

Indiana University  
School of Social Work

S520/X906  
Kapoor

Summer, 1998  
8:45AM - 12:00 Noon  
ES 4109

**Evaluation Processes for Social Work**

**I. Course Description**

This course introduces students to the knowledge and skills needed to evaluate their own practice and the effectiveness of social service programs within which they work. A range of qualitative and quantitative evaluation approaches are presented to insure skill in using a variety of evaluation designs, methodologies and techniques applicable to generalist roles in social work practice. Attention is given to the social work practice continuum of problem definition, goal setting, intervention, and evaluation of goal attainment. The role of evaluation in every practice situation is carefully examined. The social worker's ethical responsibility to monitor one's practice, as well as recognize ethical issues which may arise in the evaluation of practice and in the use of evaluation findings, are examined.

**II. Course Objectives**

As a result of having completed the requirements of this course, the student will have demonstrated:

1. An understanding of and a commitment to the responsibility to evaluate the effects and effectiveness of her/his own practice, in both interpersonal practice and planning and management settings.
2. An understanding of the role that social work values and ethics play in selecting and applying research methods to the evaluation of practices, with special attention to issues related to diverse and oppressed populations.
3. An understanding of the range of quantitative and qualitative research designs, methods, instruments, measurement models and analytical tools available for use in assessing the outcomes of practice and the effectiveness of specific interventions or programs.
4. Beginning skills in defining goals in measurable terms.
5. A beginning skill in choosing and implementing appropriate measures for evaluating one's own interpersonal practice.
6. An awareness of the instruments appropriate for use in the assessment of client functioning and the determination of needs.

7. An understanding of the range of potential effects that varying evaluation methods can have on the process of practice.
8. The purposes of program evaluation in the context of human service organizations.
9. An understanding of the types of evaluation activities appropriate for various stages in the development and implementation of programs:
  - a. Planning and needs assessment,
  - b. Start-up and process evaluation,
  - c. Ongoing operation, monitoring and outcome evaluation.
10. The relationship between program evaluation and basic research.
10. The social, organizational and political contexts within which evaluation occurs.
12. The standards of evaluation research--utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy.
13. A beginning skill in differentially selecting the most appropriate approach to the evaluation of practice in specific micro and macro practice situations.

### III. Course Content:

The content to be covered throughout this academic term is organized into five general components or phases. While the amount of time devoted to each component will vary depending upon student interest and involvement, the order of content will be addressed essentially as outlined below. The readings related to each phase of the course are listed at the end of each component.

The course begins with a general introduction to the nature and scope of evaluative research as it relates to social work practice. This initial phase includes the collection and analysis of data regarding student attitudes toward practice-related research and is intended to illustrate many of the concepts and principles addressed throughout the remainder of the course. Following this general foundation, the course explores some of the more critical issues that affect the reliability and validity of evaluation research, including ethical as well as cultural and gender considerations. During this phase, attention is given to the complementary nature of qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry and the use of triangulation as a strategy for reducing the bias.

During the third phase of the course, the analysis shifts to a more focused consideration of single system evaluation designs, including an introduction to a range of evaluation strategies that are appropriate for use in interpersonal practice. The scope of the course then broadens to encompass group designs of research as they relate to the evaluation of practice at the programmatic and organizational levels. The course concludes with a review of some of the more

important statistical measures and their role in the evaluation process. Emphasis is placed on the interpretation and meaning of the statistics rather than on derivation and calculation. Each phase or component of the course is intended to serve as a foundation for the one that follows it.

Upon completion of the course, it is hoped that the student will have attained a reasonable grasp of the foundation knowledge necessary to effectively incorporate evaluation processes into her/his practice routines. This course is a prerequisite for the more advanced course that is offered as part of the concentration year curriculum.

### **Phase 1: Introduction to Practice-Related Research**

This initial phase provides an overview of the purposes, rationale and content areas to be addressed throughout the course. It is based on a commitment to the belief that the ongoing evaluation of our social work practice intervention strategies, the effects of which can be empirically demonstrated, ultimately serves the best interests of our clients, promotes the growth and professional development of individual practitioners, and contributes to the overall credibility of the profession. Discussion will emphasize the basic elements essential to building research into practice. To help stimulate discussion, students will participate in a study of their own attitudes regarding the role of research in social work practice. The analysis of the data provided by the brief survey that accompanies this phase of the course will serve as a bridge to a consideration of some of the major concepts and principles to be addressed throughout the course.

*Related Readings: Chapters 1, 2, and 13.*

### **Phase 2: Critical Issues in Practice-Related Research**

Phase 1 has laid a foundation for incorporating evaluation research into social work practice routines. This phase will focus on a consideration of issues which can and often do effect the reliability and validity of practice our practice evaluation efforts. As such, a good deal of time will be spent during this component and throughout the course discussing factors that need to be taken into consideration in order to strengthen the integrity of our methodology in an effort to avoid bias. Within this context consideration is given to the following topics:

- threats to internal and external validity
- the role of qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry
- culture and gender issues
- ethical considerations
- practical, logistical and political issues
- the concept of triangulation in evaluation
- accessing available sources of information

*Related Readings: Chapters 4, 5, and 6.*

### **Phase 3: Single System Evaluation**

During this phase, the primary emphasis shifts to a consideration of design issues as they relate to interpersonal practice. In addition to exploring the basic protocol of the use of time series designs, as well as variations of the time series model, this component will discuss a range of single system approaches that are adaptable to a variety of different practice situations. The driving imperative behind effective single system research is to fit the evaluation method to the problem-to-be-solved in an unobtrusive way that provides the desired information while complementing the intervention process. An important component of this discussion is the consideration of Rapid Assessment Instruments (RAI's) and how they are used to help measure change in the dependent variables in practice. Accordingly, the topics covered in this component include:

- a review of time series designs, including their relative strengths and weaknesses,
- a consideration of alternative methods for evaluating interpersonal practice, (The A-Priori approach, the Q-Sort Method, Goal Attainment, etc.),
- the selection and administration of Rapid Assessment Instruments (RAI's).

