I. COURSE PURPOSE

Building upon the foundation social work research course, this advanced curriculum course focuses on the research process within the context of clinical social work practice. Emphasis is on developing the knowledge and skills required to critically assess empirically-based evidence for practice and design ethical and feasible approaches to practice evaluation. Based on key concepts and methodological issues inherent to applied research, the course addresses the steps of problem formulation, including delineation of research questions and hypotheses; group and single-system designs, including issues of internal and external validity; probability and non-probability sampling approaches and related implications for generalizability; approaches to measurement, including measurement reliability, validity, and other criteria for use in practice evaluation; identification of appropriate data collection procedures with special attention to diversity issues; and quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures designed to assess progress and change in client outcomes and practice effectiveness. Critical examination of published research allows students to assess their understanding of core concepts. Development of a research proposal enables students to demonstrate their capacities in designing practice evaluations. Throughout the course, ongoing attention is given to ethical issues that may arise in the evaluation of practice, issues related to research with diverse and at-risk populations, and the role of research in the promotion of social and economic justice.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Understand the purposes of practice evaluation research within social work practice.

2. Engage in the process of problem identification and formulation, including the use of the professional literature in shaping and refining research questions and hypotheses important to social work practice.
3. Differentially apply various group and single-system designs for use in practice evaluation and critically assess their strengths and limitations in terms of both internal and external validity.

4. Select appropriate sampling strategies for evaluating practice and identify the implications of such strategies for the generalization of findings.

5. Understand the role of measurement in practice evaluation and the applicability of measurement reliability, validity, and other criteria in selecting measurement tools.

6. Utilize appropriate data collection approaches based on the objectives of the practice evaluation project and the needs of research participants.

7. Specify appropriate statistical methods for describing sample characteristics.

8. Apply appropriate visual and statistical methods for analyzing data from single-system designs and appropriate statistical methods for analyzing data from group designs.

9. Understand the role of clinical or practical significance as auxiliary assessment criteria to statistical significance in practice evaluation.

10. Identify ethical issues and utilize ethical guidelines in designing and conducting practice evaluation research.

11. Identify and address issues related to diversity as they apply to all phases of evaluation research, with respect to age, cognitive ability, literacy, language, culture, race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, and socio-economic status.

12. Understand the linkages between practice evaluation research with at-risk and vulnerable client populations and the promotion of social and economic justice.

13. Demonstrate skills in critiquing published evaluation practice research.

14. Demonstrate skills in developing a feasible research proposal for conducting a social work practice evaluation.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts


B. Other Recommended Resources and Media


Various workbooks and short texts on social science research methods and interpreting statistics are also available from [http://www.pyrczak.com](http://www.pyrczak.com)

C. Course Grade and Grading Policy

Grades are based on the CUA Grading Policy as described in the *Graduate Announcements*. Full credit will not be given for assignments that are submitted late. No credit will be given for assignments submitted after they have been reviewed in class.

**Grade Composition:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Dates</th>
<th>Grade Composition:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 4, 9-24-12</td>
<td>(1) Research Proposal: (65%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 6, 10-9-12</td>
<td>Topic Selection Pass/Fail (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 12, 11-19-12</td>
<td>Paper Part I Problem formulation (25%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 14, 12-3-12</td>
<td>Paper Part II Methodology approach (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 14, 12-3-12</td>
<td>Paper Part III Data analysis approach (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3, 9-17-12</td>
<td>(2) Assignment # 1 on Ethical conduct in research (10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam: 12-10-12</td>
<td>(3) Assignment # 2 on Article critique (20%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(4) Class Attendance and Participation: (5%)</td>
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**Additional Notes:**

**Class Participation:** To promote student mastery of contents, this course uses a variety of practical exercises that are considered to be a part of student engagement in class participation. Some of these may take place in class, while others may be homework exercises that become subsequently reviewed in class.

**Research Proposal:** This paper is divided into three segments and focuses on the development of a research proposal for evaluating a practice strategy or intervention using a single-subject design (SSD) methodological approach. Individual guides for writing each part of the paper will be given out in class.

- **Topic Selection:** In a one-page single-spaced outline, students briefly identify and discuss:
(a) The social problem that is relevant and important for social work practice,
(b) The treatment intervention that may be used to address the problem and thus be subject to SSD approach for evaluation, and
(c) One or two possible research questions that may guide the proposed evaluation-investigation.
(d) Present at least 3 references that are relevant to your topic selection.

Please note that proposals that involve an evaluation of medication effectiveness are not acceptable; however, proposals that gauge the effectiveness of a particular intervention with or without medication may be acceptable pending instructor specific approval. Please also note that all students must gain written approval (email) from the instructor for moving forward on developing their topic into the full proposal!

