I. **Goals, Objectives and Assumptions of the Course**

This course is designed to be a practical course providing an introductory overview of evaluative research. There are two primary objectives of the course. First, students are expected to increase their capability to be critical consumers of evaluation research studies. Second, students are expected to increase their capability to conduct valid program evaluations. It is not expected that successful completion of the course will result in students becoming seasoned program evaluation professionals. Each student, nonetheless, should have a much better grasp of the research process and how to utilize this process in efforts to address real questions in practical ways, particularly within human service agencies or programs.

It is assumed that students enrolling in this course have gleaned at least a rudimentary mastery of basic research methods. Students who feel anxious about their knowledge of basic research concepts and principles should know that the major text for this course has been selected for its capacity to meet the needs of all students--those who are anxious and those who are not. The course text does not presume that students have sophisticated research knowledge or previous research experience.

II. **Course Text**


**Texts of Interest**

III. **Teaching Method**

Lectures interspersed with group discussions will constitute the major teaching method employed in the course. The course, however, will be conducted as a quasi seminar with students being required to utilize their field work settings as research sites in order to complete course requirements. A number of lectures will be followed by reflective sessions wherein the instructor will seek to encourage the wedding of lecture content to realistic problems. The objective is to emphasize the practical utility of information presented during the lectures.
IV. **Required Assignments**

Much of the course will rely on discussions and exercises associated with one's field placement or place of employment. Therefore, class participation is important and will be assessed for grading purposes.

Students are required to complete three assignments. There also may be quizzes and mini-assignments. Most probably, at least one brief quiz, designed to allow an assessment of how well course materials have been understood, will be administered. Quizzes may be unscheduled without prior notification being provided. Mini assignments may be announced as the course unfolds.

**Assignment One**

The first of the three assignments requires students to specify their field placement or place of employment utilizing the model depicted at the back of the syllabus. This assignment is due at the onset of the fifth class session. The instructor will critique each assignment during individual sessions conducted during class time. Students should prepare a sign-up sheet depicting the order of individual sessions. The instructor will follow the order as depicted on the sheet. Students working in teams (as noted below) should designate one person as the team's representative. The instructor will conduct the critiquing session with this student. Representatives should be prepared to take notes of the critiquing session to share with other team members. Reports must be double-spaced and not exceed six properly margin (at least 1 & 1/2 inches) pages in length.

WHERE POSSIBLE, STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO WORK IN TEAMS. THIS PERMITS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SET UP A DIVISION OF LABOR AND FOR STRESS-REDUCING COLLABORATION TO OCCUR. Students working in teams will select one field or employment setting to be used for the assignments.

Completion of the first assignment involves a comprehensive effort to specify agency goals and evaluative criteria. The specific issues to be addressed ideally should be germane to evaluation concerns expressed by the program's administrator. Thus, to initiate this assignment, students must ask the relevant program director or administrators to identify those aspects of program structure or operations that the director or administrators would like to have evaluated or assessed. Be sure to review any documents specifying the agency's mission, goals, etc. Reviewing an agency's strategic plan is likely to be very useful (if the agency has one). Be sure to note how an administrator's specification of goals may conflict with an agency's mission statement, or the way services are actually organized. Following identification of evaluation concerns, the completion of assignment #1 should be facilitative of the development of a skeletal evaluation or needs assessment strategy.

**Assignment Two**

Development of a skeletal model is Assignment #2. It is due at the onset of the ninth (approx.) class session; students should use the format depicted at the back of the syllabus.
The skeletal model must be set forth in outline form in a brief (two and one-half pages or less) typewritten statement. The statement provides a "point-of-departure" for student-professor dialogue (and informal peer input) focusing upon how best to approach the selected evaluation issues. Class time will be set aside for this purpose. The process will be the same as above.

**Assignment Three**

The completed evaluation design or needs assessment strategy (Assignment #3) must be thorough. Simply put, this means that another person with evaluation research skills should be able to conduct the evaluation or needs assessment, as you have proposed it, without major modification. Please note the format depicted at the back of the syllabus.

