

PubH 6034—Section 001 & 002
Program Evaluation for Public Health Practice
Spring 2009

Meeting Days:	Mondays, Section 001	Wednesdays, Section 002
Credits:	3	3
Meeting Time:	12:20 – 3:20 p.m.	4:40 – 7:40 p.m.
Meeting Place:	Mayo D-199	Mayo D-199
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Teaching Assistant (both sections):	Sarah Sevcik, sevc101@umn.edu	

I. Course Description

This course will survey several dimensions of practical health program evaluation with emphases on meeting the needs of community program administrators and planners. We will cover such things as: the purpose and uses of evaluation; differences between program evaluation and evaluation research; standards for good program evaluations (i.e., utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy); how logic models are used to describe program goals and objectives; the influence of a program's developmental stage on determining an appropriate evaluation plan; characteristics of good evaluation questions; standards for measuring program effectiveness; evaluation designs and approaches; the importance of engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process; the importance of high quality, reliable and valid evaluation data that are appropriate to the selected design and analysis methods; the context or environment in which a program operates (i.e., confounding variables such as politics, history, social norms, and competition); how to interpret and disseminate evaluation findings that will be used; and the role of evaluators in society.

The aim of this course is not to teach you what to do and think; instead, the goal is to guide you, through readings, discussions, practice, and writing, to think critically about how health programs work and how one might evaluate that process. Contributors to Wikipedia.org and Criticalthinking.net describe the importance of critical thinking for research, evaluation, writers, and in our everyday lives.

Critical thinking consists of mental processes of discernment, analysis and evaluation. It includes possible processes of reflecting upon a tangible or intangible item in order to form a solid judgment that reconciles scientific evidence with common sense. Critical thinkers gather information from all senses, verbal and/or written expressions, reflection, observation, experience and reasoning. Critical thinking has its basis in intellectual criteria that go beyond subject-matter divisions and which include: clarity, credibility, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance, and fairness.

www.Wikipedia.org

Critical thinking is important, because it enables one to analyze, evaluate, explain, and restructure our thinking, decreasing thereby the risk of acting on, or thinking with, a false premise. www.Wikipedia.org

Critical thinking is here assumed to be reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do. This rough overall definition is, we believe, in accord with the way the term is generally used these days. Under this interpretation, critical thinking is relevant not only to the formation and checking of beliefs, but also to deciding upon and evaluating actions. It involves creative activities such as formulating hypotheses, plans, and counterexamples; planning experiments; and seeing alternatives. Furthermore, critical thinking is reflective—and reasonable. The negative, harping, complaining characteristic that is sometimes labeled by the word, "critical", is not involved. www.criticalthinking.net

A valuable cautionary note in one Wikipedia entry reminds us that critical evaluative thinking is influenced by our personal beliefs – an important issue that we will talk about throughout this course.

However, even with the use of critical thinking skills, mistakes can happen due to a thinker's egocentrism or incorrectly extending ones own belief system beyond its reasonable limits or failure to be in possession of the full facts. In addition, there is always the possibility of inadvertent human error.

II. Course Prerequisites

The course is primarily designed for Public Health Community Health Education and Maternal and Child Health MPH students in the second semester of their first year. It is also suitable for graduate students in other health-related majors, as well as, community program administrators with prior public health and/or statistics training. Completed course work should include the following graduate-level courses:

Statistics (i.e., Biostatistics 1), and

Health foundations (i.e., Community Health Theory or Fundamentals of Epidemiology)

While it is not required, practical work experience in health programs and interventions is bonus preparation for this course.

III. Course Goals and Objectives

The goal of this course is to introduce masters-level students to program evaluation planning and implementation techniques that can be applied to community-based programs. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Use a simple and credible CDC framework to guide the evaluation of health programs in community settings.
2. Identify and understand five key domains of program evaluation that address:
 - a. Community health needs (known as *needs assessments*);
 - b. Health program's theories of change & implementation (known as *evaluability assessments*);
 - c. Program processes, implementation, and delivery (known as *process or formative evaluations*);
 - d. Program outcomes and community impact (known as *outcome evaluations or impact assessments*);
 - e. Economic benefits (known as *cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness, and cost-utility analyses*).
3. Identify and describe, for purposes of planning and implementing an evaluation, a health program's:
 - a. Goals and objectives;
 - b. Target population;
 - c. Theory of change or concept of implementation;
 - d. Desired outcomes, behavior change, or impact on a community;
 - e. Context in the community and political environments; and
 - f. Standards of effectiveness.
4. Construct program logic models and develop appropriate evaluation questions using logic models.
5. Understand how standard research methods of data collection and analysis are used in community program evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies.
6. Describe the role of evaluation in designing, planning, and implementing a community health program.

