique to increase their familiarity with research articles and critically assess them based on the concepts learned in class. Students may complete this assignment independently or with a partner. The exercise involves the use of a specific set of criteria provided by the instructor and posted on Blackboard. The article critique is due Oct. 23.

Lab participation: Students will be expected to participate in computer lab activities to gain hands-on experience with data management and analysis. These sessions will give students the opportunity to enter the data collected in their evaluation projects and analyze these data with the instructor present. Students will be expected to bring collected data to class on appropriate days to participate. These exercises involve the use of specific statistical procedures provided by the instructor. There are no written assignments for lab participation, but students will be required to report the results of their analyses in the final paper. Lab sessions will be held throughout the semester.

IV. Evaluation

Grading scale:

A = 94-100

B = 93-85

C = 84-70

D = 69-60

F = <60

Grade distribution:

Lab participation: 5%

Class participation: 10%

Evaluation article critique: 25%

Evaluation proposal: 25%

Final paper: 35%

* The course outline is subject to change based on instructor and student needs.

V. Class Outline

Class	Date	Topics	Reading and written assignments
1	8/21	1. Introduction 2. Outline of evaluation research process	<u>Articles:</u> Poertner, J. (2005) Wuenschel, P. (2006)
2	8/28	1. Purpose 2. Historical & theoretical development 3. Role in social work	<u>P & C:</u> Ch. 1 – Program Evaluation: An Overview
3	9/04	1. Research questions & hypotheses 2. Theory & literature reviews 3. Participatory Action Research 4. Increasing empowerment	<u>P & C:</u> Ch. 3 – Selecting Criteria and Setting Standards Ch. 6 – The Assessment of Needs <u>Articles:</u> Hofer, R. (1994) Belcher, J. R., DeForge, B. R., Zanis, D. A. (2005) <u>Review R & B:</u> Ch. 5 – Problem Formulation
4	9/11	1. Types of evaluation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community needs assessment ▪ Evaluability assessment ▪ Goal attainment 	<u>P & C:</u> Ch. 7 – Monitoring the Operation of Programs Ch. 9 – Quasi-Experimental Approaches to Outcome <u>Articles:</u> Harachi, T.W., Abbott, R.D., Catalano, R.F., Haggerty, K.P. & Fleming, C.B. (1999)
5	9/18	1. Types of evaluation (cont.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitoring ▪ Program outcomes and impacts ▪ Cost benefit and cost effectiveness analyses 	<u>P & C:</u> Ch. 11 – Analysis of Costs and Outcomes
6	9/25	1. Research designs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cross-sectional ▪ Exploratory and qualitative ▪ Pre-experimental ▪ Quasi-experimental ▪ experimental designs 2. Internal & external validity	<u>P & C:</u> Ch.10 – Using Experiments to Evaluate Programs <u>Articles:</u> Resnick, B., Bellg, A.J., Borrelli, B., DeFrancesco, C., Breger, R., Hecht, J., Sharp, D.L., Levesque, C., Orwig, D., Ernst, D., Ogedegbe, G., Czajkowski, S. (2005) <u>Review R & B:</u> Ch. 10 – Causal Inference and Correlational Designs Ch. 11 – Experimental Designs
7	10/02	1. Review of research methodology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Units of analysis ▪ Variables ▪ Levels of measurement ▪ Sampling ▪ Data collection 	<u>P & C:</u> Ch. 4 – Developing Measures <u>Review R & B:</u> Ch. 8 – Measurement Ch. 14 – Sampling Ch. 15 – Survey Research Ch. 16 – Analyzing Available Records <i>Evaluation Proposal due</i>