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE TASK HERE IS TO CONCEPTUALIZE AND REPORT HOW YOU WOULD CONDUCT AN EVALUATION OR NEEDS ASSESSMENT. YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO ACTUALLY CONDUCT AN EVALUATION. IDEALLY, HOWEVER, SOME DATA SHOULD BE OBTAINED AND EXAMINED, IF POSSIBLE.**

You will be aided in your efforts to complete Assignment #3 by reading the following:


In meeting your educational objectives it is desirable that at least some data should be collected and analyzed. In some instances, the evaluation strategy actually may be implemented completely. The product should be well-organized and well-written. It should include a literature search focusing upon the particular program area being addressed (e.g., the evaluation of employee assistance, delinquency, substance abuse, ex-offender programs, etc.), or to the particular model employed in the design (such as experimental, quasi-experimental or needs assessment models), or to both. Students are responsible for locating appropriate materials to be reviewed.

The assignment is due one week prior to the last regularly scheduled class session (15th week of class). You should use the same basic format as was utilized in assignment #2: However, the ceiling length for this assignment (#3) is seven double-spaced properly margined pages, rather than two and one-half pages. One difference in the two assignments is that #3 requires a report on literature you have reviewed that is relevant to your project. The major difference in the two assignments is that whereas assignment #2 required the mere specification of criteria (Notice here the emphasis on criteria -- This is not the same thing as merely specifying your intent) and a skeletal method, assignment #3 requires that you provide an operational definition of your criterion variables and report precisely on the method you will use to conduct your study. For example, in #2 you may have indicated that you wish to examine absenteeism costs before and after EAP intervention; Assignment #3 requires that you specify exactly how absenteeism costs (as well as other criterion variables) will be assessed.
Continuing with the absenteeism example, if you are doing a needs assessment involving absenteeism as a criterion variable you might wish to estimate absenteeism costs as specified by F.E. Kuzmits ("How Much is Absenteeism Costing Your Organization?" The Personnel Administrator, 24(6) 1979: 29-32). Perhaps, on the other hand, you are interested in examining the effectiveness of therapeutic programs seeking to treat clients suffering from depression. In that case it would be advantageous for you to utilize one of the well-known instruments that have been developed to assess levels of depression, such as the Beck Depression Inventory.  **The point here is that you should utilize the literature in your efforts to identify and develop your criterion variables, and in your efforts to construct a methodology for examining those criterion variables.**

Thus, to the extent possible, reference should be made to published literature (particularly evaluation studies) that are relevant to your efforts (this is the purpose of your literature search) particularly with regard to any standardized indices that will be used to assess your criterion variables. Resultingly, Assignment #3 also requires that a listing of your references follow your seven-page (or fewer pages) report. You must use the ASA (American Sociological Association) referencing system. Students unfamiliar with this referencing system should consult the 2-page discussion of style present in any issue (published during or after 1986) of the journal:  *American Sociological Review*.

Please attach appendices to your report presenting any data that have been analyzed. The data should be presented in tabular form, accompanied by elucidating narrative statements. In constructing tables for your report, you will be aided greatly by consulting a reference such as the following:


Time permitting, all students will be required to present their reports orally to the class. If time is limited, the instructor will select randomly several students and request that they present their reports.

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE COURSE HAS BEEN SET UP SO THAT ITS' "HEART" IS COMPOSED OF THE THREE ASSIGNMENTS NOTED ABOVE. THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU APPROACH THESE EXERCISES IN A CONSCIENTIOUS MANNER WILL LARGELY DETERMINE WHAT YOU LEARN. THE ASSIGNMENTS ARE INTER-RELATED (EACH SUCCESSIVE EXERCISE BUILDING ON THE PREVIOUS EXERCISE) AS OPPOSED TO BEING AUTONOMOUS AND DISCRETE. IN ADDITION, THEY HAVE BEEN FASHIONED TO INSPIRE REFLECTION OVER THE SPAN OF THE SEMESTER: TWO OR THREE WEEKS AFTER AN ASSIGNMENT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED ONE SHOULD KNOW HOW IT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED. Thus, in some respects, the course is an evolutionary process.**
Bases for Student Evaluation

The course design allows a good deal of flexibility insofar as the number of mini assignments and quizzes is concerned. Some sections of this course may be administered more mini assignments and quizzes than other sections.

