

University of Pennsylvania
School of Social Policy and Practice
SWRK774: Program Evaluation
Fall, 2017

Instructor:

Email:

Office hours: By appointment

I. Course purpose

This course introduces students to the theoretical and practical aspects of program evaluation. Students learn about all phases of evaluating a program or service innovation, from needs assessment and data collection, to analysis and delivery of findings. While experimental research is primarily aimed at determining the causal relationships between specific variables, evaluation is focused on determining whether particular policy or program innovations are achieving their intended goals. Students learn to appreciate how evaluation skills can be used as practical tools for social change by improving the quality of social programs through the application of systematic evaluation procedures.

The content of this course heavily integrates other elements of the MSW curriculum and a liberal arts background into the program evaluation task. For example:

Defining a social problem requires attention to the personal development of individuals in a population at risk and the social policy processes which interact with the problem.

Social problems are contextualized in a professional social work setting. Therefore, students are asked to integrate understanding of a social problem, research activities and professional practice.

Students learn how research skills in the evaluation process can be effective tools for social, organizational and practical change. Program evaluation practice requires critical thinking skills rooted in analysis of social issues and inductive and deductive reasoning.

Students will use course skills and knowledge to design an evaluation protocol that may impact a professional social work setting. Students will practice data collection, analysis and interpretation skills through various team exercises and work collegially with their teams. The latter portion of the class is structured around in-class presentations of students' proposed evaluation protocols with structured peer feedback. The course is designed as a resource for both direct practice and macro students, as effective program evaluation frequently requires collaboration between direct and macro levels of practice.

II. Educational Objectives

Among the educational objectives for this course, students will be able to:

- 1) understand the proper application of social work ethics and research ethics while conducting all work for this course;
- 2) describe the difference between research and program evaluation; identify the key concepts in program evaluation;
- 3) discuss the component parts of program evaluation within a working framework;
- 4) create a logic model linking program components.

Classroom learning is a fundamental component of your professional education. Students are therefore expected to arrive to class on time, attend each class, and be fully prepared to discuss the policy area for that class. This will require the student to read the assigned readings and begin to critically evaluate the issues covered (including the readings themselves). Students should come to class prepared to raise questions or debate specific components of a policy.

III. Course requirements

A. Text and required readings

The course will use the following text

Newcomer, K., Hatry, H., & Wholey, J. (Eds.) (2015). *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. (4th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Additional readings listed for each class session will be available on Canvas.

B. Assignments

All papers should be clearly written, well conceptualized, and cite relevant literature. Papers should be double spaced, 12-point font, 1” margins, APA reference style and submitted by CANVAS before the beginning of the class.

For APA Guidelines refer to Purdue Online Writing Lab website below:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Your course grade will be determined by the following:

1. **Class attendance and participation (20 points).** Classroom learning is a fundamental component of your professional education. Attendance is therefore mandatory.

- Full and active participation in all classroom exercises and activities is required to pass the course, with emphasis on proactive discussion of assigned readings.
- In the event that you are unable to attend class for any reason, you must notify your instructor in advance and learn how you are to make up the content you missed. Excessive absenteeism (i.e., missing more than two classes) is considered a serious problem.

2. Ethics readings. You are responsible to develop your evaluation plan in accordance with the following:

- Guiding principles for evaluators
<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>
- The Program Evaluation Standards: Summary of the Standards
<http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=103>

3. In-class Group Exercises (20 points).

- **Observation Exercise (Group Work) (10 points)**
- **Survey Exercise (Group Work) (10 points)**

Learning how to develop an evaluation question, collect data to answer the question, interpret data in answering the question, and reporting data are critical skills in program evaluation. You will be asked to demonstrate these skills in exercises that use different data collection strategies:

- The ability to gather and analyze data as part of a group is an important skill in program evaluation, and an important skill in all social work practice. **However, you will be assigned to groups/pairs throughout the semester and will be responsible for completing the assignment. However, you will receive an individual score for your contribution and effort in completing the assignment.** Class time will be set aside for the most, but some coordination outside of class will also be needed.
- Your score will be based on the instructor's observations of your contributions and effort in each step of each exercise, and the in-class presentations.

- **Observation Exercise (Individual Work) (5 points)**

4. Evaluation Protocol in Four Parts

- **Part 1: Logic Model (15 points)**

Understanding a program's theory and being able to represent it in a logic model is a conventional starting point in program evaluation. Complete a logic model for the program you intend to study. *Any structure for the logic model can be used, but it should include program processes and expected outcomes.*

In order to gather information to create the logic model and answer the questions, you will need to conduct at least one interview and/or focus group. The aim is to root your evaluation plan in stakeholder information and meet their decision-making needs. Therefore, you will interview a key stakeholder or (focus) group of stakeholders.

