

SW945: Evaluation Research Spring 2014

Instructor: Kristi Slack
Class: Friday 9:00 to 11:30 a.m., School of Social Work, Room 114
Offices: School of Social Work, 2nd floor
Office Hours: By appointment
Phone: 608-263-4630 (but I do not check this frequently—email is preferred)
E-mail: Ksslack@wisc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a comprehensive introduction to the practice of evaluation research with regard to social welfare programs and policies. It is organized around a variety of methods for planning, evaluating, and assessing social interventions in order to understand and improve their efficacy. Topics will include theory-driven approaches to evaluation research, ethical issues in evaluation, the role of the evaluator, conducting needs assessments, producing logic models, measuring and assessing multiple types of evidence, planning and implementing evaluations of new and existing programs, evaluation design (experimental, quasi-experimental), cost-benefit analysis, and translational research. Whereas the primary focus of the course will be impact evaluation—estimating the quantitative effects of social programs and policies—other stages of evaluation will also be covered. Additionally, considerable attention will be given to program theory and design. Case studies and guest lecturers will be utilized throughout the course to illustrate current approaches to each topic. Finally, we will address effect sizes, interpretation of findings, and the role of evaluation results in program and policy development.

In contrast to many evaluation research courses, we will heavily focus on applied examples of on-the-ground interactions with program staff, program evaluation planning and implementation, issues of quality assurance and monitoring, problem-solving strategies for inevitable road blocks, and how to achieve the most rigorous possible evaluation of a social welfare program in a context of resistance to randomization and/or the quantitative evaluation process.

The primary objectives of the course are to: (1) expose students to the multidisciplinary field of evaluation research; (2) familiarize students with contemporary approaches to evaluation research; (3) facilitate an understanding of the strengths and limitations of a range evaluation models; and (4) prepare students to design, implement, utilize, and critique evaluation research, as well as to contextualize and interpret findings.

COURSE FORMAT

The course is organized as a seminar. Students are expected to take an active role in class discussions. Class sessions will include limited lecture and considerable discussions of the readings and opportunities for student presentations. As such, students are expected to come to class having carefully read the materials and ready to fully participate in discussion. To facilitate this, we have included as the last page

of this document a “concept sheet,” which is designed to help you identify the important issues in each of the assigned articles and chapters. We strongly recommend that you use this document to organize your thinking for class discussion (no need to turn it in, just have it guide your thoughts about the readings).

ASSIGNMENTS

Present two case studies. Twice during the course of the semester students will be asked to present a case study to the class that is relevant to the weekly topic. This assignment will require that you identify a case example, disseminate a relevant reading, and lead the class through a discussion in which the concepts for the week are applied to the case. DUE: As assigned.

Develop and defend a logic model. Students will develop a detailed logic model outlining the theory of change underlying an existing or proposed program or policy and detailing the steps through which a given set of outcomes is expected to be achieved. Students are free to choose a program that they are familiar with (e.g., related to a field placement, place of employment, or volunteer setting), but should choose something for which a logic model has not yet been developed. DUE: Friday, 3/14/14.

Develop evaluation protocol. The culminating project of the semester will be to (a) prepare a 8-12 page (single-spaced) evaluation protocol in which you apply the concepts covered in class—including program theory and description, design, implementation, measurement, methodology, data analysis plan, issues of internal and external validity—to propose 2-3 alternative evaluation strategies for assessing the impact of the program you selected for the logic model assignments; and (2) deliver an in-class power-point presentation that gives an overview of your evaluation protocol. DUE: Presentations during weeks 15 and 16, as assigned; final project due Friday, 5/16/14.

Further instructions for the written assignments will be provided during the course of the semester.

GRADING

30% Logic model—graphic (10%) and logic model critique (10%)

20% Presentation of case studies (10% each)

40% Final project—evaluation protocol (25%) and in-class presentation (15%)

10% weekly class participation

COURSE READINGS

The readings for each week will be posted on the class Learn@UW website.

COURSE OUTLINE

Please note that there are several places throughout the syllabus where the readings are TBA. This is intentional so that after meeting together in Week 1, I can select readings that align with the interests of students in class. When readings are added to the syllabus, I will notify the class by email.

WEEK #1, 1/24/14: Introduction and overview/organization of the course, and discussion of ethical issues in evaluation

Buckley, C. (December 8, 2010). To test housing program, some are denied aid. *The New York Times*.

WEEK #2, 1/31/14: The role of experimentation in program evaluation and standards of evidence

Shadish, W., Cook, T. & Campbell, D. (2002). Experiments and generalized causal inference, in *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference (pp.1-32)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Flay, B.R., et al. (2005). Standards of evidence: Criteria for efficacy, effectiveness and dissemination. *Prevention Science*, 6(3), 151-175.

