

Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work

JOB POSTING: SESSIONAL LECTURER I

TITLE AND NUMBER OF COURSE: SWK 4510H – Research for Evidence Based Social Work Practice – ONE SECTION AVAILABLE

COURSE DESCRIPTION: SEE BELOW FOR DETAILED DESCRIPTION

ESTIMATE OF COURSE ENROLLMENT: 26

ESTIMATE OF TA SUPPORT: NONE

CLASS SCHEDULE: SPRING/SUMMER TERM 2010

MONDAYS: 6:00 – 9:30 p.m.

APR. 26 – JUNE 21, 2010

SESSIONAL DATES OF APPOINTMENT: APRIL 1 – JULY 15, 2010

SALARY: \$6,675.00 per course

QUALIFICATIONS: Ph.D. Degree in Social Work or other related field. Thorough knowledge in the following areas: (1) the process of evidence-based practice; (2) research methods used in Social Work; (3) search engines and library databases; and (4) evaluation of published quantitative and qualitative work. Preference may be given to candidates who have the most experience teaching in this area at the graduate level.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES: Sessional lecturers are required to be superior classroom teachers and to maintain a mastery of the subject area. Duties shall include the normal duties associated with the design and teaching of university degree credit courses or sections of courses. These may include the preparation and delivery of course content, including lecturers and/or seminars; creation of course ware; the development and administration of assignments, tests and examinations; the marking and grading of student work and the submission of grades to appropriate University officials in accordance with policy; the maintenance of reasonable hours of student contact outside of scheduled contact hours.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: MARCH 12, 2010

APPLICATION PROCESS: To be considered for a position, candidates must apply with a cover letter and curriculum vitae. Candidates may apply for multiple sections, however the cover letter must clearly indicate which section(s) you are interested in. Please submit applications by email to: angela.umbrello@utoronto.ca

This job is posted in accordance with the CUPE 3902 Unit 3 Collective Agreement. It is understood that some announcements of vacancies are tentative, pending final course determinations and enrolment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Overview

Evidence Based Social Work Practice is a systematic approach to making decisions that emphasizes (1) formulating answerable questions, (2) locating, critically appraising and interpreting the relevant research evidence, (3) applying best available evidence in consultation with clients, and (4) evaluating the intervention. Using a problem-based learning model, students evaluate and interpret the best available evidence relating to a number of social work policy and practice questions. Supported by a series of research methods tutorials, students develop an understanding of some of basic quantitative and qualitative research designs and methods appropriate for answering policy and practice questions.

Rationale and Significance

Evidence based practice has been defined as:

“the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions regarding the welfare of those in need of social services” (Sackett, et al., 1996, p. 71).

The topic of evidence-based practice has become prominent in the field of social work with the rapid expansion of available research knowledge relevant to social service interventions and in the ways available to access this knowledge. The international movement towards evidence based social work follows a similar movement in medicine which began in the 1970s when clinical medicine became concerned about how much of its practice was conducted in ignorance of the latest and best research evidence. What is new about evidence based medicine and now evidence-based social work practice is not the *idea* of evaluating practice, but the seriousness with which the issue of research quality is now being pursued and the emphasis on translating research evidence into service delivery.

The fundamental purpose of this course is to involve students *in* evidence based practice rather than merely to teach them *about* it. Classes will focus on the process of posing questions and identifying, critically appraising, interpreting and applying evidence to help guide social work policy and practice. Using a problem-based learning model, students will evaluate and interpret the best evidence available relative to a number of practice and policy questions.

Formulate question → Locate & appraise evidence → Interpret → Apply → Evaluate implementation

The course aims to facilitate the transition from student to practitioner or policy-maker by engaging participants in the day-to-day challenges of decision-making and responding to critical problems.

Goals

- To learn the process of evidence-based practice and develop skills in generating evidence based solutions to social work practice and policy questions.
- To develop teamwork skills in the resolution of these questions.
- To promote an interest in and respect for research evidence and provide an alternative to ‘authority based’ practice.
- To develop understanding of the appropriate research methods required for evaluating and interpreting the available evidence.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be better equipped to:

- Apply research evidence to social work practice and policy questions
- Formulate clearly stated, answerable questions
- Locate research evidence to answer these questions by efficiently searching the literature through appropriate databases
- Critically appraise qualitative and quantitative research designs and methods useful for answering different types of practice and policy questions
- Integrate findings from systematic reviews and meta analyses.
- Interpret the evidence, including its clinical or policy significance in the context to which it is being applied, and generate evidence based solutions to commonly occurring social work problems.
- Evaluate the outcomes of an evidence-based solution.
- Work in teams to apply the best available evidence to complex practice or policy problems.

Educational Philosophy

Problem-based learning is an educational format that centers on the discussion and learning that emanates from a practical problem. It is a method that encourages independent learning and provides practice in tackling puzzling situations. It is a way of learning that encourages a deeper understanding of the material than is possible through rote learning. The small-group setting often used in problem-based learning also encourages an inquisitive and detailed look at all of the issues, concepts and principles contained within the problem. The time spent outside the group setting facilitates the development of skills such as literature retrieval, critical appraisal of available information and input from peers and specialists. In short, problem-based learning encourages students to become more involved in, and responsible for, their own learning.

In appraising the evidence and crafting solutions to the questions posed, we will examine the data from a scientific viewpoint and we will also consider the extent to which the research findings can be applied to diverse populations.

Organization of course

The course is primarily developed around two-hour weekly problem-based small group sessions, with additional weekly “refresher” research methods lectures.

The group meetings will include a combination of structured student-facilitated evidence-based group exercises using assigned readings as well as consultation around of each student’s practicum-based project. The exercises will follow structured questions focusing on evaluating and interpreting the evidence from the selected readings, incorporating into decision-making and linking to implications for policy and practice.

Each class will be divided into three working groups of 8 to 10 students. Students will take turns facilitating the small group discussions, with instructors providing overall coordination and being available as consultants.

In order to successfully complete the course all students are expected to have an introductory understanding of social science research methods. The weekly lectures are primarily designed as “refresher” lectures for students who do not have a strong research methods background. The lectures will cover methods relevant to the research being evaluated in their small groups (e.g., experimental designs, meta analysis, qualitative interviewing).