Instructor’s Manual

Social Work Evaluation: Enhancing What We Do

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Lyceum Books

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I. Sample Syllabus for a Course

Research II: Evaluation of Programs and Practice

Introduction:

This course is designed to introduce MSW students (or BSW students with less rigorous requirements) to a range of philosophies, methods, and techniques that are useful for evaluating human service programs and practice interventions. The course is intended to help you become more aware of the range of evaluation activities conducted in health care and human service agencies and to prepare you to conduct your own small and mid-range evaluations of programs and practice.

This course builds on and in some ways dovetails with an Introductory Research Methods course. This course also dovetails with Practice courses, especially in the areas of evaluating practice at all system levels: micro, mezzo, and macro.

Course Objectives:

By the completion of the course, students should be able to understand and explain the following topics:

1. The historical context of practice and program evaluations, particularly significant historical beginnings in the 1960s.

2. Definitions of important terms such as program, practice, service, program evaluation, and practice evaluation.

3. Several common models of program and practice evaluation.

3. How political factors, the agency context of a program, and evaluation methods have potentialities and constraints for conducting quality evaluations.

4. The value and usefulness of program and practice evaluations for administering an agency, program planning and development, strengthening professional practice, and being accountable to regulatory and funding agencies.

5. How a program evaluation and practice evaluation are similar and different.

6. How both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in conducting evaluations.

7. The range of options in design and technique available for conducting both program and practice evaluations.
8. The basic assumptions inherent in the evaluation process and the influence of
gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, age, disability, and other
diversity factors on the research process.

9. The ethical issues involved in conducting and reporting evaluation research,
including the social work values and ethics that are pertinent to conducting and
monitoring a research study and the ethical principles of the American Evaluation
Association.

By the completion of the course, students should be able **perform** the following:

1. Integrate evaluation into your practice as a critical component of practice.

2. Write measurable objectives for the goals of programs and practice interventions.

3. Participate in various evaluation activities conducted by other staff members at
your field agency.

4. Formulate a plan for conducting a program or practice evaluation in your field
agency.

5. Implement this plan on a small scale at your field agency.

6. Prepare a readable report of the evaluation results and recommendations.

**Required texts:**

Lyceum Books.

2) A text on data analysis and SPSS

**List of Course Content:**

**Week 1:**
Introduction to course, syllabus, and major assignments
Common characteristics of evaluations
Aims of evaluation
Defining important terms
Steps in conducting an evaluation
Exploring students’ experiences and interests in evaluations
Exploring evaluations conducted in the field agencies

**Required reading:**
Dudley text, chapters 1
The evaluation chapter(s) in your Practice I text
Week 2:
Relevant events in history
Various Perspectives on evaluation
Synthesis of different evaluation perspectives
Evidence-based interventions
Introduction of the Three-Stage Approach
Ethical issues and evaluations
Informed consent and the university’s IRB protocol
Human diversity and social justice issues and evaluation
Discussion questions/assignments at the end of chapters 1 & 2 (select 2-3)

Required readings:
Dudley, chapters 2 & 3

Week 3
Common evaluation models (possibly involve a panel of speakers)
Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods in evaluation
Discussion questions/assignments at the end of chapter 4 (select 2-3)

Required reading:
Dudley text, chapter 4

Week 4:
Focusing an evaluation
The input of clients
Social and political context of evaluations
Guidelines for focusing an evaluation
A practical tool for crafting study questions
Discussion questions/assignments at the end of chapter 5 (select 2-3)

Required reading:
Dudley text, chapter 5

Week 5:
The planning stage and determining needs
The Logic Model
purposes of needs assessments
Variety of tools for conducting needs assessments
Steps in conducting a needs assessment
Practice evaluations and needs assessments
Discussion questions/assignments at the end of chapter 6 (select 2-3)

Required reading:
Dudley text, chapter 6
Week 6:
Goals and measurable objectives
Characteristics of goals
Limitations of goals
Crafting measurable objectives
Differences between program and practice objectives
Discussion questions/assignments at the end of chapter 7 (select 2-3)

Required reading:
Dudley text, chapter 7

Week 7:
Evaluation of program processes
Types of evaluations of program process
Types of evaluation of practice processes
Discussion questions/assignments at the end of chapter 8 (select 2-3)

Required reading:
Dudley text, chapter 8

Week 8:
Evaluations of outcomes
Nature of outcomes
Criteria for choosing outcome measures
Evaluation designs for program outcomes
Evaluation designs for practice outcomes
Discussion questions/assignments at the end of chapter 9 (select 2-3)

Required reading:
Dudley text, chapter 9

Week 9:
Qualitative data analysis and evaluations
Pertinent tools for qualitative data analysis
Exercises in analyzing qualitative data

Required reading:
Dudley text, chapter 10

Week 10:
Quantitative data analysis and evaluations
Pertinent tools for quantitative data analysis
Computer lab for SPSS exercises