*Related Readings: Chapter 3, summary statement on Q-Sort Technique; Powers article on reserve in library: "Designs and procedures for evaluating crisis intervention."*

### **Phase 4: Program Evaluation**

The component of the course is designed to introduce students to the basic research concepts used in program evaluation. Special attention is paid to the dynamic political and interpersonal context within which program evaluation research is planned, carried out and used. Consideration is also given to the developmental nature of all program evaluation and the importance of posing the most appropriate questions to be explored in the evaluation process. The following topics are considered:

- clarifying the purposes and initiating the evaluation planning process,
- types of evaluation (needs assessment, process evaluation, outcome research),
- evaluation as a developmental process,
- effectiveness and efficiency,
- cost effectiveness and cost benefit,
- ethical, political and utilization issues.

*Related Readings: Chapter 10.*

### **Phase 5: Analyzing and Reporting Data to Inform Practice**

During this phase, consideration will be given to the role that measurement and statistics play in the analysis of data as it relates to both single system and program evaluation efforts. Emphasis is placed on the interpretation and meaning of the statistical significance of change following individual or programmatic intervention. Content is organized in relation to levels of measurement (i.e., nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio) as well as statistical functions (i.e., central tendency, variability, relationship, difference) in an effort to help students understand the underlying assumptions imbedded in sets of related statistical measures. The following topics are considered:

- the nature of statistical reasoning,
- the use of descriptive statistics in practice,
- the use of statistics in experiments,
- the use of auto-correlation and its interpretation,
- using the two-standard deviation band in time series research,
- the logic of chi square and the *t*-test as measures of difference,
- interpreting probability tables,
- recognizing the difference between clinical and statistical significance.

*Related Readings: Chapters 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12. Also, see handouts.*

## **IV. Selected Bibliography:**

### **Required Text:**

Frederick G. Reamer (1998). Social Work Research and Evaluation Skills: A Case Base, User-Friendly Approach. New York: Columbia University Press.

### **Related Readings:**

A. Rubin and E. Babbie (1989). Research methods for social workers. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

D. H. Barlow and M. Herson (1984). Single case experimental designs, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Pergamon Press.

B. J. Blythe and T. Tripodi, Scott Briar (1994). Direct Practice Research in Human Service Agencies. New York: Columbia University Press.

N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), (1994). Handbook of qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

J. Fischer and K. Corcoran (1994). Measures for clinical practice: A source book. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: the Free Press.

W. Hudson (1981). Clinical measurement package for social workers. Reprinted in R. M. Grinnell (Ed.), Social work research and evaluation. Itasca, IL.: F.E. Peacock.

A. E. Kasdin (1986). "The evaluation of psychotherapy: Research design and methodology." In S. L. Garfield and A. E. Bergin (Eds.), Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change. New York: Wiley Press.

G. T. Powers (1990). "Designs and procedures for evaluating crisis interventions." In A. R. Roberts (Ed.), Crisis intervention handbook. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

D. Royse (1995). Research methods in social work (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

D. Royse and Bruce Thyer (1996) Program Evaluation (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

W. Stephenson (1953). The study of behavior: Q-technique and its methodology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## **V. Evaluation of Student Performance:**

Student performance in this course will be evaluated on the basis of two objective-type, in-class tests related to content discussed in class or addressed in the related readings. The first test will be given at approximately mid-semester; the second at the end of the last class session. The relative weight of each test will be either 60 or 40 percent with the higher weight being assigned to the test on which the student performs his/her best. The specific content to be covered in each test will be discussed in class. Students will be provided with a summary of their performance on each test. Anyone interested in reviewing their performance on either test may do so by scheduling an appointment with the instructor. Tests will be held for three months following the conclusion of the course.

## **VI. Additional Information:**

This course is organized around a lecture/discussion format with the expectation that students should feel free to participate generally by way of in-class comments, questions and discussion throughout the course.

It is planned that generally objective and anonymous student evaluations will be made by students at the end of the course. In addition, however, in an effort to provide for mid-course corrections, students are encouraged to provide ongoing evaluation by means of

written feedback to the instructor. Special office hours will be arranged in consultation with students at a mutually convenient time so that individual students or small groups of students may meet with the instructor to discuss course related issues.

Any student who wishes the instructor to be aware of any personal factor that might possibly adversely affect her/his ability to perform optimally in this class should notify the instructor in writing as soon as possible. This includes any special needs that should be addressed by the Adaptive Educational Services office.

You may feel free to call me either at work (317) 274-6716 or at home (317) 293-2325, regarding any questions you may have with respect to this course. I can also be reached by means of E-Mail at [jkapoor@iupui.edu](mailto:jkapoor@iupui.edu).

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**Class Schedule**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Reading Assignments</b>
<b>6/30 and 7/2</b>	<b>Phase 1: Chapters 1, 2, and 13.</b>
<b>7/7 and 7/9</b>	<b>Phase 2: Chapters 4, 5 and 6.</b>
<b>7/14 7/16</b>	<b>Phase 3: Chapter 3. MID-TERM</b>
<b>7/21 and 7/27</b>	<b>Phase 4: Chapter 10.</b>
<b>7/28 and 7/30</b>	<b>Phase 5: Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 11.</b>
<b>8/4 8/6</b>	<b>Phase 5: Chapter 12. FINAL EXAM</b>