Heinrich, C.J. (2007). Evidence-based policy and performance management: Challenges and prospects in two parallel movements. *The American Review of Public Administration*. 37(3), 255-277.

Ludwig, J., Ladd, Helen F., and Duncan, G. (2001). Urban poverty and educational outcomes. *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs*, pp. 147-201.

WEEK #3, 2/7/14: Logic models and theory-driven program design

W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2004). *W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide*. Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Noyes, J.L., and Corbett, T. (2005). Cross-systems innovations: The *line-of-sight* exercise, or getting from where you are to where you want to be, *Focus*, 24(1), 36-41.

Chen, H. & Turner, N. (2012). Formal theory versus stakeholder theory: New insights from a tobacco-focused prevention program evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 33, 395-413.

Kaplan, S.A., and Garrett, K.E. (2005). The use of logic models by community-based initiatives. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 28, 167-172.

WEEK #4, 2/14/14: Program implementation and process evaluation

Resnick, B., Bellg A.J., Borrelli, B., DeFrancesco, C., Breger, R., Hecht, J., Sharp, D.L., Levesque, C., Orwig, D., Ernst, D., Ogedegbe, G., and Czajkowski, S. 2005. Examples of implementation and evaluation of treatment fidelity in the BCC studies: Where we are and where we need to go. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 29, 46-54.

Harachi, T.W., Abbott, R.D., Catalano, R.F., Haggerty, K.P., and Fleming, C.B. (1999). Opening the black box: Using process evaluation measures to assess implementation and theory building. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(5), 711-731.

Kalafat, J., Illback, R.J., Sanders, D. (2007). The relationship between implementation fidelity and educational outcomes in a school-based family support program: Development of a model for evaluating multidimensional full-service programs. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 30, 136-148.

Viadro, C.I., Earp, J.L., and Altpeter, M. 1997. Designing a process evaluation for a comprehensive breast cancer screening intervention: Challenges and opportunities. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 20, 237-249.

Additional Reading TBA

WEEK #5, 2/21/14: Evaluating Organizational Change Initiatives

GUEST SPEAKER: LYNN BRADY, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, JOURNEY MENTAL HEALTH

Readings TBA

WEEK #6, 2/28/14: Measurement selection for program evaluation and sample size considerations

Braverman, M. (2013). Negotiating measurement: Methodological and interpersonal considerations in the choice and interpretation of instruments. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 34, 99-114.

Schaeffer, N.C. & Presser, S. (2003). The science of asking questions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29, 65-88.

Benjamin, L. (2012). Nonprofit organizations and outcome measurement: From tracking program activities to focusing on frontline work. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 33, 431-447.

Additional Reading TBA

WEEK #7, 3/7/14: Balancing agency/provider/stakeholder needs with scholarly needs

GUEST SPEAKER: JENNY GREETHER- PROGRAM DIRECTOR, EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE

Patton, M.Q. (2008). *Excerpts from Utilization-Focused Evaluation, 4th Ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional Reading TBA

WEEK #8, 3/14/14: Implications of and strategies for recruitment and retention in evaluation research

GUEST SPEAKER: TBA, UW-MADISON, SURVEY RESEARCH CENTER

Readings TBA

LOGIC MODEL ASSIGNMENT DUE 3/14/14

Spring Break – No Class: 3/21/14

WEEK #10, 3/28/14: Evaluation design I: randomized experiments

- Greenberg, D.H., Michalopoulos, C., and Robins, P.K. (2006). Do experimental and nonexperimental evaluations give different answers about the effectiveness of government-funded training programs? *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 25(3), 523-552.
- *Agodini, R., and Dynarski, M. 2004. Are experiments the only options? A look at dropout prevention programs. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 180-194.
- *Sandler, I.N., Schoenfelder, E.N., Wolchik, S.A., and MacKinnon, D.P. 2011. Long-term impact of prevention programs to promote effective parenting: Lasting effects, but uncertain processes. *Annual review of Psychology*, 62, 299-329.
- *Susser E., Valencia, E., Conover, S., et al. 1997. Preventing recurrent homelessness among mentally ill men: A "critical time" intervention after discharge from a shelter. *American Journal of Public Health*. 87, 256-262.