Assignments one and two are developmental with respect to the effective completion of assignment three. You should regard assignment three as the final for this course in that only this assignment will be counted for credit: A student's performance on assignment three will constitute the principal basis upon which grades are awarded. In addition, class participation and completion of any mini assignments, including quizzes, will be taken into account. Students wishing to receive a grade of "A" for this course are urged to perform well on all components.

The professor reserves the discretion to consider a student's extraordinary work effort, consistent class contributions, and/or unusual improvement in the quality of work in awarding a grade.

Late Assignments and Other Problems

Students who have performed well but, for adequate reasons that can be documented, are unable to finish the class at the scheduled completion date are eligible for the grade of "I". All uncompleted work must be completed and submitted prior to the end of the succeeding semester or summer session.

If a quiz is missed, one mutually convenient re-testing date will be set presuming the student can provide documentation of an acceptable reason for having missed the quiz (e.g., car accident, unanticipated hospitalization, court appearance, etc.). Re-testing dates are very unlikely to be set simply because students have encountered some minor or common difficulty, consented to or arranged an appointment during class time, etc.

V. Participation by Students with Disabilities

Students needing special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course are urged to contact the professor as soon as possible.

VI. Religious Observances

Students will be allowed to complete examinations or other requirements that are missed because of a traditional religious observance. Students missing a lecture segment because of a religious observance are encouraged to obtain notes for that lecture segment from a fellow student.

VII. Academic Misconduct
Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of the academic endeavors of others.

VIII. **Complaint Procedures**

Complaints may be directed to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs.

IX. **Grade Appeal Procedures**

A grade may be appealed on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision by the professor. Appeals must follow the established procedures adopted by the School of Social Welfare. These procedures are available in writing from the Director of Social Work Programs. Students should be aware, however, that the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the assessment of student performance depends on largely subjective standards and expert review [Mathews v. Eldridge, 424 U.S. 319; 96 S. Ct. 893 (1976)]. The Court also has emphasized in other cases that subtlety and expertise are involved in academic decision making with respect to grades [Board of Curators v. Horowitz, 435 U.S. 78 (1978)]. Due to the inherent subjectiveness and need for skilled expertise in grading student performance, so long as a professor has acted in good faith when awarding a grade, professors have a complete defense, even if the grade was awarded in error (cf: Mathews v. Eldridge). Thus an "arbitrary" decision and a subjective decision are not the same thing. Professors have not been allowed to waive their responsibilities to make subjective assessments of student performance based on their skilled expertise.

X. **Racial Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**

Racial discrimination and sexual harassment are reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the university. They subvert the mission of the university and threaten the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. The university will not tolerate behavior between or among members of the university community which creates an unacceptable working environment. Similarly, the professor will tolerate neither racial discrimination nor gender discrimination between or among students enrolled in the course.

XI. **Incompletes**

An "incomplete" may be awarded to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of the semester but who, because of illness, or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination, or some other limited amount of term work.

XII. **Course Content**

A. **What is Evaluation Research? Purpose, Need and Selected Problems.**
Required Reading


Extra Reading:


B. What is a Needs Assessment? Purpose, Need and Selected Problems.

Completion of a mini-exercise is required for this segment. The exercise involves developing a draft version of a needs assessment instrument. The exercise will be explained more fully during the lecture.

Required Reading


Suggested Reading


C. The Elements of Design

**Required Readings:**


**Extra Reading:**


D. Selecting a Design

**Suggested Reading**


E. Data Analysis

A portion of class time will be spent discussing one or more statistical techniques that may be used to analyze data generated by an evaluation research project. This test or tests (possibilities include: chi-squared; t-test for dependent samples; gamma; Cramer's V) will be widely applicable to specific analyses appropriate for program evaluation studies.