Required readings:
Dudley text, chapter 10
Statistics text readings

**Week 11:**
Quantitative data analysis and evaluations (continued)
Computer lab for SPSS exercises

**Required readings:**
Dudley text, chapter 10
Statistics text readings

**Week 12:**
Open for work on major assignments

**Week 13:**
Preparing and disseminating the results
Variety of formats for evaluation reports
Strategies for preparing reports
Strategies for disseminating evaluation results

**Required readings:**
Dudley text, chapter 11

**Week 14:**
Student presentations
Summary of course
II. Supplemental Bibliography for Course

Additional evaluation texts:
Ginsberg, L. (2001). *Social work evaluation: Principles and methods*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. (Several scales of such things as clinical anxiety and family relations are included in chapter 8.)

Evaluation issues in general:


**Participatory action research:**


Hughes, R., & Kirby, J. (2000). Strengthening evaluation strategies for divorcing family support services: Perspectives of parent educators, mediators, attorneys, and judges. *Family Relations, 49*, 53-61. (Considers the views of other stakeholders.)


**Articles on clinical assessment, needs assessments and other measurement issues:**


**Qualitative program evaluations:**

Antle, B., et al. (2001). Challenges of parenting for families living with AIDS. *Social Work, 46*(2), 159-169. (A qualitative study that identifies themes describing parenting when a family member has AIDS.)


**Evaluation studies on client access to services:**

**Evaluation studies of client and staff satisfaction:**

**Evaluation studies of program processes:**

**Evaluation studies of program outcomes:**

**Case studies:**


III. Larger Assignments

A. A Program Evaluation Proposal and a Program Evaluation Report (details available in the Appendix)

B. Individualized Assignments (details in the Appendix)

C. Chapter 6, Discussion Question/Assignment #2: Assess the needs of families in a selected community

D. Chapter 6, Discussion Question/Assignment #6: Conduct a needs assessment and address a policy question

E. Chapter 8, Discussion Question/Assignment #7: Conduct an evaluation of practice processes

F. Chapter 9, Discussion Question/Assignment #7: Conduct an evaluation of practice outcomes
IV. Smaller Assignments

A. Chapter 1, Discussion Question/Assignment #1: Agency Information Sheet

B. Chapter 1, Discussion Question/Assignment #5: Interview a staff member about evaluations

C. Chapter 4, Discussion Question/Assignment #1: Explore a common evaluation model

D. Chapter 5, Discussion Question/Assignments #2 & 3: Develop a focus for an evaluation

E. Chapter 7, Discussion Question/Assignment #7: Role play helping a client craft measurable objectives

F. Chapter 8, Discussion Question/Assignment #6: Role play informal exploration of client satisfaction

G. Chapter 9, Discussion Question/Assignment #2: Role play helping a client use a Goal Attainment Scale

H. Chapter 11, Discussion Question/Assignments #1 & 2: Critique an evaluation report
Appendix

A. Program Evaluation Proposal

This major assignment involves several small steps that will lead to a program evaluation proposal and eventually a completed program evaluation report. These two major assignments (proposal and final report) should give you considerable exposure and hands-on experience with evaluation processes in an agency context. The program evaluation proposal includes all of the following topics of information:

1. A one-page executive summary.

2. A title that succinctly reflects your proposed study.

3. The following background information:
   a. Why is this study being proposed?
   b. Describe the program elements and problems that provide the larger context for your evaluation?
   c. What resources are available to support you in completing this evaluation?
   d. What constraints are evident in completing the evaluation and how you will take them into account?
   e. What is the anticipated contribution/impact of the study on programs, clients, and agency decision-making?
   f. Summarize the findings from the professional literature (two pertinent articles). Feel free to use articles in the course bibliography that are relevant to your evaluation.

4. Study questions (two to five questions) that will be the focus of your investigation. Also explain why you have chosen these questions.

5. Study design, including the following:
   a. A plan to protect human subjects. (Identify the agency as the sponsor of the evaluation.)
   b. The primary variables that you will focus on and how they will be measured.
   c. Data collection approach and specific procedures
   d. The instrument to be used and attach a copy.
   e. Data source and sampling approach
   f. A data analysis plan.

6. Strengths and limitations of your research design, the extent of agency support, sources of data, etc.

7. A time frame for completing the study by the end of the semester.
8. Addendum to include: an informed consent form and data collection instrument

The proposal should be double-spaced and use each of the above topics of information as headings for the proposal. Be realistic about what you can accomplish in the remaining seven weeks of the semester in your sample size and the length of your instrument.
B. Program Evaluation Report

The Program Evaluation Report follows the implementation of the Program Evaluation Proposal assignment in #A above. This assignment involves the following four major steps: 1) Updating your proposal, 2) Analyzing your findings, 3) Presenting the findings and recommendations in a technical report and 4) Presenting the findings and recommendations in a communication form that is helpful to the agency.

