

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

SW 549 Evaluative Research
(3 credit hours)

Prerequisite(s): 510, 512, 513, 517, 519, 520, 522, 537, 538, 539

Instructor: Cynthia Rocha, Ph.D.

Class: Thursday 12:40-3:20

Office hours:

Thursday 3:30-4:30 & by appt.

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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.utk.csw.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*, 2008).

Disability: 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 2227 Dunford Hall (865) 974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

Course Description: This is a required concentration course. An advanced exploration of the techniques, methods, and issues relevant to ethical practice in Evaluative Research. Topics covered include history, philosophies and conceptual approaches in Evaluative Research; analysis of the strengths/limitations of Needs Assessment and Program Evaluation methods; the analysis and management of program data using statistical software; and the measurement of program goals/objectives through process and outcome evaluations. With an emphasis on critical thinking and evidence based practice, students will utilize these skills to perform evaluations in their areas of interest.

Course Rationale:

Social workers regardless of 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 workers have the knowledge and skills necessary to retrieve and critically evaluate existing program and policy research and the tools to carry out evaluations of programs and policies. Therefore, this

course focuses on the understanding and application of diverse evaluative 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.

Course Competencies: By the completion of this course, the students are expected to be able to demonstrate (through course activities, assignments, and/or exams):

1. Knowledge of the history, definitions, and philosophies of evaluation research in advancing practice of evidence based practice (CT/EBP C.1., C.2., C.3., C.4; Diversity D2.) [*Content: (a) purposes of evaluative research, (b) theories of evaluation, (c) history of evaluation including emergence of the specialty, previous abuses of research with underrepresented client systems and reasons for using evaluative research to develop evidence based practice (d) evaluation research in human service organizations (e) issues of research with diverse client systems*]
2. Skills in utilizing search resources to access relevant evidence based evaluation literature with an emphasis on applying critical thinking in the interpretation, synthesis and development of social work programs and policies. [CT/EBP C.1., C.2., C.3., C.4.) (*Content: (a) Use the evidence-base research process in the utilization of databases to locate practice knowledge (b) critical analysis of evaluative research knowledge sources,(c) the link between evidence based research to program and policy development,(d) using empirical research to develop outcome measures and (e) conduct a review of evidence based literature to determine type of evaluation needed to study various programmatic problems to be inclusive of process evaluation and outcome evaluation; using research to inform practice and practice experience to inform research*)
3. Skills in conducting evaluation assessments, determining program goals and objectives and determining the needs of populations served. (CT/EBP C.1., C.2., C.3., C.4.) [*Content: (a) Critical appraisal of evidence in the development of evaluation design, outcome measures, program goals/objectives, (b) using logic models to visually display program theory, processes and outcomes, (c) making the link between program elements and evaluation design, (d) formulating and assessing population needs through a complete understanding of the contextual variables (e) formulating research questions for evaluation including identification of issues to explore, programmatic problem and the purpose of the evaluation and (f) when and how to conduct a needs assessment*]
4. Knowledge of the principles, logic, strengths, and limitations of sampling techniques relevant to evaluation research, including the ability to select appropriate sampling strategies for particular evaluation circumstances. (CT/EBP C.1., C.2., C.3., C.4.: Diversity D.1., D.2., D.3.) [*Content: (a) purpose and limitations of random selection in evaluative research (b) cultural sensitivity in sampling procedures (c) sampling*

strategies in the development of an evaluative research design, (d) data collection techniques including secondary data, primary data, Interviews & surveys]

5. Knowledge of the principles, logic, strengths, and limitations of meta-analysis, experimental design, quasi-experimental design, case-control and cohort studies, pre-experimental group studies, surveys, and qualitative research designs including the ability to select appropriate research designs for particular evaluation circumstances. (CT/EBP C.1., C.2., C.3., C.4.) [*Content: (a) evaluation design including principles, logic, strengths, and limitations of meta-analysis, experimental design, quasi-experimental design, case-control and cohort studies, pre-experimental group studies, surveys, and qualitative research designs (b) ability to use quantitative vs. qualitative methods and (c) understand the hierarchy of evidence as it applies to different study designs]*]
6. Knowledge of the strengths and limitations of measurement techniques relevant to evaluation research including the ability to select appropriate measurement techniques for particular evaluation circumstances. [CT/EBP C.1., C.2., C.3., C.4.) (*Content: (a) Standardized scales and survey questionnaires, (b) reliability and measurement validity, (c) significance, error and variables, (d) understand how measurement contributes to the strength of evaluation findings, (e) Selecting appropriate measurement targets from the literature (i.e. client level: Multidimensional (global) assessment scales, uni-dimensional scales with and without clinical cutoff scores), and (f) Selecting the feasibility of outcome target measures such as availability of the measure, existing data, accessibility of data, availability of baseline information from multiple sources*}]
7. Skills in data collection, preparation, manipulation, analysis, and presentation of evaluation research data. [CT/EBP C.1., C.2., C.3., C.4.) [*Content: (a) data collection methods (b) experience collecting data (c) understand data analysis (d) build database using statistical programs, (e) knowledge of statistical tools such as SPSS, (f) Graphic, tabular and statistical presentation of evaluative research findings, (g) Reporting and disseminating evaluation results, (h) descriptive statistics, chi-square, correlation and t-tests*]
8. Skills in appropriate ways to report and disseminate evaluation research results. (CT/EBP C.1., C.2., C.3., C.4.). [*Content: (a) understanding the need for evidence to support program development and fund procurement, (b) ability to clearly disseminate and explain evaluative research findings through the use of executive summaries, evaluative reports and presentations to primary stakeholders*]
9. Knowledge of ethical, political, and organizational factors involved in the conduct of evaluation research (Values/ethics C.1). [*Content: (a) Professional guidelines for the ethical conduct of evaluation research including the NASW and Code of Ethics and Ethical guidelines for evaluative researcher, (b) methods for addressing ethical*]