8	10/16	<p>1. Measurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardized scales & survey questionnaires ▪ Reliability & measurement validity ▪ Bias 	<p><u>Review R & B:</u> Ch. 9 – Constructing Instruments</p>
9	10/23	<p>1. Data management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data entry ▪ Data coding ▪ Data cleaning <p>(Computer Lab)</p>	<p><u>Review R & B:</u> Chs. 20 – Quantitative Data Analysis <i>Evaluation Article Critique due</i></p>
10	10/30	<p>1. Data Analysis - Descriptive Statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measures of central tendency ▪ Measures of variability ▪ Graphical presentations <p>(Computer Lab)</p>	<p><u>Review R & B:</u> Chs. 20 & 21 – Inferential Data Analysis: Parts 1 & 2</p>
11	11/06	<p>1. Data analysis - Inferential Statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chi square ▪ Correlation ▪ T-test <p>(Computer Lab)</p>	<p><u>Review R & B:</u> Chs. 20 & 21 – Inferential Data Analysis: Parts 1 & 2</p>
12	11/13	<p>1. Interpreting & communicating findings</p> <p>2. Ethics</p> <p>3. Political & organizational factors</p> <p>3. Avoiding bias</p> <p>4. Cultural competency</p>	<p><u>P & C:</u> Ch.5 – Ethics in Program Evaluation Ch. 13 – Evaluation Reports: Interpreting & Communicating Findings Ch. 14 – How to Encourage Utilization NASW Code of Ethics in Research (http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/default.asp)</p>
13	11/20	Class conclusions	<i>Research presentations</i>
14	12/05	Final (no in-class meeting)	<i>Turn in Final Report via Blackboard by 5 p.m.</i>

Evaluation Project

Instructions: You will select a program evaluation research problem which is of interest to concern to you at your field placement. You may choose a community needs assessment, monitoring of program implementation, outcome assessment, or another programmatic or managerial issue. You will conduct an evaluation of this problem throughout the semester.

The project involves four stages: (1) preparing an evaluation proposal, (2) collecting and analyzing data, (3) preparing an evaluation report, and (4) presenting the evaluation project to the class. Grading criteria for the evaluation proposal, report, and presentation are described below. Data collection and analysis will be based on each student's specific project. We will enter data and analyze it during class (see the class outline). Students will receive participation points for these activities. The description of the data collection and analysis will be included in the final report.

Evaluation Proposal

Papers should be typed, double spaced, using 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font. Title and reference pages are required. Follow the outline listed below.

1. Research Problem (20 pts.)

Select a program evaluation research problem which is of interest and concern to you. You may choose a community needs assessment, monitoring of program implementation, or outcome assessment. Consider the following components:

- *The programmatic problem*
- *Who is affected and how*
- *The type of evaluation*
- *Why the chosen evaluation method chosen is most appropriate*

2. Description of the Agency (25 pts.)

Briefly describe the setting in which the study will take place. Consider the following elements:

- *The problem addressed by the program*
- *Target population*
- *Services provided*
- *Evaluation context-general social and economic context in community*
- *Expected outcomes*

3. Literature Review (25 pts.)

Justify the need to conduct this study with an appropriate literature review. Your lit review should assist you in developing your research questions. Address the following components:

- *Theoretical and conceptual foundations in the program area*
- *Prior research around the program*
- *What research demonstrates that the program is effective – why*
- *What research critiques the program - why*
- *Current state of the knowledge*

4. Evaluation Hypotheses (20 pts.)

Develop a set of evaluation hypotheses or research questions which you will use to guide and/or test in your study. Base these hypotheses on either both the program objectives and the literature.

5. Technical Components (10 pts.)

Use APA style. Pay particular attention to headings, page numbers, the title page, running heads, and grammar.

Evaluation Report

Report the results of the proposed evaluation study implemented during the course of the semester. Incorporate revised proposal into final paper. Papers should be typed, double spaced, using 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font. Title and reference pages are required.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, including recommendations for improving the program (20 pts)

2. Introductions and Background (5 pts)

Statement of the problem / What questions are being answered?

3. Literature Review (10 pts)

- *What else has been done in terms of researching similar programs?*
- *Where else has your methodology been used?*
- *What can we learn from what others have done that will improve this evaluation?*

IV. Program Description (10 pts)

- *What are the program's goal(s) and objective(s)?*
- *What is the theory behind the program?*
- *What are the program activities?*

V. Evaluation Design and Discussion (15 pts)

- *Process Evaluation (Implementation Monitoring)*
 - *What are the program elements?*
 - *How many clients got what amount of the program?*
 - *What other concepts and measures were used in this part of the evaluation?*
 - *What are your conclusions about the implementation of the program?*
- *Outcome Evaluation*
 - *What type of design and measures?*
 - *How do these measures relate to the outcome of interest?*
 - *Are there any problems with the measures that make them less than ideal?*
 - *What internal validity threats are controlled for and which are not?*
 - *How serious are the remaining threats?*

VI. Results (15 pts)

- *What statistical procedures were used to analyze the data you collected?*
- *What are the results?*
- *What conclusions do you draw from the data and its analysis?*
- *What about external validity? Strong? Weak? Etc.*

VII. Recommendations (for the program directors and stakeholders) (15 pts)

Appendix A: Survey forms, descriptions of other information gathering devices (5 pts)

Technical Components (5 pts.)

