University of Minnesota School of Social Work
Syllabus

SW 8842-Advanced Social Work Evaluation

Part I: Course information
SW 8842-Advanced Social Work Evaluation
1- 3 credits

Faculty Contact:
Name:
Email:
Phone:
Office Location:

Short Description:
Students design and carry out an evaluation of a program or of their own direct practice. Bi-weekly topics include purposes and types of evaluations at the program and direct practice levels, instrument design, data analysis, ethical issues, and organizational, political, social and cultural factors affecting evaluation in diverse human contexts.

Long Description:
Evaluation is an essential aspect of good social work practice and service delivery. This course is taken concurrently with students’ concentration year field placements, during which students design and carry out an evaluation either of a program or of their own direct practice in their field placement agency or another agency. Students design and carry out evaluations that incorporate current evaluation methods and principles derived from research, theory, practice wisdom, and their own experience. Evaluation methods covered include single-system designs; client-focused evaluations; practitioner-focused evaluations; program (group-level) evaluations, including input, process, outcome evaluations; standardized and self-constructed instruments, data analysis and reporting. The course includes ethics of evaluation and consideration of the political, social, cultural, and organizational factors affecting evaluation. A utilization-focused evaluation is emphasized. Students present their work at the end of the course, including any implications for development or change. The course meets every other week throughout the academic year.

Pre-requisites:
1. This is an advanced social work class, and the material presented in this class is at an advanced level. Social Work students enrolled in this course should have completed the foundation classes listed below, or have advanced standing status.
   SW 5051 - Human Behavior and the Social Environment
   SW 5801 - Policies and Programs in American Social Welfare
   SW 8151 - Social Work Practice Methods: Individuals and Systems
   SW 8152 - Social Work Practice Methods: Families and Groups
   SW 8153 - Models of Community Intervention
   SW 8841 - Social Work Research Methods
2. Concurrent registration in field instruction (SW 8020 or SW 8030) or prior arrangements with instructor and field team is required.
3. If you are not a Social Work student, you need permission of the instructor

Clinical Licensure Hours:
This course contains some clinical content, as required by the Minnesota Board of Social Work for eligibility for the Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW). The number of hours in each required category is listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Differential Diagnosis</th>
<th>Assessment based treatment planning</th>
<th>Clinical Intervention Methods</th>
<th>Evaluation methodologies</th>
<th>SW values and ethics</th>
<th>Culturally specific clinical assessment</th>
<th>Other areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part II: Course outcomes

Course Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course students will be able to:

- Identify the structure, uses, and limitations of various direct practice and program evaluation designs and methods.
- Understand ethical issues that arise with various evaluation designs and methods and ways to appropriately deal with them.
- Demonstrate skill in evaluating direct practice or human service programs through the design and implementation of an evaluation plan.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the current climate for practice and program accountability.
- Identify and describe how each of the four cornerstones of evidence-based practice is part of practice evaluation;
- Demonstrate skill in collecting quantitative and qualitative forms of data.
• Utilize client-specific progress data from self-constructed and/or standardized instruments that inform practice and program decisions and measure progress toward service user goals.

• Understand contextual factors and issues (political, social, cultural, and organizational) that impact the design and implementation of evaluations with a range of populations.

• Use findings from an evaluation to recommend program changes to relevant stakeholders, where appropriate, or to alter interventions to improve practice.

Social Work Practice Competencies
Successful completion of this concentration course implies that the student has achieved competency in the following advanced practice behaviors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency: 2.1.2 – Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of the profession, its ethical standards, and relevant law. Social workers:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Behavior</th>
<th>Covered in class through (i.e., activity, reading, content)</th>
<th>Assessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and analyze value-based and ethical dilemmas that arise in their area of practice, using professional codes of ethical standards and through appropriate professional consultation.</td>
<td>Session 6 in Track A Session 5 in Track B</td>
<td>Evaluation Design Mid-term exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency: 2.1.3 – Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social workers are knowledgeable about the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and reasoned discernment. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity. Critical thinking also requires the synthesis and communication of relevant information. Social workers:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Behaviors</th>
<th>Covered in class through (i.e., activity, reading, content)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identify and evaluate models of assessment, prevention, intervention and evaluation that are appropriate to their area of practice.</td>
<td>Session 1 Sessions 5 &amp; 7 in Track A Sessions 5 &amp; 6 in Track B</td>
<td>Mid-term exam Evaluation Design and Mid-term exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EP 2.1.6 – Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research
Social workers use practice experience to inform research, employ evidence-based interventions, evaluate their own practice, and use research findings to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery. Social workers comprehend quantitative and qualitative research and understand scientific and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate ability to evaluate practice and/or programs in an area of concentration</td>
<td>Sessions 1-6, 9-14</td>
<td>Evaluation Design &amp; Implementation Mid-term exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate ability use practice experience to shape research questions, methods and processes to advance knowledge in an area of concentration.</td>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>Assignment #3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Practice Competency: 2.1.10 (a)-(b) – Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities**