Students will **not** carry out an actual program evaluation—there is not enough time to develop a plan with input from all program stakeholders or to obtain IRB approvals, collect and analyze data, interpret and disseminate findings and recommendations. Most program evaluations take several months, if not years. However, you will learn enough in this course to stimulate ideas for a manageable program evaluation masters project.

IV. Methods of Instruction and Work Expectations

The course is scheduled for three in-class hours once a week for the entire semester. The format is a combination of interactive lectures, intensive small group and full class discussions, team and paired exercises, and in-class case studies based on exposure to a wide variety of community health program examples. In other words, there is plenty of hands-on work in this course designed to give students many types of theoretical and practical exposure to program evaluation to suite their particular learning style. In addition, the format will aid in developing valuable skills in program coordination, leadership, and evaluation, e.g., critical thinking, communication, teamwork, problem solving, and project management.

PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS

As a member of and important contributor to the class, each student is expected to attend all class sessions and to have completed reading and other assignments (see course schedule posted on Vista). With this preparation, in-class discussions and exercises reach their highest potential as each individual brings her or his unique perspectives and contributions. Furthermore, by preparing, everyone has devoted time to thinking critically about issues of interest, confusion, or debate. Students are encouraged to ask questions during class and by email anytime the topic needs more clarification; but there is considerable, long-lasting value in re-reading course materials, applying readings to familiar examples, and referring to other sources to enhance understanding beyond the basics. Good program evaluation demands effort beyond the basics.

V. Course Text and Readings

There are two required textbook. Other resources are made available online and students are encouraged to seek resources on their own to support their work.

Required Textbooks

Issel, L. M. 2004. *Health program planning and evaluation: A practical, systematic approach for community health*. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Hahn, C. 2008. *Doing qualitative research using your computer: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

VI. Assignments and Course Outline/Weekly Schedule

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL ASSIGNMENTS

A program evaluation plan: Course Evaluation Plan Project

Each student will develop, in stages, a four-part plan for evaluating a community program. Part 1 is a description of a selected community program. Parts 2 and 3 are plans for a process evaluation (Part 2) and an outcome or impact assessment (Part 3). Part 4 is a presentation (slide handouts) or brief 1-2 page report of mock evaluation findings.

In-class and homework assignments build knowledge and technical expertise.

A variety of in-class exercises and assignments will be carried out throughout the semester. Specifics of these will depend on class needs, readiness, and desire to go deeper into topic areas. Expect an in-class assignment every week or an in-class exercise that develops into a homework assignment for the following week. Exact timing will be flexible and, potentially, specific to each course section.

Mid-term and final exams

Two non-traditional exams will be given that test your knowledge of program evaluation and mastery of critical thinking. Students will create the exams as an exercise in developing knowledge evaluation instruments.

TEAM ASSIGNMENTS

Teamwork. To build effective skills, each student will be part of a semester-long team that will be charged with working together on in-class exercises that include giving and receiving feedback on the course Evaluation Plan Project and other course exercises and assignments. Team exercises facilitate learning as members of the team reinforce what is known by individual members or increase knowledge through discussion and practice of concepts and techniques related to the course learning objectives. In addition, members of a team gain skills in

effective collaborations – a valuable asset in public health research, intervention programming and implementation, and evaluation.

ABBREVIATED SPRING 2009 COURSE SCHEDULE (See *WebCT Vista website for reading schedule*)