As soon as you have identified a program to evaluate, you can begin working on this assignment. To accompany your logic model, provide a 5-7 page narrative that answers the questions listed below. When you write this up, please use the questions/interview schedule as your subheadings.

- Who did you interview? What are their roles in the program?
- What are the goals and objectives of the program you will evaluate?
- Who is the program designed to serve? Include as much demographic detail as possible (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) for each group impacted by the program (e.g., students, parents, clients, etc.). Give your best estimate if precise demographic information is not available.
- What are the means through which program goals and objectives are expected to be met (What activities does the program utilize to serve its clientele)?
- What data/records currently exist relative to goals, objectives, and activities of this program

• **Part 2: Data Collection Instrument (15 points)**

Each student will develop a data collection instrument that embodies the standards and criteria of one of the data collection approaches discussed in class (i.e. an interview schedule, focus group questions, observational protocol, online or written survey, standardized sheet for transcribing administrative file information, etc.)

A 3-5 narrative must accompany the instrument. It should include:

- 1. Evaluation question(s)
- 2. Operational definitions and measurement levels (nominal, scale, ordinal) for all data items, including coding scheme for qualitative data
- 3. Procedures for collecting the data (sampling, accessing respondents or settings, permissions, etc.)
- 4. A plan to analyze the dataset

• **Part 3: Evaluation Protocol (15 points)**

Complete the full protocol for your evaluation project. In a total 12-14 pages (Not counting references & appendix), synthesize your logic model and data collection instrument work into the following sections and address the questions below:

- *Evaluation Framework*: What theoretical framework/orientation has guided your program evaluation? How is this framework/orientation well-suited to the program you have evaluated? Explicitly compare it to other options.
- *Stakeholders*: Who are your stakeholders and the readers of your evaluation report? What are their needs and expectations? How do you intend for them to use your evaluation report? What makes the evaluation framework you have chosen well-suited to meet their needs?
- *Existing Program Data*: What data have you utilized in your evaluation? How have you gain access to that data? What form was the data in when you received them? What are the weaknesses of these data?
- *Data Collection*: What, if any, additional data have you collected for your evaluation? How have you collected that data? Include any materials (e.g., surveys, tests, interview questions, observation protocols) that you have used. How did you gain permission and ensure cooperation for data collection?
- *Data Analyses*: How did you analyze your data? How do the results of each analysis relate to specific program goals, objectives, and activities?
- *Recommendations*: Based on your findings what choices will the stakeholders have to initiate change? In what direction are your recommendations (program should contract, expand, add, delete, May be even terminate if certain conditions are found). Where in the logic model is the focal point of your recommendations (are more resources/inputs needed? Do activities need to be adjusted? Are the outcomes realistic? Was there sufficient data /records to conduct evaluation?)

- **Part 4: Evaluation Briefing (10 points)**

Each student will develop a short, professional presentation designed to convey and sell the proposed protocol to stakeholders. Consider how to BRIEFLY, CLEARLY, and CONVINCINGLY convey the 3-5 most important things stakeholders will learn from your results and the potential choices they may be able to make based on the empirical data. **This 20-minute presentation will be given in class.**

C. Grading policy

Please see me as soon as possible in the semester if you require formal accommodations related to a disability. Please also contact me **immediately** if you anticipate having any problems completing an assignment. Late assignments will be docked points. Exceptions to this late penalty are rare and up to the discretion of the instructor.

Midterm Assessment

The midterm assessment will be based on satisfactory course participation, completion of the logic model, and satisfactory performance in the group exercises to that point. *You may assume that you are in good standing and on target to receive a passing grade unless you and your academic advisor receive an e-mail indicating otherwise.*

A+ 98-100

A 93-97

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

IV. Course Calendar and Readings/ Assignments

Session	Date	Topics & Readings	In class <i>group</i> presentation	<i>Individual</i> Assignment Due
1	August 30 th	Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • Assigning groups 		
2	September 6 th	Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is program evaluation? Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter1 (Planning and Designing Useful Evaluations) • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter2 (Analyzing and Engaging Stakeholders) 		
3	September 13 th	Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you going to evaluate? • What is a program? • Theory of change In class discussion: logic model Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 3 (Using Logic Models) • Savaya,R., Waysman, M. (2005). The logic model: A tool for incorporating theory in development and evaluation of programs. <i>Administration in Social Work</i>, Vol 29(2) pp. 85-102. • W.K. Kellogg (2001). Logic Model Development Guide. Battle Creek, Chapter 1. Introduction of logic model 		Observation Exercise (Individual Work)