Professional practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals; using research and technological advances; evaluating program outcomes and practice effectiveness; developing, analyzing, advocating, and providing leadership for policies and services; and promoting social and economic justice.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate: Apply research skills to analyze, monitor and evaluate and improve programs for community practice interventions.</td>
<td>Sessions 1-3, Sessions 4-8 and 9-16 in Track B</td>
<td>Evaluation Design and Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate: Communicate and disseminate research and evaluation results to a variety of local, regional, national or global audiences.</td>
<td>Reading for Session 14 in Track A, Session14-16 in Track B</td>
<td>Evaluation Implementation and Presentations</td>
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**HDA Competency: 2.1.10 (a)-(b) – Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities**

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<tr>
<td>• Evaluate: Apply research skills to analyze, monitor and evaluate and improve interventions and programs in health, aging and disability</td>
<td>Sessions 1-3, Sessions 4-8 and 9-16 in Track B</td>
<td>Evaluation Design and Implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluate: Communicate and disseminate research and evaluation results to a variety of local, regional, national or global audiences.</td>
<td>Reading for Session 14 in Track A, Sessions 14-16 in Track B</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluate: Apply research skills to analyze, monitor, evaluate and improve treatment alliance and interventions and programs in clinical social work practice in mental health.</td>
<td>Sessions 1-3, Sessions 4-8 and 9-16 in Track B</td>
<td>Evaluation Design and Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluate: Communicate and disseminate research and evaluation results to a variety of local, regional, national or global audiences when appropriate.</td>
<td>Reading for Session 14 in Track A, Sessions 14-16 in Track B</td>
<td>Evaluation implementation and Presentations</td>
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### CMH Competency: 2.1.10 (a)-(b) – Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

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<td>Evaluation implementation and Presentations</td>
</tr>
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**Part III: Course requirements**

**Texts:** One of these is required:

Assignments
The following are the major assignments for this course:

1. The largest assignment is the design and execution of an evaluation related to your field placement or other social agency, either of a program in which you are involved, or of a part of your direct practice. The first part of this assignment is to do a written design for your evaluation, (including the focus of your evaluation, your method(s), the measure(s) you intend to use, the schedule of observations, how you will analyze your data, and so on. [Detailed instructions will be provided in class, which will vary somewhat, depending on whether you will be doing a direct practice evaluation or a program evaluation.] The evaluation design will count for 25 points and be due at the seventh class session.

The second part will be a written report of your evaluation. It will present your focus and design, your methods, an analysis of your data, a discussion of how you interpret the data, and implications for your practice and/or for program development, including any implications for practice decisions, program development or change. [Detailed instructions and suggested interview questions will be distributed in class.] In addition to the written report you are also expected to present your work either in class or at a poster session. The whole package will count 60 points of your total grade for the course: 25 points for the evaluation design, 25 points for the written evaluation report, and 10 points for the presentation. The written report will be due at the last class of spring semester.

2. Construct a logic model of a program or of a direct practice intervention. (5 points)

3. Do an interview either with a practitioner or program manager/administrator regarding how the practitioner evaluates her/his practice OR how the organization evaluates its program(s). Turn in a report that includes a summary of the interview plus your own reflections and critique. [Detailed instructions and suggested interview questions will be distributed in class.] (5 points)

4. Do one of the following:
**Track A students:** Construct a baseline—i.e. data that can provide critical information about the frequency, severity, and patterned variations relating to a problem or concern. This assignment requires you to utilize a data collection procedure to measure the occurrence of a problem behavior, felt concern, or new skill with someone other than yourself (this can be a client, a family member, a classmate or a coworker). The paper should be approximately 3-5 pages long, excluding graphs. [Detailed instructions will be distributed in class.] (15 points)

OR

**Track B students:** Submit a report assessing the evaluability of the program for which you are planning to design an evaluation: Include an assessment of the readiness of the organization and program to undertake an evaluation, the extent to which program processes and outcomes are well defined, the extent to which appropriate measures exist or can be developed, the extent of access to sources of data, and the extent to which program staff will be involved in the evaluation. [Detailed instructions will be distributed in class.] (15 points)

5. There will also be a quiz on concepts and ideas in fall semester (15 points)

**GRADING**

**Grade Distribution and Assignment Weighting**

The grade weight and due date for each assignment is listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Grade Value (total 100 pts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logic Model</td>
<td>October 3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Interview</td>
<td>October 17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Track A:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct a Baseline OR</strong></td>
<td>November 14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Track B:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assess the Evaluability of the program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Design</td>
<td>December 12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-course Exam</td>
<td>December 12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poster Presentation</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Written Evaluation</em></td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Report

100 points total

*Instructors will select two direct practice evaluation projects and two program evaluation projects for oral presentation during Session 15 to a joint class session. These four projects will receive extra credit.