WK #	Dates by Section		Topics Covered	Graded Assignments Due
	001	002		
0	Holiday	1/21	Section 002 will meet for pre-course warm-up and workshop. Section 001 students are invited to participate – RSVP by 9 a.m. 1/21 to harwo002@umn.edu OR sevci101@umn.edu	
1	1/26	1/28	Course introduction to program evaluation and related concepts	In-Class Assignment
2	2/2	2/4	Evaluation approaches, frameworks, types, and plans Special focus on the CDC's Evaluation Framework CDC Framework Step 1: Engage Stakeholders	In-Class Assignment
3	2/9	2/11	CDC Framework Step 2: Define the Program Program theory of change, characteristics, and environmental context Logic models CDC Framework Step 3: Overview of Evaluation Focus Options <u>5 Evaluation domains:</u> evaluability and needs assessments, process and outcome/impact evaluations, and economic evaluations. <u>Evaluation standards:</u> utility and feasibility	In-Class Assignment
4	2/16	2/18	CDC Framework Step 4: Gathering Credible Evidence Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method data collection, pilot testing, valid and reliable measurement Special focus on qualitative and mixed method data <u>Evaluation standards:</u> Propriety and accuracy	Evaluation Plan Part 1: Program Description
5	2/23	2/25	<u>Evaluation domains:</u> evaluability and needs assessments Bringing back logic models to determine whether and how a program can be evaluated Planning a needs assessment; special focus on conducting focus groups and surveys for assessing community needs	In-Class Assignment
6	3/2	3/04	<u>Evaluation domain:</u> process evaluation and formative feedback Special focus on types of program processes suitable for evaluation, generating formative feedback internally and receiving external formative feedback	In-Class Assignment
7	3/9	3/11	More on process evaluation and process data Quantitative and qualitative process data, where it comes from, how to organize it for evaluation and program administration and strategic planning Special focus on the usefulness of data management systems for handling process data	In-Class Assignment
SPRING BREAK WEEK – March 16-20th, 2009				

WK #	Dates by Section		Topics Covered	Graded Assignments Due
	001	002		
8	3/23	3/25	Mid-term content overview and course process evaluation Non-traditional mid-term exam	In-class Assignment
9	3/30	4/1	<u>Evaluation domain</u> : Outcome evaluations and impact assessments Distinguishing differences between program outcomes and impacts, quantitative and qualitative approaches, evaluation research versus outcome and impact evaluations	Evaluation Plan Part 2: Process Evaluation Plan
10	4/6	4/8	More on outcome and impact evaluation domain The role of process evaluations in explaining outcomes and impacts Special focus on issues raised in class, plus critical discussion of real-life examples from student and instructors' experiences in conducting evaluations in this domain.	In-Class Assignment
11	4/13	4/15	<u>Evaluation domain</u> : Economic evaluations Distinctions between different types of economic evaluations; basic steps; linking outcome and impact evaluation to economic evaluations.	Evaluation Plan Part 3: Outcome OR Impact Evaluation Plan
12	4/20	4/22	Mini-seminar on qualitative research methods in program evaluation Identifying qualitative data; understanding how it is collected and how to organize and analyze the unstructured data that are obtained. Special emphasis on hands-on work with qualitative data.	In-Class Assignment
13	4/27	4/29	CDC Framework Steps 5 & 6 : Justifying conclusions and ensuring use of evaluation findings – organizing data, disseminating findings, reporting, making recommendations	In-Class Assignment
14	5/4	5/6	Overview of the 6 CDC Framework Steps, 5 evaluation domains, standards of evaluation, logic model building and utility, the role of evaluation in program planning, using standard research methods in evaluation settings, and critical thinking in program planning and evaluation. Discussion of course content, learning objectives, self-assessment of learning, in-class non-traditional final exam	Evaluation Plan Part 4: Mock report of findings
15	5/11	5/13	Submit, online, a summary of your individual semester learning achievements with a proposed final course grade to be compared with instructor's assessment. Non-traditional final exam.	Course Learning Summary & Grade

VII. Evaluation and Grading

Learning for this course will be evaluated through a variety of individual and team assignments and performance evaluations, including non-traditional mid-term and final exams. Each student, with feedback from

their teammates and instructors using specific evaluation criteria, will **evaluate their own performance** on each assignment using:

1. 100-point scales for each of the four parts of the Evaluation Plan Project
2. 10-point scales for:
 - a. each in-class and homework assignment,
 - b. each of two exams, and
 - c. an overall teamwork learning measure.

Final course grade. Each student will propose a final course learning grade based on a personal assessment of overall learning relative to team and instructor feedback throughout the semester, progress over time on assignments and exercises, and demonstrated evaluation knowledge from the two exams and the 4-part course Project. During final exam week May 11-16, each student will submit a learning summary with a proposed final grade that will be compared to the instructor’s assessment. Perfect agreement will be recorded as *is*. Grade disagreements will be negotiated if the instructor’s grade is less than the student’s proposed grade. If the instructor’s grade is higher than the student’s proposed grade, the instructor’s grade will be used.

