**McMaster University School of Social Work**

**SW743: Critical Approaches to Evidence and Evaluation in Social Services and Communities**

June 29 – August 10, 2020, Mondays & Thursdays 4:30-7:20 p.m. online

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# Course Overview

## Course Description:

Discourses of evidence-based practice increasingly permeate social services, and audit technologies abound. This course explores both the doing and discourses of evaluation and accountability as they relate to critical practice in social services and communities. It supports students to apply critical conceptual frameworks to evidence and evaluation, develop an awareness of the organizational context for evaluation, learn about inclusive evaluation methods, and examine ways to use more conventional methods of evaluation for social justice ends.

## Course Objectives:

* Understand how theory (critical theory, practice theory, social change theory, evaluation theory) shapes understandings of evidence and evaluation
* Develop awareness of the context in which evaluation occurs including organizational, social, cultural and political relations
* Learn about evaluation methods for inclusive individual and community participation
* Engage in practical application by using specific models and methods of evaluation
* Reflect on how to use more conventional methods of evaluation for social justice ends
* Examine ways to build organizational capacity for evaluative thinking and evaluation

The basic assumptions of this course concur with the broader curriculum context set by the **School of Social Work's Statement of Philosophy**:

*As social workers, we operate in a society characterized by power imbalances that affect us all. These power imbalances are based on age, class, ethnicity, gender identity, geographic location, health, ability, race, sexual identity and income. We see personal troubles as inextricably linked to oppressive structures. We believe that social workers must be actively involved in the understanding and transformation of injustices in social institutions and in the struggles of people to maximize control over their own lives.*

## Course Format

Information will be presented through review of readings, class discussion and exploring specific examples of evaluation templates.

## Required Texts:

1. Journal articles and book chapters will be available through a link on A2L.
2. Other course material will also be made available through a link in A2L.

# Course Requirements/Assignments

## Requirements Overview and Deadlines

1. Participation (15%)
2. Assignment: Develop program theory of change (25%) – due July 13, 2020
3. Assignment: Design an evaluation (45%) – one section due each week beginning July 16 through July 30, 2020
4. Assignment: Repurposing evaluation (15%) – due August 17, 2020

## Requirement/Assignment Details

1. Participation: 15%
   1. The course will be a combination of presentations, discussion and exercises. Students are expected to join the class having read the assigned readings and prepared to ask questions and participate in discussion.
   2. Students are asked to share a brief description of an evaluation approach or evaluation tool (not covered in class) with the class via a 3 slide ppt presentation shared during a synchronous class or a short narrated 3 slide ppt. recorded and posted for an asynchronous class.
2. Develop a program theory of change: 25%, **Due July 13, 2020**

(A full assignment description is posted to Avenue to Learn.)

Students will select a social service program or community initiative with which they are familiar. They will describe this program in terms of its mission and aims and expectations. They will prepare a ‘theory of change’ diagram specific to this program or initiative, for the purpose of setting up an evaluation. They will also develop a narrative about the theory of change for this program. This assignment should be approximately 7-9 pages long including the textual explanation and a one-page diagram.

1. Design an evaluation: 45%, **One section/class due from July 16-July 30, 2020**

(A full assignment description is posted to Avenue to Learn.)

This assignment involves students situating the program or initiative that was discussed in Assignment 2 in its wider organizational context and designing an evaluation for that program. The evaluation design will include the purpose, the context, key stakeholders, the theory of change, evaluation method(s) and data collection, reporting back and organizational learning. This assignment should be approximately 17-25 pages.

1. Repurposing evaluation for social justice aims: 15%, **Due August 17, 2020**
   1. Review a conventional outcome evaluation design (e.g. Social Return on Investment model or a model required by a funder of an organization to which you are connected; some examples are on the course website) and suggest ways at three different steps of the evaluation process (scope, aims, stakeholders, methods, reporting back, etc.) you can move the design towards greater participation and social justice perspectives. The assumption is that you cannot redesign the format.
      * First, identify a conventional evaluation framework and summarize the basic framework for this approach to evaluation in one page.
      * Second, drawing on your own practice experience and the material from the course, identify how you would define a more socially just evaluation process. This could involve both appreciation for particular dimensions of this approach and also critique of this approach. Suggest three ways at three different points in the evaluation where you can move the design (even in small ways) towards greater participation and social justice perspectives. Reflect on which of the steps you have identified shows the most promise for moving the evaluation in the direction you have outlined.

**OR**

* 1. Work with the evaluation that you designed for Assignment 3 and complete the steps above, except that you would summarize your own design evaluation in Step 1 and then complete the remaining steps.
  2. This assignment should be approximately 7-9 pages.

# Assignment Submission and Grading

## Form and Style

* Written assignments must be typed and double-spaced and submitted with a front page containing the title, student’s name, student number, and the date. Number all pages (except title page).
* Paper format must be in accordance with the current edition of American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual with particular attention paid to font size (Times-Roman 12), spacing (double spaced) and margins (minimum of 1 inch at the top, bottom, left and right of each page).
* Students are expected to make use of relevant professional and social science literature and other bodies of knowledge in their term assignments. When submitting, please keep a spare copy of your assignments.

## Avenue to Learn

In this course, we will be using [Avenue to Learn](http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/index.html). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss with the course instructor. You can access eSupport from the main Avenue site. Go to the login page; click “Support” on the left hand frame, then click on the “eSupport” hyperlink. Click “I am a student,” and you will have access to quick help, video tutorials, manual references, and more.

Please do not email the instructor from Avenue as the email function does not allow us to respond to emails.

## Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last five digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

## Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

# Student Responsibilities and University Policies

* Students are expected to contribute to the creation of a respectful and constructive learning environment. Students should read material in preparation for class, attend class on time and remain for the full duration of the class. A formal break will be provided in the middle of each class, students are expected to return from the break on time.
* Audio or video recording in the classroom without permission of the instructor is strictly prohibited.

## Expectations

Please ensure your cell phone is turned off before class begins. Please do not answer your cell phone or engage in texting during class. The classes in this course will be conducted in an open and respectful environment. It is expected that participation will be expressed in a constructive, respectful manner that contributes to learning.

Late Assignments will be penalized by a deduction of 2% per day. Extensions (for exceptional circumstances) must be arranged before the due date of an assignment.

## Attendance

Participation, attendance, and questions are essential in order to fully engage in the analysis of the readings. Furthermore, the expectation is that students will attend all lectures.

## Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

* Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
* Improper collaboration in group work.
* Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic dishonesty also entails a student having someone sign in for them on a weekly course attendance sheet when they are absent from class and/or a student signing someone in who is known to be absent.

## Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf) policy.

## Accessibility Statement

The School of Social Work recognizes that people learn and express their knowledge in different ways. We are committed to reducing barriers to accessibility in the classroom, and working towards classrooms that welcome diverse learners. If you have accessibility concerns or want to talk about your learning needs, please be in touch with the course instructor.

## Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar’s Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Please review the RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences about how to request accommodation. Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/current-students/riso) about how to request accommodation.

## E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, they may not reply.

# Course Weekly Topics and Readings

## Date: Monday, June 29, 2020

### Topic:

* Introduction

### Readings:

* Carden, F. (2017). Building evaluation capacity to address problems of equity. In S. Sridharan, K. Zhao, & A. Nakaima (Eds.), Building Capacities to Evaluate Health Inequities: Some Lessons Learned from Evaluation Experiments in China, India and Chile. New Directions for Evaluation, 154, 115–125.

## Date: Thursday, July 2, 2020

### Topic:

* Critical & Indigenous Perspectives on Evaluation

### Readings:

* Freeman, M. & Vasconcelos E. (2010). Critical Social Theory: Core Concepts, Inherent Tensions. *New Directions in Evaluation* 127, 7-19.
* LaFrance, J. & Nicholls, R. (2010). Reclaiming Evaluation: Defining an Indigenous Evaluation Framework. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation 23*(2), 13-31

## Date: Monday, July 6, 2020

### Topic:

* Evaluation and Practice Theory

### Readings:

* Donaldson, S., & Lipsey, M. (2006). Roles for Theory in Contemporary Evaluation Practice: Developing Practical Knowledge. In I.Shaw, J. Greene & M. Mark (eds), *Sage Handbook of Evaluation* (**56-66**), London: Sage Publications. Available online at the library.
* Sullivan, C.M. (2018). Understanding How Domestic Violence Support Services Promote Survivor Well-Being: A Conceptual Model. *Journal of Family Violence 33*:121-131.
* Evaluation Example: theoryofchange.org Read through the steps found under Theory of Change on the menu at the Center for Theory of Change. Check out the facilitators handbook: <http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/ToCFacilitatorSourcebook.pdf>

## Date: Thursday, July 9, 2020

### Topic:

* Evaluation and Measurement I: What counts as evidence?

### Readings:

* Stake, R. & Schwandt, T. (2006). On Discerning Quality in Evaluation. In I.Shaw, J. Greene & M. Mark (eds), *Sage Handbook of Evaluation* (404-418), London: Sage Publications. Available online at the library.
* Ecker, J., Donaldson, J., & Helland, J. (2017) *Youth at the Centre of Impact: Towards an Outcomes Measurement Framework*. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and Eva’s Initiatives.
* Evaluation Example: **Chapter 1** in: Burns, S. & Cupitt, S. (2003). Managing Outcomes; A Guide for Homelessness Organisations. London: Charities Evaluation Services. <https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/CES%20-%20Managing%20outcomes.pdf>

## Date: Monday, July 13, 2020

### Topic:

* Evaluation and Measurement II: What counts as evidence?

### Readings:

* Liket, K., Rey-Garcia, M. & Maas, K. (2014). Why Aren’t Evaluations Working and What to Do About It: A Framework for Negotiating Meaningful Evaluation in Non-profits. *American Journal of Evaluation 35*(2), 171-188.
* Greene, J. (1999). The Inequality of Performance Measurements. *Evaluation 5*(2), (160-172).
* Evaluation Example: **Chapter 2** in: Burns, S. & Cupitt, S. (2003). Managing Outcomes; A Guide for Homelessness Organisations. London: Charities Evaluation Services. <https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/CES%20-%20Managing%20outcomes.pdf>

## Date: Thursday, July 16, 2020

### Topic:

* Evaluation and Community

### Readings:

* Wallace, B., Pauly, B., Perkin, K., & Ranftt, M. (2015). Shifting the Evaluative Gaze: Community Based Program Evaluation in the Homelessness Sector. *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement 8*(1), 43-58.
* Johnston, A. (2010). Using Technology to Enhance Aboriginal Evaluations. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation 23*(2), 51-72.
* Evaluation Example: International HIV/AIDS Alliance. (2006). Tools Together Now: 100 participatory tools to mobilize communities for HIV/AIDS. See **Section D** on Linkage and Relationships. <https://frontlineaids.org/wp-content/uploads/old_site/229-Tools-together-now_original.pdf?1405520036>

## Date: Monday, July 20, 2020

### Topic:

* Evaluation in Situations of Complexity

### Readings:

* Langlois, M., Blanchet-Cohen, N. & Beer, T. (2013). The Art of the Nudge: Five Practices for Developmental Evaluators. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 27(2), 39-59.
* Murphy, N. (2015). Nine Guiding Principle to Help Youth Overcome Homelessness. In M.Q. Patton, K. McKegg, N. Wehipeihana, Ed., *Developmental Evaluation Exemplars* New York: Guilford Publications. Pp. 63-82. (Book available online at the library.)
* Evaluation Example: Gamble, J.A.A. (2008). A Developmental Evaluation Primer. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation. Pp. 1-25. <https://mcconnellfoundation.ca/report/a-developmental-evaluation-primer/>

## Date: Thursday, July 23, 2020

### Topic:

* Evaluation and Participation

### Readings:

* Fetterman, D. (2017). Transformative empowerment evaluation and Freirean pedagogy: Alignment with an emancipatory tradition. In M. Q. Patton (Ed.), *Pedagogy of Evaluation. New Directions for Evaluation*, *155*, 111–126.
* Cousins, B. & Whitmore, E. (1998). Framing Participatory Evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation* 80, 5-23.
* Evaluation Example: International HIV/AIDS Alliance. (2006). Tools Together Now: 100 participatory tools to mobilize communities for HIV/AIDS. See **Sections C. & E**. <https://frontlineaids.org/wp-content/uploads/old_site/229-Tools-together-now_original.pdf?1405520036>

## Date: Monday July 27, 2020

### Topic:

* Evaluation and Dialogue/Facilitation

### Readings:

* Fierro, R. S. (2016). Enhancing facilitation skills: Dancing with dynamic tensions. In R. S.Fierro, A. Schwartz, & D. H. Smart (Eds.), *Evaluation and Facilitation. New Directions for Evaluation*, *149*, 31–42.
* Abma, T. (2001). Reflexive Dialogues: A Story about the Development of Injury Prevention in Two Performing Arts Schools. *Evaluation 7*(2), 238-252.
* Evaluation Example; from the Art of Hosting Website: Hosting in a Hurry: <http://www.artofhosting.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Hostinginahurryversion1.5ChrisC.pdf>

## Date: Thursday July 30, 2020

### Topic:

* Arts Based Evaluation

### Readings:

* Sinding, C. & Barnes, H. (2015). How art works; hopes, claims and possibilities for social justice. In C. Sinding and H. Barnes (Eds). *Social Work Artfully,* Pp. 27-42. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. (ebook available at library)
* Simons, H. & McCormack, B. (2007). Integrating Arts-Based Inquiry in Evaluation Methodology. *Qualitative Inquiry 13*(2), 292-311.
* Evaluation Example: Some Examples of Arts-Based Evaluation, Jumblies Theatre. (2013). For Artreach. <http://www.ascevaluation.ca/Documents/JumbliesEvaluation.pdf>
* International HIV/AIDS Alliance. (2006). Tools Together Now: 100 participatory tools to mobilize communities for HIV/AIDS. See **Section B.** Mapping. <https://frontlineaids.org/wp-content/uploads/old_site/229-Tools-together-now_original.pdf?1405520036>

## Date: Thursday August 6, 2020

### Topic:

* Evaluation and Social Change

### Readings:

* Dart, J. & Davies, R. (2003). A Dialogical, Story-Based Evaluation Tool: The Most Significant Change Technique. *American Journal of Evaluation 24*(2), 137-155.
* Fletcher, G. & Dyson, S. (2013). Evaluation as a work in progress: Stories of shared learning and development. *Evaluation 19*(4), 419-430.
* Evaluation Example: Davies, R. & Dart, J. (2005). The Most Significant Change Technique: A Guide to Its Use. CARE International, United Kingdom, **Chapters 1 & 2**. <http://www.alnap.org/resource/8102.aspx>

## Date: Monday, August 10, 2020

### Topic:

* Building Capacity for Evaluation

### Readings:

* Danseco, E. (2013). The 5 Cs for Innovation in Evaluation Capacity Building: Lessons from the Field. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation 28*(2), 107-117.
* Runnels, V., Andrew, C., & Rae, J. (2017). Building Evaluation Culture and Capacity in a Community-Level Program: Lessons Learned from Evaluating Youth Futures. *Canadian Journal of Evaluation 32*(1), 122-130.
* Evaluation Example: International HIV/AIDS Alliance. (2006). Tools Together Now: 100 participatory tools to mobilize communities for HIV/AIDS. See **Section G**. Action Planning <https://frontlineaids.org/wp-content/uploads/old_site/229-Tools-together-now_original.pdf?1405520036>