dilemmas in evaluative research, (c) political and organizational factors involved in the planning, conducting and interpreting evaluation research, (d) human subjects protection and informed consent, (e) Avoiding bias and understanding the perspectives of minority and disadvantaged groups in the conduct and interpretation of evaluation research, (f) skills in conducting evaluation research within the ethical guidelines of social work and related codes of ethical behavior and (g) application of the evidence learned to the generation of reflective practice for better client intervention]

10. Knowledge of potential biases in evaluation research with minority and disadvantaged groups with an emphasis on skills to avoid these biases to the best extend possible. (Diversity C 1, C.2., C.3. C.4.). [Content: (a) use of evaluative research in identifying barriers to culturally relevant service delivery for client systems, (b) assess and work sensitively with practice, ethical, and research dilemmas that may arise when working with diverse client systems, (c) assess the limitations and strengths of theories of human development, practice models, interventions, and research methods and instruments when working with diverse client systems and (d) appropriately adapt and apply practice with the best evidence of effective and culturally affirming practice (e) identify and assess the interaction of cultural systems among the multiple identities of the social worker, client system(s), setting, and immediate community, and practice competently within and across these various systems and cultures]

Course Requirements:

A. Readings

Basic texts have been selected and readings are listed in the bibliography. In addition to assigned articles, students are encouraged to read from the recommended selections and independently from the professional journals.

B. Assignments and Evaluation

The course grade will be based on a combination of papers and projects conducted at your field placement.

Evaluation critique:	25%
Field Evaluation proposal:	25%
Final Paper	35%
Class Presentation	10%
Lab Attendance & Part.	5%

Grading Scale

A =	90-100
B+=	87-89
B=	80-86

C+= 77-79
C= 70-76
D+= 67-69
D= 60-66
F= <60

Text:

Required:

Posavac, Emile & Carey, Raymond. (2007). Program Evaluation : Methods and Case Studies, 7th edition, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Optional Texts:

Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. (2008). Research Methods for Social Work. (6th ed.) Brooks/Cole Pub.

Project Evaluation Criteria: Find an evaluation problem in your field placement.

Criteria for Evaluation Proposal

1. Research Problem (20 pts.)

Select a program evaluation research problem which is of interest and concern to you. You may choose community needs assessment, monitoring of program implementation, outcome assessment, or other programmatic or managerial issues to address the problem.

-What is your programmatic problem? Who is affected? How?

-What type of evaluation will you use to study this problem?

-Explain why the type of evaluation method you chose is the best to study the problem, given the history, philosophy and definition of program evaluation.

2. Description of the agency (25 pts.)

Briefly describe the setting in which the study will take place.

**Chapter two in Schalock provides an outline which is worthwhile to read. I will have copies made for you.

*the problem addressed by program

*target population

*services provided

*evaluation context-general social and economic context/ history in community

*Expected Outcomes

*justification (you don't need this one-it is encompassed in your lit review above

3. Justify the need to conduct this study with appropriate evidence-based literature review. (25 pts.)

Your lit review should assist you in developing your research questions.

-What has been done in the past?

-What is known and not known?

-What will drive your study?

*Program goals and objectives?

*Theoretical or conceptual assumptions of program?

why the program thinks their intervention will be successful.

4. Develop a set of evaluation hypotheses or research questions which you will use to guide and/or test in your study. (20 pts.)

-base this either on your program objectives and/or on the literature.

5. Technical aspects of the paper (10 pts.)

-APA style

-Headings, page numbers, spelling, grammar

Criteria for final paper

Attach revised first paper to second paper. (10 pts.)