Class Presentation

Instructions: You will be expected to present your evaluation project to the class. This presentation should be conducted in a professional manner. Therefore, behave professionally, use power point if necessary, and practice your presentation before you give the presentation. Include the following components in your presentation.

1. Why you have done this study, based on literature and program goals. (25 pts.)
 - What type of evaluation did you do?
2. Research Questions or hypotheses (15 pts.)
3. Short synopsis of methodology: (15 pts.)
 - Data collection, sampling technique, and design
 - Variables, defined and operationalized
 - Type(s) of analysis
4. Results, using handouts for the class and instructor (25 pts.)
5. Discussion and recommendations (20 pts.)

Article Critique

Instructions:

Write a critique for either of the following articles using the outline provided below. Papers should be typed, double spaced, using 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font and no more than five pages of text. A title page is required but do not count toward the page requirements. Follow APA style guidelines. You may work in pairs for this assignment.

Chen, H.T., Bersani, C. Myers, S.C., & Denton, R. (1989). Evaluating the effectiveness of a court sponsored abuse treatment program. *Journal of Family Violence*, 4(4), 309-322.

Marsh, J.D., & Wirick, M.A. (1991). Evaluation of Hull House teen pregnancy and parenting program. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 14, 49-61.

The article critique achieves three objectives:

- *Description* - describes the research study methodology;
- *Methodological critique* - evaluates the rigor of the study methodology; and
- *Assessment of conclusions* - assesses the validity of the study's findings based on the methodological critique.

To achieve the three objectives, address the following components in the paper in the following order. The point distribution suggests how much thought/attention to allocate to each component. Thought is not the same as space. The description may require two and a half pages and the evaluation and assessment only one page each. However, the evaluation and assessment must demonstrate careful attention to detail, application of research concepts, and, most importantly, independent and critical thought, to earn full points.

Paper components:

I. Full article reference. (5 points)

APA format is required. Other formats will not be accepted. Place this at the top of the first page of text (not the title page).

Example: Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2007). *Research Methods for Social Work* (6th Ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

II. Description (25 points)

This section must address the following components. If the author(s) does not address a component, note this in the paper.

- Type of evaluation
- Research Problem/Question(s)
- Theory or program driven

- Hypothesis(es)
- Sample
 - Units of analysis
 - Size
 - External validity (representation)
- Design
 - Type
 - Internal validity (causal inference)
- Data collection
- Measurement
 - Variables (IV, DV, and control)
 - Levels of measurement
- Statistical analysis
- Findings
- Discussion/Conclusions/Recommendations

III. Methodological Critique (35 points)

Consider the issues below when evaluating the study. You do not have to consider all of the issues in this section. Address those issues that pertain to the study. For example, address internal validity if it is particularly strong or weak in the study. If the study is measuring a concept using a new measurement instrument, make sure to address the measurement validity and reliability. Use your critical and independent thinking skills. In this section, simply state the study's weaknesses and strengths. Do not make judgments about the study based on the critique.

- Internal validity (experimental, quasi-experimental, or pre-experimental)
- External validity (random sample)
- Limitations (e.g. cross-sectional rather than longitudinal design, small sample, etc.)
- Bias (e.g. selection bias, response bias)
- Measurement (validity and reliability)

IV. Assessment of Conclusions (35 points)

In this section, link the evaluation (Section III) to the study's conclusions. Evaluates the degree to which the study's conclusions are valid based on the methodological critique. Consider the following questions in your assessment.

- How do the study's weaknesses/strengths affect the authors' abilities to answer the hypotheses and state conclusions?
- How do the study's weaknesses or limitations affect the conclusions?
- Do the study's weaknesses invalidate the conclusions? How/why?
- How do the study's strengths affect the conclusions?
- Do the study's strengths make the conclusions particularly important? How/why?