Awareness of the limitations and underlying assumptions of statistical tests helps to inform the entire research process, including the selection of evaluation criteria, instruments, and conceptualization of the evaluation strategy, design and method.

Time permitting, a simple cost-benefits model will be presented.
Students desiring to conduct program evaluations, minimally, should be comfortable with the following techniques: Chi-squared test, measures of association, and t-tests (particularly for dependent samples). Knowledge of F-tests is desirable. Students not comfortable with these techniques are encouraged to consult the following straightforward readings:


James L. Bruning and B. L. Kintz, Computational Handbook of Statistics, Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1977


F. Planning an Evaluation Study (will be presented presuming sufficient time).

Required Reading


G. Criterion Measures and Principles of Measurement (will be presented presuming sufficient time.)

Required Reading


Other Reading


**Extra Reading**

**Questionnaires**


**Reliability and Validity in Scale and Instrument Construction**


**Interviewing**


**Participant Observation**


ASSIGNMENT #1: (Specification of Program Goals, Assumptions and Categories of Evaluation.)

Must not exceed six double-spaced properly margined pages

To complete this assignment, it will be desirable to have three discrete sections focusing respectively upon a program's: (1) Long-Range Objectives; (2) Intermediate Objectives and (3) Immediate Objectives. Each objective should be stated succinctly, perhaps in 1 to 3 sentences, and precede the presentation of other information focusing upon (1A) assumptions about the nature of the problem(s) the program seeks to address and (1B) assumptions about the effectiveness of the interventive strategies selected to treat the problem. Measures to assess program effectiveness that are appropriate to different categories of evaluation should be indicated, as noted below.

For example, if a recently implemented employee assistance program were the subject of an evaluation, long range goals could include such things as: (1) Improving the image of the employer among employees and the general community; and (2) reducing costs borne by the employer for employee health insurance coverage. Intermediate goals might focus on: (1) Improving productivity by reducing absenteeism, tardiness, grievances, etc., and (2) improving the capability of supervisors to minimize litigation risks due to faulty supervisory and/or personnel policies and procedures. Short range goals might involve: (1) Improving the capacity of supervisors to identify factors symptomatic of problem conditions such as substance abuse, etc., and; (2) promotion/publicization of the program in order to achieve (3) high utilization rates.

(Although EAPs serve to improve the health and social functioning of employees these goals are implicit in most of the objectives stated above. E.g., improving social functioning by solving alcohol, marital or other problems should reduce absenteeism, tardiness, etc. Remember, the program evaluation most likely is being sponsored by the employer; as such the goals need to be stated in a manner consistent with the sponsor's interests.)

Speaking in reference to 1A and 1B assumptions, consider the specific goal being discussed is achieving high utilization rates. In 1A, statements about factors affecting utilization behavior should be presented, including issues such as the EA program's location, confidentiality policies, etc., insofar as these might influence employee utilization. In the 1B section statements should be made indicating how these issues are addressed by the strategies selected to achieve the goal. For example, what assumptions are being made
about the effectiveness of distributing flyers, putting on workshops, etc., that inform employees about the EA program's client confidentiality policies?

Section 2, "Categories of Evaluation," should follow the statements focusing upon objectives and assumptions. The categories represent five interrelated sets of criteria by which the success or failure of a program may be evaluated. They should be applied to each level of objective as they serve to define the type(s) of measure(s) that will be used in evaluating an activity. The five categories include: (1) Effort; (2) Performance; (3) Adequacy of Performance; (4) Efficiency; and (5) Process. When responding to this (and other) portion(s) of the assignment, all statements should be in sentence form.

**EFFORT** - refers to the assessment of input regardless of output. Thus, an evaluation focusing upon effort seeks to determine the quantity and quality of activities that take place in meeting goals. For example, how many staff hours were involved in developing flyers, presentations, etc., designed to increase utilization rates? Were the flyers legible and, from a graphics standpoint, well designed? Were the workshops administered well, well attended and offered at appropriate times? (The assignment requires that you ask the right questions, not that you have the answers.)