1. Methods (20 pts.)

A. Sample

-What kind of sampling technique did you use?

-What was the sample size?

-How representative to the program population is your sample?

B. Data Collection Techniques

C. Design

-What type of design was utilized?

-Any internal/external validity issues that need to be discussed? (e.g. attrition)

2. Measurement (20 pts.)

A. What were your variables?

-either list the variables, or if they were specifically delineated to control, independent/intervention and dependent/outcome, discuss this.

B. How were your variables operationalized?

-Discuss definitions and level of measurement here.(may want to create a table)

C. Are there any measurement reliability and validity issues that should be discussed?

3. Type of analysis (10 pts.)

A. What type of analysis did you use? (eg. frequencies, means, etc.)

B. What statistical test were employed, if any?

4. Outcome (10 pts.)

A. What were the results of the evaluation?

- B. What were any problems that were encountered?
 - C. Limitations of the study.
5. Discussion (10 pts.)
- A. What are the implications of the results?
 - B. What recommendations do you have for the program?
6. Tables and graphs (10 pts.)
- Attach any tables and graphs which help the reader understand the analysis and refer to these throughout the discussion.
7. Technical issues (10 pts.)
- Page numbers, headings, spelling, grammar, APA style.

Class 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.)
- Short synopsis of: (15 pts.)
3. Data Collection and Sampling Technique, Design used
 4. Variables, defined and operationalized
 5. Type of Analysis
6. Results, using handouts for the class and instructor (25 pts.)
 7. Discussion and recommendations

Students may critique either of the following articles:

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

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

Criteria for Critique: It is important for social workers to have skill in utilizing existing research to advance evidence-based practice. Critically analyze one of the two program evaluation articles to assess the methodological soundness of their approaches in evaluating practice. This can be done in outline form. Feel Free to work in pairs.

1. Purpose of the evaluation (10 pts)
Type of Evaluation

- What are the research questions or hypotheses?
2. Theory or program driven (10 pts)
 - Is the evaluation theory driven or program driven?
 - If the evaluation is driven by the objectives of the program, what are the objectives?
 - What are the underlying assumptions of the evaluation?
 3. Methods (20 pts)
 - Sample
 - Units of analysis
 - sample size and type
 - representativeness
 - Data Collection Techniques
 - Design
 - Type of design
 - internal, external validity issues
 4. Measurement (20 pts)
 - Level of measurement (may want to create a table for this section).
 - Variables
 - What are the independent/experimental/treatment variables?
 - What are the dependent/outcome variables?
 - Do they have controls?
 - How are variables operationalized? (create table, for major variables only)
 - Any discussion of measurement reliability/validity
 5. Type of analysis (10 pts.)
 - Statistical tests employed?
 6. Outcomes (20 pts.)
 - Results of study
 - Problems they saw with study
 - Problems you see that they did not
 - Discrepancies, things that didn't make sense
 - Any ethical issues?
 7. Technical aspects of your paper (10 pts)
 - APA style, Spelling, grammar, headings, page numbers.

Readings and Outline:

Class one- 1/8

Introduction to Evaluative Research
Structure of the course
Understanding Evaluative Research

Class two – 1/15

Purpose of Evaluative Research
History and Theories of Evaluation
Overview of Definitions of Evaluation Research in Social Work

Readings:

Posavac, Chapter one: Program Evaluation: An Overview
Reichardt, C. S. & Rallis, S. F. (Eds.) (1994). Relationship between the qualitative and quantitative research traditions. In The qualitative-quantitative debate: New perspectives, New Directions for Program Evaluation, 61. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Gabor, P. & Grinnell, Jr., R. M. (1994). Should program decisions be based on empirical evidence of effectiveness? Yes. In W. W. Hudson & Nurius, P. S. (Eds.), Controversial issues in social work research. Boston. Allyn and Bacon.
Taber, (1994). Should program decisions be based on empirical evidence of effectiveness? NO. In W. W. Hudson & Nurius, P. S. (Eds.), Controversial issues in social work research. Boston. Allyn and Bacon.

Class Three – 1/22

Types of Evaluation
Determining Community Needs and Organizational Goals
Conducting an evaluability assessment
Conceptualizing and operationalizing program goals and objectives
Conducting a Community needs assessment
What is Participatory Action Research?
Increasing Empowerment and Reducing Oppression: The Antidiscrimination Principle

Readings:

Posavac, Chapter 3, Selecting Criteria and Setting Standards
Chapter 6, The Assessment of Need
Gaventa, J. (1988). Participatory Research in North America, *Convergence*, XXI (2/3), 19-28.