- **Part 1 – Problem Formulation:** The focus in this first paper is on identifying and developing a problem area or issue that is important to social work practice and that will, in some manner, evaluate a particular practice-based intervention using a single subject approach. This paper will involve the use of the literature review to develop a problem statement and identify the practice intervention used for evaluation. It will present a literature review in respect to the problem area being evaluated, and formulate and specify the research question(s) and research hypothesis(es) that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the practice strategy or intervention.

- **Part II – Methodological Approach:** The second paper builds the SSD methodology of the research proposal. It presents various aspects of SSD research methodology required to investigate the stated research question and research hypothesis(es). This paper will provide detailed conceptualization and operationalization of the independent variable (e.g., the social work intervention), and dependent variable(s) (i.e., the expected human behavioral outcomes), and consider one or two intervening (control) variables. It will also discuss the measurement tools or instruments and their reliability or validity, data collection approach, sampling strategy, and the application of a specific SSD design. At this point, the students hand-in both part 1 and part 2 as one paper, but are graded on part 2 only.

- **Part III – Data Analysis:** The third paper, or the final part of the research proposal, presents the data analysis plan for the proposed practice SSD evaluation. The data analysis plan typically includes discussion on the statistical approach and procedures used for describing the sampled participants, statistical tests that will be used to test the proposed hypothesis(es) for single subject designs, consideration how effect size will be examined, and a discussion on how statistical, and clinical or practice significance will be addressed.

**Assignment #1 on Ethical Conduct in Research and Evaluation** involves reading an assigned article that describes a particular intervention approach and developing a written
*Informed Consent* that could be applied with adults in the implementation of such an intervention.

**Assignment #2 on Article Critique:** In this assignment students read and evaluate an article using a group design methodology using a specific set of questions provided by the instructor. This assignment is completed as a final “take-home exam.”

D. **Course and Instructor Evaluation**
NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at [http://evaluations.cua.edu](http://evaluations.cua.edu) using your CUA username and password. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to this feedback.

IV. **CLASS EXPECTATIONS**

A. **Scholastic Expectations**
Please refer to the NCSSS Announcements or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the student-author, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and be carefully proofread by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

B. **Academic Honesty**
Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. **Accommodations**
Students with physical, learning, psychological, or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DDS) at CUA and submit documentation of a disability to the course instructor: PRYZ 207, Phone: 202-319-5211, [http://disabilityservices.cua.edu/](http://disabilityservices.cua.edu/). If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.

D. **Attendance/Participation**
Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to arrive to class on time. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Use of any electronic devices during class must be approved by the instructor and is expected not to be disruptive to participants. All phone-listening devices are to be muted during class sessions. If a student expects to be absent for a particular session, the student is expected to notify the instructor in advance and in writing, or, in the case of illness, as soon as possible. Students are responsible for obtaining any materials they missed due to absence. Unexcused or multiple absences will result in a reduction of the final grade.
Students are also expected to read all designated assignments for each class session and to actively participate in class discussion and exercises.

E. **CUA Blackboard:**

Following each class, most materials pertaining to course contents will be placed on CUA Blackboard.

**Instructions for Blackboard access:**

Step 1: Start with http://www.cua.edu/
Step 2: Go to the first tab “About CUA,” and Click on “Offices and Services”
Step 3: Click on the link “Home at CUA” on the right side of the page
Step 4: Click on the top bar that indicates “Blackboard”
Step 5: Click on the link “Login ”
Step 6: Login using your CUA username and password
Step 7: Enter Course SSS 756

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**SSS 756 Fall 2012 CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Class 1  Introduction to Practice Evaluation**

**8-27-12**
Parallels between social work practice and practice evaluation research
Understanding subtle differences between program and practice evaluation
Types of evaluation research (needs assessment, process evaluation, outcome evaluation, efficiency analysis)
General types of practice evaluation research
Review of ethical issues in practice evaluation
Review of diversity and social justice issues in practice evaluation
Review course outline, schedule, and expected assignments

**Readings:**


**Articles on BB:**

Information on Evidence-Based Practice (EBP), see website at http://www.asha.org/Members/ebp/intro/

Research-to-Results, June.

*** Handout: Class 2 Preparation for In-Class Practical Exercise:
Examining the structure of evaluation for interventions based on their methodology and considering similarities and differences. Prior to class 2, please download Instructions for Examining 2 Articles, and download and read the following 2 articles on CUA – BB and consider the posed questions:

Group Methodology Intervention: Carney & Buttell, 2004
Single Subject Methodology Intervention: Barrett & Wolfer, 2001

***Handout: Assignment I – Instructions for Ethical Conduct in Research and Evaluation
Informed Consent (Due Class 3)

***Handout: Topic Selection and Approval for Research Proposal Paper (Due: Class 4)

9-03-12 NO CLASS - Labor Day Holiday!

