

Syllabus

Theories and Methods of Evaluation

Winter, 2003 Course #8810

Instructor: Paul A. Toro

Text: Rossi, P. H., Freeman, H. E., & Lipsey, M. W. (1999). Evaluation: A systematic approach (6th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Description. This course will cover readings explicating concepts in and providing examples of program evaluation. Since the best way to learn about program evaluation is through "hands on" experience, each student will undertake a field project. The student may identify a project in a site of his/her choosing (e.g., in the student's work setting) or the instructor can help the student locate a project in sites where he has already established contacts (see list of possible projects below). The project can take many forms, including: (1) a needs assessment; (2) a formative (or process) evaluation; (3) a summative (or outcome) evaluation; or (4) a systematic approach to developing or improving an existing program (e.g., through the use of existing program evaluation data). The student will consult with "stake holders" in the project site when designing the evaluation.

Instructional Methods. Class sessions will involve: (a) the discussion of readings and major topics in the field of program evaluation and (b) group supervision of students in the development of their projects. Class time throughout the semester will be roughly equally divided between these two activities. The instructor will provide new material related to the readings, will highlight certain points in the readings, and will share his own experiences as a program evaluator. Some classes may involve guest speakers doing program evaluation in the community and we may take some "field trips" to different sites where students or others are engaged in program evaluation or program development activities. Individual supervision of projects will be provided as needed by the instructor outside of class.

Readings. Readings will come from the text above and a variety of supplemental sources (see list below). Readings on a particular topic should be read before the class dealing with that topic (see class schedule below). The text will be available at Marwil's and/or the University Bookstore. A copy of the supplemental readings will be available in the instructor's research offices (room 3249) at 51 W. Warren. In the past, most students have arranged to make copies of the supplemental readings for their personal use.

Responsibilities When Working in the Field. Evaluators must act in a highly professional manner. That means you must treat the field assignment responsibly. You should not promise anything that you cannot do, and you should do what you promise. You will be seen as a representative of your profession and the University. Working in the field can be very exciting, but also very frustrating. It is important to recognize that you will be working as a guest in another person's place of business and that the people involved in program implementation are generally not professional researchers. They may not fully share your values and they may not fully understand what it is you want to do or why. Moreover, they may have a lot invested in their programs. A negative evaluation might well have funding consequences and, if not funding consequences, then consequences for self-esteem. It is very important to gain and to maintain trust and understanding.

Project Reports and Diary. Two project reports, forming a key source for student evaluation in the course, will be required: An interim report by mid-term and a final report at the end of the semester. These reports can take many forms. The interim report might consist of a proposal for an evaluation project, a report of experiences and problems in setting up the project, the results of a needs assessment, or conclusions based on a literature search. The final report can involve these same formats but could also be a report of the results of a process or outcome evaluation (designed

either for consumption by the project agency or for publication purposes), an evaluation project proposal to be submitted to an outside funding agency (complete with a budget), or a report of experiences and problems in implementing the evaluation project. The student should discuss the intended format for each report with the instructor as early as possible in the semester. To facilitate effective supervision, the student may also wish to keep a diary recording notable experiences in developing and executing the project.

Collaborative Work. Students may work together on a single project. However, the extent of each one's effort and contributions must be made clear and separate reports need to be written.

Commentaries. Another key source for student evaluation in the course will be a set of commentaries (1-2 double-spaced pages) required throughout the semester. These commentaries may be about specific readings, questions about concepts, questions for the instructor, or issues you would like to have discussed in class. You can turn in your commentaries in class, put them in my mailbox at 71 W. Warren, under my office door at 51 W. Warren, fax them (313-577-7636), or e-mail them to me. We have a total of 12 classes (not counting the first and last). You must hand in at least 6 of these commentaries during the semester.

Grading. The grade will be based on the quality of the student's interim and final reports (40%), the 6 commentaries (30%), and class participation (30%). The evaluation of class participation will not only involve discussions on reading and lecture material, but also participation in supervision (both as a supervisor for others and as a supervisee). Overall effort and progress on your student project, including feedback from agency sites, will also be considered (this component will be primarily reflected in the instructor's evaluation of the interim and final reports). Note that, since there will be no exams, students' understanding of the reading material will be assessed through their commentaries, reports, and class participation.

Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
1/15	Introduction to course; gaining entree to agencies; overview of program evaluation	None
1/22, 1/29	Problems and practical issues when working in the field; the evaluator role in society	T1-3 S1-2
2/5, 2/12	Needs Assessment	T4 S3
1/19, 2/26	Formative Evaluation: Monitoring Programs	T5-6
3/5 3/19	Impact Assessment: Designing Outcome Evaluations	T7 S4-6
3/26	Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses	T11-12 S7
4/2	Multivariate data analytic strategies	None
4/9, 4/16	Qualitative approaches to needs assessment and evaluation	S8-10

"T" in the reading column above refers to chapters in the text and "S" to supplemental readings from the list below. This class schedule is subject to changes, to be announced in class.

Supplemental Reading List

- 1 Cowen, E. L. (1978). Some problems in community program evaluation research. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 46, 792-805.
- 2 Chavis, D. M., Stucky, P. E., & Wandersman, A. (1983). Returning basic research to the community: A relationship between scientist and citizen. American Psychologist, 38, 424-434.
- 3 Acosta, O., & Toro, P. A. (2000). Let's ask the homeless people themselves: A needs assessment based on a probability sample of adults. American Journal of Community Psychology, 28, 343-366.
- 4 Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). Chapters 2 and 3 in Quasi-experimentation: Design and analysis issues for field settings. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- 5 Toro, P. A., Passero Rabideau, J. M., Bellavia, C. W., Daeschler, C. V., Wall, D. D., Thomas, D. M., & Smith, S. J. (1997). Evaluating an intervention for homeless persons: Results of a field experiment. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 65, 476-484.
- 6 Rappaport, J., Seidman, E., Toro, P. A., McFadden, L. S., Reischl, T. M., Roberts, L. J., Salem, D. A., Stein, C. H., & Zimmerman, M. A. (1985). Finishing the unfinished business: Collaborative research with a mutual help organization. Social Policy, 15, 12-24.
- 7 Weisbrod, B. A., Test, M. A., & Stein, L. I. (1980). Alternative to mental hospital treatment: II. Economic benefit-cost analysis. Archives of General Psychiatry, 37, 400-405.
- 8 O'Neill, Small, B. B., & Strachan, J. (1999). The use of focus groups within a participatory action research environment. Chapter 16 in M. Kopala & L. A. Suzuki (Eds.), Using qualitative methods in psychology. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
9. Goldman, L. (1999). Qualitative research in program evaluation. Chapter 17 in M. Kopala & L. A. Suzuki (Eds.), Using qualitative methods in psychology. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 10 Banyard, V. L. (1995). "Taking another route:" Daily survival narratives from mothers who are homeless. American Journal of Community Psychology, 23, 871-891.

Some Possible Class Projects

- 1 Work with the Office for Homelessness Coordination in the Department of Human Services in the City of Detroit to collect needs assessment data, assist particular agencies to develop better HUD grant proposals, or other tasks.
- 2 Design and implement an evaluation of programs at Caregivers, Inc., which provides in-home case management and other support services to poor families in the Detroit area.

- 3 As part of a research contract funded by the City of Detroit and Wayne County, help Dr. Toro and his team conduct a comprehensive needs assessment involving the homeless adult population in Wayne County.
- 4 Assist Detroit's Homeless Union, an advocacy program operated by formerly homeless persons, to identify funding sources, and collect needs assessment data. The Union has special interests in better serving Detroit's homeless women with substance abuse problems.
- 5 Help evaluate Parents and Children Together (PACT), a training and support program for abusive and other low income parents operated by WSU staff.
- 6 Help evaluate one or more special services for homeless adolescents (e.g., intensive shelter services, residential services for pregnant teens).
- 7 Work on one or more projects with Melanie Hwalek, Ph.D., of SPEC Associates, a local consulting firm specializing in the evaluation of social programs.
- 8 Assist the Veteran's Foundation develop and evaluate services for homeless veterans in Detroit.