Students are required to attend and to participate in all class sessions, unless they have notified and received permission from the instructor in advance. Students who miss more than three classes will not meet the minimum standards for passing the course.

**Evaluation and Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students performing satisfactorily during fall semester will receive a grade of X for fall semester. A letter grade will be assigned at the end of spring semester for the three credits.

To complete the course successfully all students must complete and receive a passing grade for each assignment.

**Course Policies**

There are many University and School of Social Work policies that govern this course. Please go to [http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/Documents/SSWCoursePolicies.pdf](http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/Documents/SSWCoursePolicies.pdf) to see a complete description of all the policies.

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**Part IV: Course content**

**Session Plans**

*Note: Students will attend the first three class sessions together. They will then select either Track A or Track B and attend the class sessions in that track until the final two class sessions of spring semester, when students will again meet together.*

**Session #1: September 5**
Topics: Introduction to evaluation: What is evaluation? Why is it important?
Levels of analysis: Micro, Meso, Exo, and Macro.
What is direct practice evaluation? What is program evaluation?
Introduction to group-level designs and single-system designs.

Theories of Change Across Multiple Systems—A Meta-Perspective:

- Delineation of the various influences on client change: the common factors model
- Logic models

Required Readings:


Session #2: September 19

Topics: Evidence-based practice (EBP). Whenever possible, we want evaluations of any type to be based on best research evidence, but the best thinking recognizes that EBP also requires incorporation of client perspectives, the professional wisdom of service providers, and the values and personal experiences of service providers.

Reflective practice: There is a growing awareness of the connections between EBP and reflective practice. These ideas are important guiding principles for how to do competent evaluations.

The nature of practice itself: This is important because it is part of how both service users and service providers experience practice. This pays heed to the idea of starting where “clients” are. In evaluations, service users, service providers, and collaborations, as well as external influences on service user functioning all have parts to play in how service users and service providers experience practice.

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Session #3: October 3

Topics: Instrumentation (Part 1): What are instruments, where do they come from, how to develop them, how to evaluate them in terms of reliability and validity. Advantages and disadvantages of individualized and standardized measures.

Distinguishing between clinical significance and statistical significance

Interviewing: Basic principles of individual and group interviewing. Uses of interviewing throughout the evaluation.

Collaboration: Evaluation as collaborations between researchers, service providers, service users, administrators, and others who provide services to individuals and families.
**Model Evaluations:** There are many examples of various types of evaluations that individual service providers or teams of them can actually do. Compare single-site feasible evaluations with large-scale multi-site, multi-million dollar evaluations.

**Required Readings:**


*Note: Students divide into either Track A or Track B, depending on the intended level of their evaluation (direct practice or program evaluation).*

**Track A – Direct Practice Evaluation Track**

**Session #4: October 17**

**Topics: Instrumentation in Evaluation (Part 2)**

*Self-Constructed Measures for Diverse Practice Contexts*

**Required Readings:**


Session #5: October 31

Topics: Individualizing Evaluation: n=1 framework and approaches
Types of single system designs and their uses
Baselining

Required Readings:


Session #6: November 14

Topics: Selecting a Measure
Reactivity
Monitoring Progress in a Practice Context
Ethical Issues in Direct Practice Evaluation


Required Readings:


Session #7: November 28
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF EVALUATION DESIGNS with Discussion-Part 1

Topics: Evaluating Process Dimensions of Practice with Clients
        Practice Evaluation in Case Management
        Evaluating Practice in Minimal-Contact Situations

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Session #8: December 12

EVALUATION DESIGN IS DUE TODAY
MID-COURSE EXAM
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF EVALUATION DESIGNS with Discussion-Part 2
Topics: *Inherent tensions in the dual roles of practitioner and evaluator and strategies to address them*

Required Readings:


**Track B – Program Evaluation Track**

**Session #4: October 17**

Topics: *Evaluation at the Program Level*

*Overview of purposes of program evaluations*

*Types of program evaluations*

*Formative vs. summative evaluations*

*The environment of program evaluation*

*The focus on utilization*

Required Readings:


Session #5:  
October 31

Topics:

Steps in a program evaluation
Political and ethical considerations in program evaluation
Logic models in program evaluation
Input evaluations: characteristics and use
Process evaluations: characteristics and use
Ethical issues in program evaluation

Required Readings:


Session #6:  
November 14

Topics:

Outcome evaluations: Group level designs
Quasi-experimental designs in program evaluation
Experimental designs in program evaluation

Required Readings:

Royse, Thyer & Padgett (2010), Chap. 9, “Group Research Designs.”