Class 2 Problem Formulation

9-10-12 Understanding the process of developing a practice evaluation for a research study
Developing a problem statement and review of the knowledge base
Understanding what is an intervention in the context of practice
The role of the literature review in problem formulation
Shaping and refining the research question and research hypotheses
Specifying independent and dependent variables
Comparing the nature of single system and group designs in evaluation

In-Class Practical Exercise: Noting similarities and difference in interventions using group versus single subject design methodology (Please bring 2 assigned articles and Instructions for Examining 2 Articles to class)

Readings:
Engel & Schutt (3rd Edition, 2013): Appendix A: Questions to ask about a research article

3 Variable Measurement

9-17-12 Measuring human outcomes
Conceptual and operational definitions of variables
Levels of variable measurement
Translating observation into measurement, and measures selection
Assessing reliability and validity of measuring instruments
Understanding the strategy for observation in single-case versus group design methodology

Readings:


*** DUE: Assignment #1: Ethical Conduct in Research and Evaluation Informed Consent:
Upload onto BB under Assignment link (by 10am).

4 Measurement Approaches in Practice Evaluation I

9-24-12 Specifying problems and goals
Types of measures in practice
Individualized rating scales
Client logs
Goal attainment scaling approach

Readings:


Articles on BB:


*** DUE: Topic Selection for Research Proposal Paper and getting instructor approval!
Upload onto BB under Assignment link (By 10am!).
Measurement Approaches in Practice Evaluation II

10-01-12  Behavioral observation  
Standardized questionnaires  
Reactivity of measures  
Selecting a measure

Readings:


NOTE: 10.08.12 - NO CLASS: Columbus Day – CUA Observed Holiday

Administrative Monday: Designed for Monday classes on Tuesday!

10.09.12  *** Class-time is used for completing Research Proposal Paper – Part I.

*** DUE: Research Proposal - Problem Formulation (Upload to BB by end of class-time!)

Practice Evaluation Designs: Single-System Designs I

10-15-12  Principles of single-system designs  
Developing baselines  
Basic single-system design: AB  
Experimental single-system designs: ABA, ABAB, BAB  
Considerations for design internal and external validity  
Threats to design validity

Readings:


Articles on BB:


8 Practice Evaluation Designs: Single-System Designs II

10-22-12 Multiple designs for single systems
Changing intensity and successive intervention designs
Experimentation
Complex and combined designs
Comparing and selecting a designs

*In-Class Practical Exercise: Practicing article critique: Prior to this class, please read the following article (on BB) and be prepared to answer questions 1-10, 14, 15, 19, 23-25 in Appendix A (Engel & Schutt, 2013).


Readings:


Articles on BB:


9 Analysis of Single-System Designs I

10-29-12 Developing a measurement and recording plan
Basic principles of analysis
Visual analysis of single-system design data
2SD method for determining change and statistical significance
Making sense of practical, theoretical, and statistical significance

*In-Class Practical Exercise: Using 2SD method to evaluate change – Instructor Handout.

Readings:


10 Analysis of Single-System Designs II

11-05-12 More complex evaluation analysis
Evaluating trend in a phase
Celeration line approach to analysis
Measuring effect size (using the Δ-Index, and g-Index))

*In-Class Practical Exercise:* Using Celeration line method to evaluate change and calculating effect size – Instructor Handout.

**Readings:**


11 Group Design Strategies I

11-12-12 Review Group Sampling: probability and Non-probability
Determining generalizability of results
Review criteria for determining causality in group designs

**Readings:**


12 Group Design Strategies II

11-19-12 Pre-experimental, quasi-experimental, and true experimental group designs
Threats to internal and external validity
Evaluating change

**Readings:**


***DUE: Methodology Paper 2 (Upload to BB by 10am!)***
NOTE: 11-21-12 to 11-23-12 NO CLASSES: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!

13 Group Designs: Analyzing Change

11-26-12 Descriptive statistics: Mean, median, mode, standard deviation
Inferential statistics: Between group mean comparisons (t test and ANOVA) and repeated measures

Readings:


Recommended Reading: Review the concepts of using t-tests (independent and paired t-test observations for two group comparisons, ANOVA and repeated measures ANOVA for three or more comparisons, and Chi-square test) – you may use any behavioral science book on basic statistics.

*** Handout: Class 14 Preparation for In-Class Practical Exercise: Prior to class 14, please read an assigned article (using group design methodology approach) in preparation for conducting article critique as a last class exercise. The article is on BB. Also, please be prepared to answer questions 1-10, 14, 15, 19, 23-25 in Appendix A (Engel & Schutt, 2013).

14 Last Class

12-03-12 Class Practice: Conducting an article critique using group design methodology.

Readings:


*** Assignment # 2 Handout: Instructions for Article Critique with an assigned article.

***DUE: Data Analysis Paper 3 (Upload entire paper to BB midnight!)

12-10-12 *** DUE: Assignment # 2: Article Critique (upload to BB by midnight).

THANK YOU.

HAPPY WINTER HOLIDAYS and Happy New Year of 2013!