**PERFORMANCE** - refers to an assessment of the results of effort rather than the effort itself. An evaluation focusing upon performance seeks to determine how much was accomplished relative to an immediate goal and whether or not any changes occurred. For example, to what extent have utilization rates increased? How do utilization rates compare to the utilization rates of other EAPs with similar contracts? Do trend data indicate a continuing increase in utilization levels? (Again, the assignment requires that you ask the right questions, not that you have the answers.)

**ADEQUACY** - refers to the extent to which effective performance is adequate in relation to the total amount of need. For example, a program may have been very successful in expending effort to achieve increased utilization, may have increased utilization substantially, but still may be treating only a small fraction of those in need. Measures to assess adequacy may require the availability of data indicating aggregate need. In the absence of aggregate need data, try to specify measures that reflect adequacy such as: Have the number of workplace alcohol-related accidents declined significantly? Has the percentage of employees receiving poor supervisory evaluations for conduct violations declined significantly? Etc.

**EFFICIENCY** - refers to whether or not there are better ways to achieve a program's goals. For example, is sending out flyers as effective as putting on workshops when seeking to increase utilization rates? If so, the distribution of flyers may be more efficient because it is less costly. Are there other more efficient ways of achieving higher utilization rates? Efficiency focuses upon an examination of alternate methods in terms of their costs, including money, time and personnel costs. (For the assignment, try to specify alternative, presumably more efficient, procedures or techniques for accomplishing program goals.)
**PROCESS** - refers to determining how or why a program works or does not work. Answering these sorts of questions are not inherent in a program evaluation. However, a process evaluation is very useful because the information yielded provides explanations for the more or less descriptive results generated by the preceding evaluation categories. For example, after a determination has been made that presentations are more effective in increasing utilization rates than distributing flyers or showcasing videos, a process evaluation may reveal that enhancing utilization requires that some employees act as opinion leaders within the corporation, and that the most effective way to spawn opinion leaders is through one-to-one dialogue made possible at presentation sessions. Obviously, such a finding would have a number of profound implications regarding the best ways to increase utilization.

Basically, a process evaluation seeks to "make sense" out of purely descriptive evaluations by explaining how things work. Thus, it attempts to make a contribution to basic knowledge as well as to administrative decision making. In this regard, a process evaluation combines evaluation with research. Process evaluations tend to focus on one or more of four domains including: (1) The attributes of the program itself (what are the component parts of a program and which components detract from realizing program goals; e.g., does the program rely on the use of automatic telephone answering devices which reduce utilization?); (2) the population exposed to the program (who are the recipients of service; e.g., are all segments of the workplace being served, or do some groups continue to under-utilize the EAP?); (3) the situational context within which the program takes place (what are the conditions under which a program operates that affect success such as locale, auspices, timing, etc. E.g., is the EA program located in an area that enhances utilization? Would a union-sponsored rather than company-sponsored EAP promote higher utilization?); and (4) the different kinds of effects produced by the program (such as planned effects, unintentional effects, type of effects-cognitive, attitudinal, behavioral, and the duration of effects; e.g., are continuing presentations necessary to maintain high voluntary utilization rates in companies experiencing high turnover?)

Thus, the assignment requires the completion of three sections; one section for each level of objectives. The format is as noted below:

State level of objective (I = Long-range; II = Intermediate; III = Immediate).

1. Specify the program's objectives (i.e., write the objectives in abbreviated form)

2. Assumptions
   a. Specify 1A assumptions
   b. Specify 1B assumptions

3. Categories of Evaluation
   a. Effort
b. Performance

c. Adequacy

d. Efficiency

e. Process

Students who continue to have questions about the assignment are urged to consult: Edward Suchman, *Evaluative Research*, N.Y.: Russell Sage, 1967.

See Chapter IV, "Types and Categories of Evaluation," especially pages 68-71. The assignment is a modified version of the prototype presented on those pages. Please note, however, that whereas the prototype involves abbreviated statements, you are expected to use complete sentences in preparing the assignment.

Please note that there are exemplars of the three assignments on reserve in the library. You are urged to consult these exemplars regardless of whether you have any questions about the assignments. Even if you have no questions, you will be aided if you examine the exemplars.