Session #7:  
November 28

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF EVALUATION DESIGNS with Discussion-Part 1

Required Readings:

Royse, Thyer & Padgett (2010), Chap.13, “Pragmatic Issues”
**Session #8: December 12th**

EVALUATION DESIGN IS DUE TODAY
MID-COURSE EXAM
STUDENT PRESENTATIONS OF EVALUATION DESIGNS with Discussion-Part 2

**Spring Semester**

Peer-inspired learning will play a prominent role in the spring semester. In addition to the scheduled topic for each session, students will promote their own and others’ learning through periodically describing to their peers the evolving status of their evaluations, articulating their own decision processes in context, and explaining their underlying rationales for various aspects of their evaluation designs and actual implementation. Students will invite critical feedback and seek specific input on unresolved issues and challenging questions from peers as well as from the instructor. Critical thinking and consultation will be expected with regard to methodological, ethical, and practical questions involved in their evaluations.

Half of each bi-weekly, three-hour class session during spring semester will be devoted to a “Consultation Labs,” during which time students—on a rotating basis—will present a progress summary of their evaluation project and receive feedback from peers and their instructor related to emerging issues, questions, and obstacles during the implementation phase if the evaluation.

Instructors will continue to work with the same (class) cohort of students over this two-semester course, in order to maximize familiarity with the student, their respective practice settings, and their evolving evaluation projects. This familiarity will facilitate optimal advising and feedback on evaluation projects.

**Track A – Direct Practice Evaluation Track**

**Session 9 January 23**

**Topics:**
- CONSULTATION LAB
- Organizing and Analyzing Evaluation Data
- Goal Attainment Scales
- Linking Monitoring of Progress with Evaluating Outcomes

**Required Readings:**


**Session 10** February 6

**Topics:** CONSULTATION LAB

Cultural Influences in Measurement


**Session 11** February 20

**Topics:** CONSULTATION LAB

Evaluating Progress and Process in Practice with Groups

**Required Readings:**


**Session 12** March 6

**Topics:** CONSULTATION LAB

Issues in Evaluating Practice with Couples and Families

**Required Readings:**


Session 13 March 27

Topics: CONSULTATION LAB  Evaluation in Specialized Treatment Contexts

Required Readings:


Session 14 April 10

Topics: CONSULTATION LAB  Evaluation in Specialized Treatment Contexts

Required Readings:


Track B – Program Evaluation Track

Session #9: January 23

**Topics:** Needs assessments – Purposes and Methods

**CONSULTATION LAB**

**Required Readings:**


Session #10: February 6

**Topics:** Use of client satisfaction as a measure

The use of focus groups in evaluation

**CONSULTATION LAB**

**Required Readings:**

Royse, Thyer & Padgett (2010), Chapter 7, “Client Satisfaction.”


Session #11: February 20

**Topic:** The analysis of data in program evaluation

**CONSULTATION LAB**

**Required Readings:**

Royse, Thyer & Padgett (2010), Chap.14, “Data Analysis”

Session #12: March 6
Topics: Outcome evaluations: Client level designs and direct practice evaluation
Single-system designs

CONSULTATION LAB

Required Readings:


---The Week of March 18 is Spring Break---

Session #13: March 27

Topics: Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis as a program evaluation tool

CONSULTATION LAB

Required Readings:


Session #14: April 10

Topics: Considerations in writing the evaluation report
Planning for effective dissemination of findings and utilization of results

CONSULTATION LAB
Required Readings:

Royse, Thyer & Padgett (2010), Chap. 15, “Writing Evaluation Proposals, Reports, and Journal Articles”


Sessions #15-#16: April 24 and May 5
Student Presentations and Poster Sessions

To facilitate a synthesis of applied learning across program evaluation and direct practice evaluation, class sections in Tracks A and B will be re-united for the last two class sessions. Instructors will select two outstanding program evaluation projects, and two outstanding direct practice evaluation projects, to be formally presented to all students enrolled in this advanced course in a special two-hour colloquium (for the 15th class session). All students will prepare and present a poster on their projects at an All-School event held during the last week of classes (date to be determined) for the 16th “class session.”

ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Direct Practice Evaluation


Program Evaluation