Penalties for late or incomplete work. There are no make-up classes for those that are missed and you will NOT be allowed to attend classes for the other course section as make-up. We understand and accept that there are extenuating circumstances that prevent us from meeting all of our commitments. Due dates for the four Evaluation Plan Project assignments are established at the start of the semester leaving plenty of time to work around other commitments to: a) submit assignments before the due date or, alternatively, b) complete most of the work well ahead of time as a draft and fine tune just before submitting, on time, the final version of the Plan section. In-class and homework assignments, exams, and other learning measurement exercises cannot be made up since most or all of these rely on teamwork.

FINAL GRADE CONVERSION CHART – UNIVERSITY EQUIVALENTS					
Letter grade	Numeric grade	Letter grade	Numeric grade	Letter grade	Numeric grade
A	4.0	B	3.0	C	2.0
A-	3.75	B-	2.75		
B+	3.50	C+	2.50	F	0.0

S/N option:

N represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either a) complete but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit, or b) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I (incomplete).

S represents achievement that is satisfactory and the student will be expected to complete all assignments and receive a minimum of 70% (C-).

Incomplete Grade. A grade of incomplete “I” shall be assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., documented illness or hospitalization, death in family, etc.), the student was prevented from completing the work of the course on time. The assignment of an “I” requires that a contract be initiated and completed by the student before the last day of class, and signed by both the student and instructor. If an incomplete is deemed appropriate by the instructor, the student, in consultation with the instructor, will specify the time and manner in which the student will complete course requirements.

Extension for completion of the work will not exceed one year (or earlier if designated by the student’s college). For more information and to initiate an incomplete contract, students should go to:

www.sph.umn.edu/grades.

University of Minnesota Uniform Grading and Transcript Policy A link to the policy can be found at onestop.umn.edu.

VIII. Other Course Information and Policies

Grade Option Change (if applicable)

For full-semester courses, students may change their grad option, if applicable, through the second week of the semester. Grade option change deadlines for other terms (i.e. summer and half-semester) can be found at onestop.umn.edu.

Course Withdrawal

Students should refer to the Refund and Drop/Add Deadlines for the particular term at onestop.umn.edu for information and deadlines for withdrawing from a course. As a courtesy, students should notify their instructor and, if applicable, advisor of their intent to withdraw.

Students wishing to withdraw from a course after the noted final deadline for a particular term must contact the School of Public Health Student Services Center at sph-ssc@umn.edu for further information.

Student Conduct, Scholastic Dishonesty and Sexual Harassment Policies

Students are responsible for knowing the University of Minnesota, Board of Regents' policy on Student Conduct and Sexual Harassment found at www.umn.edu/regents/polindex.html.

Students are responsible for maintaining scholastic honesty in their work at all times. Students engaged in scholastic dishonesty will be penalized, and offenses will be reported to the Office of Student Academic Integrity (OSAI, www.osai.umn.edu).

The University's Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as "plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; or altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying of data, research procedures, or data analysis."

Plagiarism is an important element of this policy. It is defined as the presentation of another's writing or ideas as your own. Serious, intentional plagiarism will result in a grade of "F" or "N" for the entire course. For more information on this policy and for a helpful discussion of preventing plagiarism, please consult University policies and procedures regarding academic integrity: <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/>.

Students are urged to be careful that they properly attribute and cite others' work in their own writing. For guidelines for correctly citing sources, go to <http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/> and click on "Citing Sources".

In addition, original work is expected in this course. It is unacceptable to hand in assignments for this course for which you receive credit in another course unless by prior agreement with the instructor. Building on a line of work begun in another course or leading to a thesis, dissertation, or final project is acceptable.

If you have any questions, consult the instructor.

Disability Statement

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services to have a confidential discussion of their individual needs for accommodations. Disability Services is located in Suite 180 McNamara Alumni Center, 200 Oak Street. Staff can be reached by calling 612/626-1333 (voice or TTY).

Course Evaluation

Beginning in fall 2008 the SPH will collect student course evaluations electronically using a software system called CoursEval. The system will send email notifications to students when they can access and complete the course evaluations. Students who complete the course evaluations promptly will be able to access their final grades just as soon as the faculty member renders the grade. All students will have access to their final grades two weeks after the last day of the semester regardless of whether they completed the course evaluation or not.

Student feedback on course content and faculty teaching skills are important means for improving our work. Please take the time to complete a course evaluation for each of the course for which you are registered.