1) Update the Program Evaluation Proposal
You should update the proposal in several areas. Consider revisions particularly in the background information, your study questions, study design, and strengths and limitations of your research design. Describe resources and constraints in the past tense in terms of how you used resources and addressed constraints. Leave out information on your time frame since the project will be completed at this time. Also, be sure to include an updated version of your data collection instrument. This updated proposal is to be turned in as part of your program evaluation report. The executive summary should be in the past tense and include a summary of the findings and recommendations.

2) Analyze the findings
Next, analyze your findings. Your study questions and data analysis plan should guide you through this process. Effective visual aids such as tables and graphs should be considered in the presentation of your findings. Computer lab classes will be available to complete the data analysis.

3) Prepare a report of the findings and recommendations
Your report of the findings and recommendations is to be prepared in close consultation with your field agency so that it is in a form that it is most helpful to the agency.

4) Develop one additional form of presentation
A technical report like the one you will turn in to the instructor is one way to present your findings to the agency and community. Other communication forms are also available including a staff workshop, a memo to your agency, a personal discussion with the agency provider, a news release, a public forum or community meeting, and a publishable article for disseminating your findings. Select one of these communication forms for the field agency. Then briefly describe specifically what you did and how the stakeholders responded. If the stakeholders are staff of the agency, share whether they gave any indication that they would implement your recommendations?

Outline for Program Evaluation Report

The completed program evaluation report is expected to have all of the following areas of information and use all of the headings listed below.
1. A title that succinctly reflects your proposed study.

2. A one-page executive summary. Write it in past tense and include a summary of findings and recommendations.

3. Table of Contents

4. The following background information:
   A. Why this study is being proposed
   B. What program elements or components, problems, and other issues are involved
   C. Resources available to you to support this study
   D. Constraints that existed and how you took them into account
   E. Contribution/impact of the study on programs, clients, and agency decision-making
   F. Summary of findings from the professional literature (two pertinent articles).

5. Study Questions that will be the focus of your investigation. Also explain why you have chosen these questions. Note that these questions are general in nature and are not the specific questions that you ask your respondents.

6. Study design including the following:
   A. Plan to protect human subjects including indicating the agency is the sponsor.
   B. Define the primary variables that you focused on and how they were measured.
   C. Data collection approach and specific procedures
   D. Instruments that you used and attach a copy in the Appendix.
   E. Data sources and sampling approach used
   F. A data analysis plan. Do this by explaining how you answered each study question. (Be as specific as possible, including statistical procedures and qualitative data analysis techniques used, etc.)

7. Findings section

8. Discussion section including a concluding summary of the findings, the recommendations, and the strengths and limitations of your study.

9. Report to the agency: Briefly describe which communication form you have used, what you did specifically, and how the users have responded. If the users are staff members of an agency, share whether or not they gave any indication that they would implement your recommendations.

10. References
11. Appendices:

A. Data collection instrument used
B. Any important tables, graphs, etc. not included in the Findings section.
C. Informed consent form
C. **Individualized Assignments**  

**Explanation:** This assignment is to be completed sometime during the semester. Each student will have a different assignment which is why it is referred to as an “individualized assignment.” The assignment will provide you with a “hands-on” experience with some aspect of a program evaluation. This assignment will also add to your knowledge and skills about evaluations. The instructor will give you specific directions, resources, and guidance once we have agreed on your specific assignment. The number of students permitted for each assignment is noted in parentheses below and will vary with the amount of work required (e.g., if two students are assigned, twice as much work is expected than for one student). After completing your assignment, you will be asked to give an informal presentation to the class to share what you have learned. You will be choosing one assignment from the following options:

1. Actively participate in an evaluation project offered in your field agency and share with the class what you learned. (1)  
2. Lead a focus group of clients that explores what they see as the strengths and weaknesses of a particular program. Share your results. (1)  
3. Lead a focus group of clients or staff that involves them in identifying possible questions for a needs assessment study. Report on your results. (Examples of topics for needs assessments are teen pregnancy prevention, domestic violence, services relevant to older adults, staff morale issues). (1)  
4. Lead a focus group of BSW or MSW students on a topic of interest to you and report on the findings. (1)  
5. Conduct and report on a case study of a client having difficulty with agency accessibility issues. (1)  
6. Identify the critical ingredients in your practice approach. (To complete this task, for example, you could write up and analyze 3 or 4 process recordings of your work with clients, identify the aspects in your process recording that seem most prominent, and then describe an approach that reflects what you actually learned. (1 or 2)  
7. Observe the environment of a waiting room or another setting of an agency to identify and document any problems or special needs that may need to be addressed. Report what you have found to the class. (1)  
8. Implement a single system design with a client and present the results to the class. (1)  
9. Present a role-play of work with a client system focusing on an evaluation of the client’s progress. Include both the initial session and later evaluation session in the role-play. Use a Single System Design and/or Goal Attainment Scale to evaluate the client’s progress. (2)