Class four – 1/29

Types of Evaluation, continued
Monitoring (process)

Program outcomes, impacts
Cost benefit and cost effectiveness analyses

Readings:

Posavac, Chapter 7, Monitoring the Operation of Programs
Chapter 10, Quasi-Experimental Approaches to Outcome
Chapter 12, Analysis of Costs and Outcomes

Class five – 2/5

Research questions and evaluative hypotheses
Theory and Literature Review
Review, units of analysis, variables, levels of measurement

Readings:

Posavac, Chapter 3, Selecting Criteria and Setting Standards
Review Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 5: Problem Formulation

Class six – 2/12

Research Designs for Evaluative Research
Cross-sectional, exploratory and qualitative designs
Pre, quasi and experimental designs
Internal and external validity

Readings:

Posavac, Chapters 10 and 11, Using Experiments to Evaluate programs
Review Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 10, Causal Inference and Correlational Designs
Ch.11, Experimental Designs

EVALUATION PROPOSAL DUE

Class seven – 2/19

Sampling and Data Collection
Secondary and primary data
Interviews, surveys, telephone

Readings:

Posavac, Chapter four, Developing Measures
Review Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. Review Chapters 6 & 8, Measurement & Sampling

Review Rubin and Babbie, Chapters 15 & 16, Survey and Unobtrusive Data Collection

Class eight-2/26

Measurement, continued

Advanced measurement techniques:

standardized scales and survey questionnaires

Reliability and measurement validity

Understanding systematic bias against diverse groups: ethnic, gender, SES, and sexual orientation as a source of systematic bias.

Readings:

Review Rubin and Babbie Chapter 9, Constructing Instruments

Class nine-3/5 ARTICLE CRITIQUE DUE

Data Management

Data entry

Micro Computer Lab

Readings:

Peruse Rubin & Babbie, Chapter 20 & 21, Processing Data and Interpreting Descriptive Statistics

Class ten- 3/12

Continue, Data Entry

Data Coding & Cleaning

SPRING BREAK 3/19

Class eleven- 3/26

Data Analysis

Preparing, entering, and manipulating evaluation research data using a microcomputer.

Graphic and tabular presentation of evaluation research data

Readings:

Peruse Rubin and Babbie, Chapter 20 & 21, Inferential Data Analysis

Class twelve – 4/2

Computer Lab

Data analysis, continues

Descriptive stats, averages, percentages, cross tabs

Understanding chi square, correlation, T-tests

Class thirteen 4/9

Interpreting and communicating findings

Ethical Issues in Social Work Education-NASW Code of Ethics

Political and organizational factors involved in planning, conducting, and interpretation of evaluating research

Professional guidelines for the ethical conduct of evaluation research

Avoiding bias and understanding the perspectives of minority and disadvantaged groups:

Economic, gender, minority, sexual orientation, biases.

Readings:

Posavac, Chapter 5, Ethics in Program Evaluation

Chapter 13, Evaluation Reports: Interpreting & Communicating Findings

Chapter 14, How to Encourage Utilization.

NASW Code of Ethics in Research (Handout)

Class fourteen – 4/16 Presentations due today.

Class Fifteen – 4/23. Finish presentations/Evaluations.

FINAL PAPERS DUE: Friday April 24, 5:00 p.m.

Supplemental Readings

- Edelhoc, M. (1999). Welfare reform in South Carolina: "Roughly right" social policy. *Social Policy (Spring)*.
- James Neff & W. Zule, (2000). A Development of a Measure of Treatment Readiness for Out of Treatment Drug Users: Psychometric Properties and Construct Validity@. Substance Use and Misuse, 35: 585-599.
- Michael Quinn Patton (1997). Utilization-Focused Evaluation, California: Sage Publications, 3rd Edition .
- Parrott, S. (1998). Welfare recipients who find jobs: What do we know about their employment and earnings? Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Pavetti, L., Olson, K., Nightingale, D., Duke, A. & Isaacs, J. (1998). Welfare to Work Options for Families Facing Personal and Family Challenges: Rationale and Program Strategies. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.
- Peter Rossi and Howard Freeman. (1999). *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach*, 6th Edition, California: Sage Publications.
- Rocha, C.J. & Kabalka, L.E. (1999). A comparison study of access to health care under a Medicaid managed care program. *Health and Social Work, 24 (3)*, 169-179.
- Rocha, C. & Strand, E. (2004). The effects of economic policies and employment assistance programs on the well-being of displaced female apparel workers. *Journal of Family Issues, 25 (4)*, 542-566.
- V. Slonim-Nevo and Y. Anson. (1998). A Evaluating Practice: Does it Improve Treatment Outcome@. *Social Work Research 22: 66-74.* 1998.

Related Journals

Evaluation Review (was called
Evaluation Quarterly)
Evaluation Research
Harvard Business Review

Social Service Review
Evaluation and Program Planning
Evaluation Studies Review Annual
Journal of Policy Analysis and Management