4	September 20 th	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose of your evaluation? • Problem identification and determining the question • Context evaluation (evaluating needs and assets) • Frameworks for formative and summative evaluations <p>In class discussion: needs assessment</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 4 (Exploratory Evaluation) • Kellogg Evaluation Handbook, Chapter 2. How We Got Here: A Summary of the Evaluation Landscape, History, Paradigms, and Balancing Acts • Culhane, D. P., & Kuhn, R. (1998). Patterns and determinants of public shelter utilization among homeless adults in New York City and Philadelphia. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 23–43. 		Part 1: Logic Model
5	September 27 th	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection • Survey • Operational definition • Using agency records -Archival data <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 14 (Using Surveys), • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 17 (Collecting Data in the Field) • Liket, K. et. al., (2014). Why aren't evaluations working and what to do about it: a framework for negotiating meaningful evaluation in nonprofits. <i>American Journal of Evaluation</i>, Vol. 35(2) pp.171-188. 	Observation Exercise - Group Work (group 1, 2, & 3)	

6	October 4 th	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Interview (Focus group) • Using stories in evaluation <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcome et. al, (2015). Chapter 20 (Focus group interviewing) • Newcomer et al. (2015) Chapter 21 Using stories in Evaluation • Watkins, R., Meiers, M. and Visser, Y. A Guide to Assessing Needs (2012). The World Bank, Washington DC. Full, free book is available at: http://www.needsassessment.org/ 	<p>Observation Exercise-Group Work (groups 4 & 5)</p>	
7	October 11 th	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming ideas to project proposals • Semi structured interview • Sampling <p>In class discussion: Semi-structured interview</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 19 (Conducting Semi-structured Interviews) • Newcomer et al. (2015) Chapter 14 (Using survey) • Farole, D. and Cissner, A. (2005). Seeing eye to eye? Participant and staff perspectives on drug courts. <i>New York: Center for Court Innovation.</i> • Rubio, D., Cheesman, F. and Federspiel, W. (2008). Performance measurement of drug courts: The state of the art. <i>Statewide Technical Assistance Bulletin Vol. 6. Williamsburg, VA: National Center for State Courts</i> 		<p>Part 2: Data Collection Instrument</p>

8	October 18 th	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quasi experimental design • Measuring and monitoring program outcomes • Developing data information systems <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 5 (Performance Measurement) • Bozza, J. (2007) Benevolent behavior modification: Understanding the nature and limitations of problem-solving courts. <i>Widener Law Journal</i>, Vol.17, pp.98-143. 	<p>Survey Exercise - Group Work (groups 4 & 5)</p>	
9	October 25 th	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single system design • Cultural competence in evaluations • The influence of politics on evaluation practice • Ethics of evaluation <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guiding principles for evaluators http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51 • The Program Evaluation Standards: Summary of the Standards (www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html) • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 27 (Use of Evaluation in Government: The Politics of Evaluation) • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 28 (Evaluation Challenges, Issues and Trends) 	<p>Survey Exercise - Group Work (groups 1, 2, & 3)</p>	

10	November 1 st	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speaking (Graham, F) Qualitative Study • Interpreting and analyzing the data • Cost of Quantitative study <p>In class discussion: Cohort Study and Case-Control Study</p> <hr/> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 19 (Qualitative Analysis) • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 20 (Using Statistics in Evaluation) • McLellan, A. T., Skipper, G. S., Campbell, M., & DuPont, R. L. (2008). Five year outcomes in a cohort study of physicians treated for substance use disorders in the United States. <i>Bmj</i>, 337, a2038. • Ma, C., & Smith, T. E. (2017). Increased alcohol use after Hurricane Ike: The roles of perceived social cohesion and social control. <i>Social Science & Medicine</i>. 		
11	November 8 th	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-Effectiveness and Cost-Benefit Analysis <p>In class exercise: cost effectiveness analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing effective evaluation reports and maximizing use of results by not- for-profits <hr/> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 24 (Cost effectiveness and cost benefit analysis) • Herman, P., Avery, D., Schemp, C. S., & Walsh, M. E. (2009). Are cost- inclusive evaluations worth the effort? <i>Evaluation and Program Planning</i>, 32, 55-61. • Newcomer et. al., (2015). Chapter 27 (Providing Recommendations, Suggestions and Options for improvement) • Newcomer et al, (2015). Chapter 28 (Writing for Impact) 		
12	November 15 th	No Class: Individual Protocol Consultation Appointment Day!		
13	November 22 nd	No Class: Happy Thanksgiving holiday!		

14	November 30 th	Class Presentations and Discussion of Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individuals assigned in groups 1, 2 & 3• Protocol paper
15	December 6 th	Class Presentations and Discussion of Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individuals assigned in groups 4 & 5