Additional Reading TBA

WEEK #11, 4/4/14: Evaluation design II: quasi-experimental designs

- *Shadish, W.R., Clark, M.H., and Steiner, P.M. 2008. Can nonrandomized experiments yield accurate answers? A randomized experiment comparing random and nonrandom assignments. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 103(484), 1334-1356. (Including commentaries and rejoinder).
- *Barth, R., Greeson, J., Guo, S., Green, R., Hurley, Sl, & Sisson, J. (2007). Outcomes for youth receiving intensive in-home therapy or residential care: A comparison using propensity scores. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(4), 497-505.
- *Nimon, K., Zigarmi, D. & Allen, J. (2011). Measures of program effectiveness based on retrospective pretest data: Are all created equal? *American Journal of Evaluation*, 32, 8-28.
- *Weitzman, B., Mijanovich, T., Silver, D. & Brecher, C. (2009). Finding the impact in a messy intervention: Using an integrated design to evaluate a comprehensive citywide initiative. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 30, 495-514.

Additional Reading TBA

WEEK #12, 4/11/14: Evaluation design III: evaluation research with observational data

- Cook, T.D., Shadish, W.R., and Wong, V.C. (2008). Three conditions under which experiments and observational studies produce comparable causal estimates: New findings from within-study comparisons. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 27(4), 724-750.
- *Pohl, S., Steiner, P.M., Eisermann, J., Soellner, R., and Cook, T.D. 2009. Unbiased causal inference from an observational study: Results of a within-study comparison. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(4), 463-479.
- *Feng, H. & Lu, M. (2011). School quality and housing prices: Empirical evidence from a natural experiment in Shanghai, China. *Journal of Housing Economics*, 22, 291-307.
- *Costello, E. J., Compton, S., Keeler, G. & Angold, A (2003). Relationships between poverty and psychopathology: A natural experiment. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 290(15), 2023-2029.
- *Gordon, R.A. and Heinrich, C.J. (2004). Modeling trajectories in social program outcomes for performance accountability. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 25(2), 161-189.
- *Fording, R., Schram, S. & Soss, J. (2013). Do welfare sanctions help or hurt the poor? Estimating the causal effect of sanctioning on client earnings. *Social Service Review*, 87(4), 641-676.
- *Doyle, J. Jr. (2013). Causal effects of foster care: An instrumental variables approach. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35, 1143-1151.

WEEK #13, 4/18/14: Cost-benefit analysis

- Weimer, D., and Vining, A.R. (2011). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 5th Edition. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. Chapter 16, Cost-benefit analysis: Assessing efficiency (pp. 383-423).
- Currie, J. (2001). Early childhood education programs. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 15(2), 213-238.
- *Belfield, C.R., Nores, M., Barnett, S., and Schweinhart, L. (2006). The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program: Cost-benefit analysis using data from the age-40 followup. *The Journal of Human Resources*, 41(1), 162-190.
- *Johnson, M.P., Ladd, H.F., and Ludwig, J. (2002). The benefits and costs of residential mobility programmes for the poor. *Housing Studies*, 17(1), 125-138.

*Reynolds, A., Temple, J., Robertson, D. and Mann, E. (2002). Age 21 cost-benefit analysis of the Title 1 Chicago Child-Parent Centers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(4): 267–303.

*Weimer, D.L., and Vining, A.R. Foster, E.M., & Holder, E.W. (2004). Benefit-cost analysis in the evaluation of child welfare programs. *Focus*, 23(1), 44-49.

WEEK #14, 4/25/14: Translational research

GUEST SPEAKER: TBA

Woolf, S.H. 2008. The meaning of translational research and why it matters. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 299(2), 211-213.

Lenfant. (2003) Clinical research to clinical practice – Lost in translation? *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 349, 868-874.

Drolet, B.C. and Lorenzi, N.M. (2011). Translational research: Understanding the continuum from bench to bedside. *Translational Research*, 157, 1-5.

Dodge, K. (2011). Context matters in child and family policy. *Child Development*, 82(1), 433-442.

WEEK #15, 5/2/14: Student presentations

WEEK #16, 5/9/14: Student presentations

Concept Sheet
Evaluation Research

This sheet is designed to help you to identify the key points in the readings for the week and to organize your thoughts so that you are prepared to actively participate in class discussion. Its purpose is to facilitate identification of the major issues in each reading. You are not required to address each of these topics for every reading; rather comment on those that are most relevant.

Support for a theory or conceptual advance (as explicitly stated by authors or otherwise apparent to you):

Comments/questions about sampling and recruitment, measurement choices, and data collection:

Comments/questions about key analytic methods and their rigor:

Thoughts about the contribution of the findings about “what works” and what doesn’t, according to authors and according to you:

Implications or importance for program evaluation, and for practice and/or policy: