

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
School of Social Work

Course: SOWO 810, Evaluation of Social Interventions
Spring 2016, Tuesdays 10:30 – 11:50 A.M., Room 500

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Office Hours: Before and after class and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives: Students will apply knowledge of research methods and evidence-based practice by developing and completing an evaluation project. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to draw from knowledge of research methods and evidence-based practice, and work effectively with supervisors, colleagues, peers, and consumers, to design, conduct, and disseminate the results of an evaluation of a social intervention, program, service, or policy. Specifically, students will demonstrate:

1. Skills for reviewing and presenting information about the importance of a social problem, including its relation to discrimination based on culture, economic status, gender, religion, age, or sexual orientation;
2. The ability to consider social problems in the context of current service delivery and critically determine a matter requiring evaluation related to consumer need, the process of service delivery, or service outcomes;
3. The ability to design an appropriate evaluation, including describing a logic model, identifying a sample, determining a suitable study approach; and selecting appropriate, reliable, and valid measures (including consideration of validity for the targeted population);
4. The ability to plan, conduct, and synthesize appropriate qualitative or quantitative analyses;
5. The ability to apply knowledge of social work ethics and values to the design of practice intervention or other types of evaluations;
6. The ability to consider the implications of results for practice and policy (including implications related to success in working with clients from different groups); and
7. The ability to summarize all of this material in a concise written document.

COURSE MATERIALS:

SOWO 510 course materials

Rubin, R. & Babbie, E. R. (2011). *Essential research methods for social work*. (3rd ed.) Belmont, CA: Brooks-Cole.

POLICY ON INCOMPLETE OR LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Students must notify the instructor at least 24 hours before an assignment is due if an assignment is going to be turned in late. Extensions may be given at the instructor's discretion. Students will lose five points for each 24-hour period beyond the due date and time (including weekends) for unexcused late assignments. Assignments that are more than 5 days late will not be accepted. A grade of "Incomplete" will be given only in extenuating circumstances and in accordance with School of Social Work and University policies.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Academic dishonesty is contrary to the ethics of the social work profession, is unfair to other students and will not be tolerated in any form. Please refer to the *APA Style Guide*, *The SSW Manual*, and the SSW Writing Guide for information on attribution of quotes, plagiarism and

appropriate use of assistance in preparing assignments. All written assignments should contain a signed pledge from you stating that, "*I have not given or received unauthorized aid in preparing this written work.*" In keeping with the UNC Honor Code, if reason exists to believe that academic dishonesty has occurred, a referral will be made to the Office of the Student Attorney General for investigation and further action as required.

FORMAT FOR WRITTEN WORK: APA format should be used for all written assignments. Students should refer to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.)* for information on APA format. A self-paced APA tutorial can be found at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/apa/index.html>.

POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students with disabilities that affect their participation in the course and who wish to have special accommodations should contact the University's Disabilities Services (Voice/TDD 962-8300, 966-4041). Students must have a formal letter from the University's Department of Disabilities Services to receive disability-based accommodations. Students should discuss the need for specific accommodations with their instructor at the beginning of the semester.

Course Requirements

Phased Assignment Worksheets: To ensure that the project is started promptly and can be completed during the semester, students will complete four phased assignment worksheets. These assignments will be used to develop the final evaluation report.

Phased Assignment Worksheet 1: Description of social problem and justification of evaluation

You will be asked to:

- Answer questions pertaining to the social problem to be addressed and its importance/justification;
- Provide at least three citations related to the social problem to be addressed and at least three citations related to the project's justification;
- Answer questions pertaining to the intervention to be evaluated (if your group plans to evaluate an intervention); and
- Clearly state draft evaluation questions.

Note: The final paper will include a literature review with at least six scholarly citations that are pertinent to the evaluation. Pay special attention to the literature on relevant evidence-based practices in the area of study.

Phased Assignment Worksheet 2: Evaluation design

- You will be asked to answer questions related to your evaluation design, including the type of evaluation you will implement (e.g., needs assessment, formative evaluation, process evaluation, outcome evaluation), your research design, and the strategy you will use to collect the data (e.g., focus groups, interviews, chart abstraction). You will also be asked to report the targeted sample size and how you will identify and recruit your sample (or obtain existing records).

Phased Assignment Worksheet 3: Measurement

- You will be asked to answer questions related to your measurement plan (i.e., the data collection instrument you plan to use; this may be an existing instrument, one you create, or a combination of the two).

Phased Assignment Worksheet 4: Draft data analysis plan

- You will be asked to answer questions related to your analysis plan, including your research question(s), available data, analysis strategy, and which technique(s) you will use to answer the project's research question(s) (e.g., t-test for independent groups, ANOVA, correlations, interpretation strategy for qualitative data).

Evaluation Project: An evaluation project related to each student's field placement or specific interests will be the primary assignment for this course. Projects can include needs assessments, process or formative evaluations, or outcome evaluations. The project will make up 50% of the total grade.

The project write-up should be no more than 5-7 pages and should include the following sections: Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Results, Discussion, and References. Drafts should be submitted for feedback.

The Abstract will be one page or less and will describe the project, findings and implications.

The Introduction section should be no more than 1 – 1.5 pages long and should begin with a statement of the problem to be addressed (e.g., child abuse and neglect, homelessness, mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder). This can be something germane to your field placement or of interest personally or professionally. Identify the specific population that the problem affects and provide information about the prevalence (i.e., the number and percentage of people in a population who currently have the problem) and incidence (i.e., the number and rate of new cases over time) of the problem.

Discuss the importance of the problem in terms of human and financial costs. How costly is this problem to the individuals it affects? How costly is the problem to society (e.g., health care costs, lost wages, crime)? What are the short- and long-term outcomes of the problem? What are the implications of not addressing the problem for those it affects and society as a whole? Why is the problem an important issue for social work practice to address (i.e., does the problem affect a large number of people, is the population that the problem affects profoundly marginalized or underserved in some way)? Make your reader care about this problem and the population it affects.

The Literature Review section should be no more than 1 – 1.5 pages long. Empirical research (qualitative and quantitative research studies) pertaining to **interventions or programs** that address your problem and population of interest should be reviewed concisely and critically. Social interventions can be small in scale (supportive therapy with one client) or large in scale (Federal WIC program for mothers and infants). Some social interventions have large literatures associated with them (e.g., treatment for depression among adults) while others might have more limited literatures (e.g., interventions for foster children).

Start your search with some of the more comprehensive databases (i.e., Web of Science, Social Work Abstracts, Pubmed). You might also try GoogleScholar. Start your review early and contact your professor immediately if you have trouble locating articles. Historically, students who have waited to begin this process have struggled with this section of the paper. So, students are **strongly encouraged** to get an early start on this review. If there are no studies about the effectiveness of a particular intervention with your specific population of interest (i.e., functional family therapy with juvenile delinquents who are diagnosed with developmental disabilities) consider reviewing the general literature on the intervention (i.e., functional family therapy with juvenile delinquents in the general population) and draw conclusions about the potential effectiveness of the intervention for your population. After you have identified several articles, it might be helpful to construct a table (template available from instructor) in order to take a more collective look at their methodological strengths and weaknesses.

Conclude this section with some discussion about why your intervention needs to be evaluated (i.e., there's no evidence at all or that it works for your particular population, an intervention was modified and needs to be evaluated, etc.). What knowledge gaps do you hope to fill with your evaluation? This section should end with a research question or hypothesis.

The Methods section should be no more than 2 – 2.5 pages long and will present the plan for how the research question(s) or hypotheses will be addressed. There will be four subsections: (a) Design, (b) Sample, (c) Measures, and (d) Intervention Description. Provide separate subheadings for each section.

Design - First, discuss the type of study design you will be using in your evaluation.

Sample - Second, discuss how your sample was obtained, (e.g., convenience sample, random sample). Note where you obtained your sample and whether it was a probability or non-probability sample. For those using single-subject designs, you should provide a description of your client, your client's problems and how and why the particular problems were selected for intervention.

Measures - Next, discuss the targets or outcomes that will be examined and your plan for measuring change in the outcomes. Be sure to discuss how your data will be collected (e.g., IRS, standardized measures, administrative records) and by whom (i.e., you, the client, third party [multiple methods]). The psychometric properties of any standardized measures that are being used should be discussed.

Intervention Description - Fourth, you should provide a description of the intervention(s) as implemented. The intervention(s) should be sufficiently described so it can be replicated.

The Results section will be approximately one page and will present the results of your evaluation. More specifically, discuss the following for each outcome: (a) how the data were examined (i.e., visual data analysis, t-test, chi-square) and (b) how the outcome was influenced by the intervention (i.e., improvement over time, those who received the intervention had better outcomes than controls).

The Discussion section will be approximately 1 – 1.5 pages and should: (a) summarize the findings; (b) discuss the limitations of your evaluation and any plausible alternative explanations for your findings; (c) suggest recommendations for other practitioners; and (d) suggest recommendations for further evaluation (i.e., given the limitations of your evaluation, how would you improve your next evaluation?). Conclude this section with a discussion of the importance of your findings to social work practice, policy and research.

References – Provide an accurate list of all cited sources in APA format.

Tables – Manuscript style tables of descriptive and inferential statistics should be created.

Professional Conference Presentation: Students will prepare a poster presentation of their projects, which will be presented at the School's Research Day (date TBA). Presentations should be structured as follows: (a) Introduction and Background; (b) Research question or hypothesis; (c) Methods; (d) Results; and (e) Discussion and Implications for Social Work. Students should pay equal attention to substantive content and the quality of their presentations. Drafts can be submitted for feedback early and often. These presentations will make up 30% of the total grade.

Format for Written Work: **APA format should be used for all written assignments.** Students should refer to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.)* for information on APA format. A self-paced APA tutorial can be found at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/apa/index.html>. Also, refer to the School of Social Work Style Guide, pages 26 – 32, for guidelines on proper citations and plagiarism.

Evaluation and Grading:

Evaluation Project	50%	<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
Poster Presentation	30%	94 – 100	H
Phased Assignments 1-4	<u>20%</u>	80 – 93	P
	100%	70 – 79	L
		< 69	F

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January 12	Course Overview and Syllabus
January 19	Review – Identifying Outcomes Research Questions and Hypotheses Rubin and Babbie – Chapters 5 – 8

January 26	Review – Evaluation Designs Rubin and Babbie, Chapters 11 and 12
February 2	Review – Sampling (<u>Worksheet #1</u>) Rubin and Babbie, Chapters 9, 10, 11 (pps 182 – 185, pps 199 – 200), 14 and 19
February 9	Review – Outcomes and Measures (<u>Worksheet #2</u>) Rubin and Babbie – Chapters 5 – 8
February 16	Review – Data Analysis (<u>Worksheet #3</u>) Ruben and Babbie, Chapter 18 Electronic Statistics Textbook: http://www.statsoft.com/textbook/stathome.html Statistical Computing: < http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/ >
February 23	Open Date – Consultation with Professor (<u>Worksheet #4</u>)
March 1	Open Date – Consultation with Professor
March 8	Open Date – Consultation with Professor
March 15	Spring Break – No Class
March 22	Open Date – Consultation with Professor
March 29	Open Date – Consultation with Professor
April 5	Open Date – Consultation with Professor
April 12	Open Date – Consultation with Professor
April 19	Open Date – Consultation with Professor
April 27	Research Day, all assignments due.