

SW 296A: Advanced Methods for Evaluating Social Work Practice

Lecture: Riverside Hall 1004; Saturdays, 8 am – 5 pm; 8/27, 9/10, 10/15, 11/19, 12/10

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I. Course Description

Pre-requisite is completion of SW 210 with at least a B or acceptance to the program as an Advanced Standing student.

This course builds on the quantitative and qualitative research knowledge and skills gained in *SW210: Methods of Social Research*, to strengthen the understanding of the methods and processes of evaluation of practice using intermediate and advanced assessment tools. The primary purpose of the course is for students to develop the skills necessary to evaluate program outcomes and/or practice effectiveness. Students will develop competencies in various approaches to the evaluation process involving the concepts of measurement, design, analysis and decision making. For this purpose students are expected to choose a data set, client, group or program in their respective agencies of field training and engage in the evaluation process involving accurate identification of the focus of evaluation, substantiating the relevance of the focus of evaluation, developing suitable measurement tool, formulating and structuring a fitting intervention or program development and modification, implementing the intervention/program within a researchable design and analyzing the outcomes in the spirit of accountability in the professional practice of social work. Most importantly students will learn to use techniques of negotiation in working out their evaluation strategies with the people responsible for the program being evaluated.

The course emphasizes practice informed evaluation, the evaluation of evidenced-based practice interventions, and utilization of the results of such research knowledge in making practice decisions that improve the quality of services, initiate changes in policy and improve delivery of social services. Students will acquire the ability to develop and analyze outcome measures rooted in the knowledge of social work research methods. Specifically, students are expected to develop competencies in research evaluation methods using content analysis, chi-square, t-tests, and ANOVA as they relate to evaluating their practice of social work.

Students will deepen their familiarity with essential components of research project development initially introduced in SW210 including: problem formulation, conceptual framework

development, research design, measurement, use of externally validated tests and their psychometric analysis, sampling, data collection, data analysis and computer technology. Students will learn and demonstrate proficiency in qualitative and quantitative research methods. Students will also engage in laboratory work for the equivalent of 8 weeks of the semester where they will manipulate data in conjunction with training in the specific quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods described above.

Using case studies of practice research questions from the field, students will assist in determining appropriate research designs to use in responding to particular practice challenges and research questions. For example, a social agency practitioner from the field may be a guest lecturer who describes a program, or intervention evaluation need to the class. Students will then explore various methods that may be utilized to evaluate this phenomenon in the practice setting.

II. Course Objectives

1. Identify and state a research question related to client/ agency/program/policy outcome in social work practice within the context of the intellectual and professional interests of the students.

Outcome:

Students will articulate the benefits and liabilities of the evaluation research topic they are interested in and develop a researchable question within the context of prior research and the goals of the program/intervention/assessment. At the **second class meeting students will submit a preliminary literature review** on the evaluation question they have articulated.

2. Develop a knowledge base related to the articulated research question which provides justification for the focus of evaluation study and demonstrates sensitivity to issues of ethnicity, cultural diversity and ethical considerations in social work practice and research.

Outcome:

Students will apply the ethical principles in conducting research for their articulated plan of evaluation and apply it to the subsequent stages of selecting a research design, developing or choosing their measures, drawing their samples and developing hypothesis statements. The **research plan developed as part of this course will be submitted at the third class meeting** and will substantiate this outcome.

3. Students will cultivate proficiency in developing and stating relevant and potentially useful information about the client/group/ or program to be evaluated.

Outcome:

Students will submit a plan of research each for case level and program level evaluation. The plan will encompass discussion of the processes to be engaged in conducting agency based research with an individual, group or program.

4. Students will master the understanding of developing a plan for collecting information, organizing the information collected in the evaluation process for efficient delivery and draw conclusions from the data analysis process.

Outcome:

At the third class meeting students will identify either a data set or a sample to collect data from. This process will demonstrate competencies in the areas of ease of the use of sample, appropriateness of the sample selection to the flow of agency operations, selecting the sample with the awareness of user input, and how to obtain existing data with due permission.

5. Develop respect for the issues of measurement tools for evaluation and the types of evaluation tools that evaluation researchers need to be aware of. Students are expected to develop proficiency in selecting a means of measurement of variables needed for the examination of the evaluation research question(s) and to be able to decide accurately:

- (a) At what level the variables should be measured
- (b) What means should be employed for observation
- (c) The reliability and validity of this means of measuring the variables.

Outcome:

By the 4th class meeting students will understand the notions of objectivity and precision in measurement and locate an existing standardized measurement to measure the variables of their study or adapt an existing measurement to the measurements of variables required for their study. They shall provide a rationale for the means of measurement used.

6. To assess the research questions and select a research design appropriate for the context of the agency's policy and examine the design in relation to the most common threats to internal validity. Students will learn specific application of experimental designs at the case, program, group and agency levels and become proficient in the Praises Model.

Outcome:

Students will use their individually articulated research question, the sampling method they have opted to use, the measurement tool selected and decide on either case level evaluation or program level evaluations and begin the data collection process after securing the permission of the agency and shall engage effectively in the process of collecting the data necessary for the examination of the research question. In this process students will apply or propose to apply their capacities for collecting data by fitting the data collection to the programs and services of the agency.

7. To utilize the knowledge of data analysis and computer skills to analyze the data from the standpoint of practical significance and from the standpoint of statistical significance.

Outcome:

Students will show evidence of having mastered the methods of graphic data display, and developing critical decisions based on the analysis of the data collected with the client or the program or the data set as the focus of the research.

8. To develop an adequate statement of conclusion based upon the outcome of the study and share the findings of the evaluation effort.

Outcome:

By the 5th class meeting students will write their research reports with recommendations for integrating evaluation and service activities within the context of each agency that the student collected data from. These research reports will be used to complete the research section of their integrative papers/cap stone projects in the following semester. Each integrative paper/ capstone project will involve analytical discussion of their practice, behavior, policy, theory and research components.

Using case studies of practice research questions from the field, students will assist in determining appropriate research designs to use in responding to particular practice challenges and research questions. Practitioners from the field will be guest lecturers who will describe program, or intervention evaluation needs to the class. Students will then explore various methods that may be utilized to evaluate this phenomenon in the practice setting. Research faculty teaching this course will provide data for manipulation in lab. Through this process students will be equipped with the tools to evolve as evidence-based practitioners with findings that will frame their professional practice.

III. Requirements

a. In-class participation	10%	Sessions 1-5
b. Instrument Design & Data Collection	10%	Session 3-4
c. SPSS Labs (3) & Qualitative Data Ana. Labs (1)	20%	Session 2-5
d. Matching Eval. Prblm. w/ Appro. Method – Exam	30%	Session 4
e. Research Report	30%	Session 5

IV. Teaching/Learning Modalities

This class will be taught with an emphasis on discussion. Students will be asked to share their own experiences, knowledge and opinions within the frameworks and concepts presented in class. There will be a mid-term evaluation of the instructor so that feedback can be incorporated into the last half of the class. This class will be taught with an emphasis on practice evaluation using qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative designs such as Case Study, Grounded theory and Ethnography will be explored as options for empowering methods of evaluation. Students are expected to actively contribute to class discussions by sharing their experiences from their field placements. Consideration of all ethical, political and social aspects of the research process as entailed in the evaluation efforts will be an ongoing discussion in all classes.

To accommodate for the monthly meeting schedule, all student work will be due by 2:00 p.m. Wednesday of the week following class, in case students desire to edit and update their work as a result of content learning in the class meeting.

V. Texts & Readings

Required

1. Course reader articles available for purchase in the first class.
2. Abu-Bader, S. H. (2011). *Using statistical methods in social science research with a complete SPSS Guide*. Chicago: Lyceum. ISBN 1935871021 (the 2006 version should also be fine and found at a much better price on Amazon).
3. ***Bloom, M., Fischer, J. & Orme, J. G. (2009). Evaluating practice: Guidelines for the accountable professional. Boston, MA: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon. ISBN 0205612016; main course text, ordered with SPSS statistical software bundle and sells for about \$185 at the Hornet Bookstore; may purchase ebook through coursesmart.com for \$58 but will not have access to SPSS. SPSS is used in 2nd semester as well and no additional texts are required for next semester.***

Recommended

4. Rubin, A. & Babbie, E. R. (2008). *Research methods for social work* (any used copy would suffice) . Belmont, CA: Thompson Brooks/Cole.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introductions, Overview & Expectations: Evaluation Research & Questionnaire Introduction

Review course objectives & syllabus; complete introductions

Lecture – Review of description of evidenced based research. Why is evaluation of practice important for social work?

1. Why evaluate?
2. Evaluation vs. Basic Research
3. Politics of Evaluation Research - Data vs. knowledge
4. Types of evaluation research
5. History of Evaluation Research – Single system vs. Program Evaluation
6. Single System Design
7. Evidence Base Practice
8. Evaluation Informed vs. Evidence Based Practice
9. Praises Model
10. Qualitative/Hypothesis Generating Research
11. Qualitative/Quantitative Complementary Research
12. Evaluation components
 - Needs Assessment
 - Target Population
 - The Program Process
 - Outcomes
13. Conceptualization & Measurement
14. Question & Questionnaire Construction & Use of Instruments

15. Codebook Development

Group Discussion

Define evaluation informed and evidence based practice, and why they are important issues in social work.

Video: Dhamma Brothers

Readings

Bloom Chapters 1-3

Abu-Bader Chapters 1-3

Bloom, B. (2009). Knowing or unknowing? That is the question: In the era of evidence-based social work practice. *Journal of Social Work, 9*(2), 158-177. DOI: 10.1177/1468017308101820

Manuel, J. I, Mullen, E. J., Fang, L. Bellany, J. L. & Bledsoe, S. E. (2009). Preparing social work practitioners to use evidence-based practice: A comparison of experience from an implementation project. *Research on Social Work Practice, 19*(5), 613-627. DOI: 10.1177/1049731509335547.

DUE: One page paper (double spaced) defining evidence-based practice, why it is important and the issues for social work. (not graded – part of participation grade) you may turn it in the week after class if you like.

Week 2: Overview of Single System Research, Program Evaluation & Needs Assessment

1. Use of Instruments
2. Single System Research
 - Behavioral Observation
 - Basics & Measurement issues – Behavioral Obs. Rating & Standardized Scales
 - Ethical Questions
 - Research designs
 - Internal Validity Issues
3. Program Evaluation
 - Components and meaning
 - Sources of knowledge
4. Needs Assessment for proposed and existing programs
5. Normal Distributions
6. Standard Scores
7. Hypothesis Testing
8. T-Tests (independent & dependent)

Speaker

Alameda County Juvenile Hall Library research project

SPSS LAB

Readings

Bloom Chapters 4 - 10

Abu-Bader Chapters 4-6

Adams K. B., LeCroy, C. W. & Matto, H. C. (2009). Limitations of evidence-based practice for social work education: unpacking the complexity, *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45(2), 165-186.

Holden, G., Barker, K. Rosenberg, G. & Onghena, P. (2008). The evaluation self-efficacy scale for assessing progress toward CSWE accreditation – Relate objectives: A replication. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 18(1), 42-46. DOI 10.1177/1049731507303954

DUE: Literature Review (3pgs./ 20 refs.) (DRAFT)

Instrument Design & Analysis (2pgs.) (DRAFT)

Week 3: Evaluations to Improve Programs: Qualitative & Quantitative

1. Single-System Design Principles
 - Baselining
 - A-B, A-B-A, A-B-A-B, B-A-B

Intensity and Successive Intervention Designs

2. Program improvement approaches
3. Identifying program models
4. Program monitoring
5. Formative Evaluation
6. Process Evaluation
7. Central & Specific Research Questions
8. Descriptive Statistics
9. Bivariate Correlation
10. The qualitative research process
11. Multiple cycles of analysis in qualitative research

SPSS LAB

Readings

Bloom Chapters 11 - 16
Abu-Bader Chapters 8 & 9

Gould, N. (2010). Integrating qualitative evidence in practice guideline development: Meeting the challenge of evidence-based practice for social work. *Qualitative social work, 9*(1), 93-109. DOI 10.1177/1473325009355623

Hope, R. M. & Hodge, D. M. (2006). Factors affecting children's adjustment to the death of a parent: The social work professional's viewpoint. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 23*(1), 107- . DOI: 10.1007/s10560-006-0045-x

DUE: Instrument Design & Data Collection Plan (2–3 pgs.)

Week 4: Statistical & Qualitative Methods of Analysis & Interpretation

1. Computer Analysis of Single-System Design Data
2. Psychometrics and existing instruments
3. Data Analysis, Interpretation & Presentation of Findings
4. Challenges in interpreting findings
5. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) & Chi-Square Analysis
6. Designing and Analyzing Qualitative studies
7. Managing Qualitative Data

SPSS LAB

Readings

Bloom 17 - 22
Abu-Bader Chapters 10 & 11

Rubin, A. & Parrish, D. (2007). Problematic phrases in the conclusions of published outcome studies: Implications for evidence-based practice, *Research on Social Work Practice, 17*(3). 334-347. DOI: 10.1177/1049731506293726

Steen, J. A. & Smith, S. & Jackson, D. L. (2010). The development and evaluation of the perceptions of competence and responsiveness scale. *Journal of Social Service Research, 36*, 118-127. DOI: 10.1080/01488370903578041

DUE: Data Collection Completion / Findings (DRAFT)

IN CLASS: Evaluation Problem / Research Method Exam 30%

Week 5: Working with Multiple Variables in Analysis

1. Outcome Evaluations
2. Preexplanatory & Explanatory Outcome Evaluations
3. The world of multivariate research questions
4. Bivariate analysis limitations and foundation for multivariate analysis
 1. Multiple regression analysis considerations, benefits and limitations
 2. Power, Benefits & Limitations of Evaluation Research
 3. Barriers to evaluation research

SPSS LAB

Readings

Bloom Chapters 23 - 25

Abu-Bader Chapter 12

Cokol, M., Iossifov, I., Rodriguez-Esteban, R. & Rzhetsky, A. (2007). How many scientific papers should be retracted? *EMBO Reports, 8*(5), 422-423. DOI: 10.1038/sj.embor.7400970

Rosenthal, B. S., Wilson, C. W. (). Student factors affecting performance in an MSW research and statistics course. *Journal of Social Work Education, 92*(28), 77-84.

Hisle-Gorman, E. & Zuravin, S. (2006). Teaching social work research: A comparison of web-based and in-class lecture methods, *Journal of Technology in Human Services, 24*(4), 77-93. DOI: 10.1300/J017v24n04_05

DUE: Research Report 30%

VI. Evaluation

There are several methods of evaluation for this course. Your attendance and participation maximize your experience in the class and together constitute 10% of your grade. It is expected that all assignments will be completed on time. Late assignments will lose 1 grade per day, unless arrangements are made **PRIOR** to the due date. Written materials are expected to be of graduate student quality, which means concise, coherent, well-organized writing with citations for all referenced ideas. Paper must follow APA (American Psychological Association, 6th Edition) guidelines. The methods of instruction are two-fold. One dimension of this course is a lecture discussion approach aimed at understanding and communicating intermediate to advanced research methods and skills in conducting research studies. The other dimension of this course uses computer labs in an experiential, action-oriented approach in which learning through “doing” is emphasized.

IX. Accommodation

The university is committed to providing every reasonable academic accommodation to students with disabilities. The Office of Services to Students with Disabilities provides university academic support services and specialized assistance to students with disabilities. Individuals who need such accommodation must notify the instructor to arrange said accommodation within the **first week of class**. This instructor is committed in every effort to accommodate **all** special needs.

X. Assignments and Grading

Each student’s final grade will result from adding the scores obtained from all the assignments required by the course and determining a curve. The course includes a possibility of 200 points when all evaluated work is included. Class attendance and participation are prerequisites to receiving a passing grade. Students are expected to attend all classes. Situations such as ill health must be reported to the instructor before class. **One absence in this weekend class during the semester will automatically result in the student receiving a “B-” or lower grade for the semester** regardless of his/her performance in all required assignments.

In-class participation 10% (20 points)

This grade is assigned based upon class attendance and participation in assignments given throughout the semester. Up to 4 points are awarded for each week of class participation.

Instrument Design & Data Collection 10% (20 points)

Using the student’s own interest in evaluating an area of their practice, students will be required to design an appropriate research instrument for data collection related to a hypothetical research project. Most students will design a codebook that would be used for extracting existing data from social agency files.

SPSS Labs 20% (40 points)

Four short assignments will be completed using the computer lab. Four of these assignments will require quantitative data analysis and 1 assignment will use qualitative data analysis. Ninety-minute to 2 hour class sessions will be used for each SPSS lab. A total of 4 sessions will allocate some portion of the time for SPSS labs. Absences from the SPSS lab sessions are impossible to makeup.

Matching Evaluation Problem with Appropriate Method – Exam 30% (60 points)

Multiple choice, matching and short answer exam covering course content and requiring students to match an evaluation problem with an appropriate research method and provide justification for its use.

Research Report 30% (60 points)

Students are expected to produce a research project proposal and critique where they will develop a research study related to evaluating their own social work practice and provide justification for use of its methods. Students will describe the research methods appropriate for their research question, collect and analyze data and write a research report. The research report will be no more than 6 pages in length. The paper will be graded on the logic of your discussion, use of evidence to support your position, clarity of your writing and appropriateness of the research method selected.

1. Begin with a review of the literature – 3 pages;
2. Describe proposed research project which will evaluate a selected aspect of your professional practice;
3. Explain how the project is relevant to shaping your professional practice;
4. Articulate the **theory** you are using to frame your approach to the research problem;
5. Describe the **diversity** issues related to evaluation of your practice in the proposed project;
6. Describe the personal and professional **practice** implications of your research findings;
7. Explain how agency and community **policies** might be changed as a result of your findings;
8. Provide justification of appropriate **research methods** you would use to respond to evaluate your professional practice;
9. Explore how you might improve upon this project if you were to conduct it in the future;
10. Discuss what you have discovered about your personal/professional **practice philosophy** that may guide your practice once you graduate.

Each Assignment and Final Course Grades will be Assigned Following these Guidelines

95% and above	A
90% - 94%	A-
86% - 89%	B+
83% - 85%	B
80% - 82%	B-
76% - 79%	C+
73% - 75%	C
70% - 72%	C-
66% - 69%	D+

63% - 65%	D
60%- 62%	D-
59% and below	F