ASSIGNMENT #2: (Skeletal Evaluation OR Needs Assessment Strategy)

Must not exceed two and one-half double-spaced properly margined pages

PROJECT TITLE

(Give your evaluation or needs assessment exercise a title; place it here.)

PURPOSE

(Describe the overall purpose for conducting the project in 2-3 sentences.)

OBJECTIVES

[Indicate in 2-3 sentences precisely what your research objectives are. E.g.: "To collect and analyze data in order to judge the effectiveness of (or need for) employee assistance services with respect to the following": (List should follow). If part of your project involves "process" questions, you may state any hypotheses you plan to investigate in directional or null form.]

MEASURES
(List the criteria you have selected to assess program effectiveness, or need for services)

METHOD

(Briefly describe the method(s) you will employ to obtain and analyze your data.)

PRINCIPAL BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

(State in several sentences the anticipated benefits resulting from the completion of your project.)

ASSIGNMENT #3: (Evaluation OR Needs Assessment Strategy)

Must not exceed seven double-spaced properly margined pages

PROJECT TITLE

(Give your evaluation or needs assessment exercise a title; place it here.)

PURPOSE

(Describe the overall purpose for conducting the project in 2-3 sentences.)

OBJECTIVES

[Indicate in 2-3 sentences precisely what your research objectives are. E.g.: "To collect and analyze data in order to judge the effectiveness of (or need for) employee assistance services with respect to the following": (List should follow). If part of your project involves "process questions, you may state any hypotheses you plan to investigate.]

RELEVANT LITERATURE

[In 1-3 pages, report here on any published studies obtained during your literature review that were useful to you in guiding your research effort. It is not appropriate here to simply offer summaries of studies that have been reviewed. Comments should focus on methodological issues of importance. In other words, you are not to review studies here as if you were preparing a term paper. Your literature section is for the exclusive purpose of making points that are pertinent specifically to the method of your study, although some attention may also be addressed to assumptions about the nature of a problem or the effectiveness of intervention strategies).

(Speaking in regard to important methodological issues, say you are interested in the effectiveness of prison-sponsored job training programs in reducing recidivism rates
following release from incarceration. Indicate how the recidivism studies you reviewed helped to inform the methodology you constructed for your study.)

[For example: (1) What follow-up methods were utilized to track ex-offenders in the studies you reviewed? How did knowledge of these methods help you to construct your follow-up method?; (2) What time periods were utilized following a prisoner's release from incarceration by which determinations were made as to whether or not recidivism had occurred? How did knowledge of these influence the length of time you selected for your recidivism examination period?; (3) Did the authors of studies you reviewed indicate a need for refinements in future studies, which you incorporated into your study, or did the need for refinement occur to you as you reviewed the literature? Perhaps the recidivism studies you reviewed failed to disaggregate ex-offenders domiciled in half-way houses upon release from those simply released from prison. As this most probably constitutes a methodological flaw, you should: (1) indicate how your study will improve on existing literature by taking this into account methodologically; (2) present or cite published data justifying an aggregate examination; or (3) provide a compelling argument to justify an aggregate examination. Excluding exceptions noted in the paragraph above, the idea here is that your remarks should be focused crisply upon the technical aspects of constructing your methodology, rather than upon generalized comments of the sort more appropriate for a term paper. Be succinct.]

[Also, report on any standardized instruments uncovered by your review you chose to utilize in your study. Indicate why you selected the measure(s), and report on the strengths and weaknesses of the measure(s) you selected.]

METHOD

[In one to three pages, define in operational terms the measure(s) you will be using, if it/they have not been discussed in your literature review section. In Assignment 2 it was sufficient, for example, to indicate your plan to examine a program's effectiveness in reducing client depression levels. In Assignment 3, you must precisely specify the tool(s) or techniques(s) you will use to assess depression levels.]

(Precisely describe the method you will employ to obtain and analyze your data.)

REFERENCES

(Use ASA referencing system.)

APPENDICES

If there are appendices, do not exceed three additional pages.
XIV. Miscellaneous Articles of Interest


