PMA 9141
Advanced Topics in Program Evaluation
Spring Semester 2020

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Office hours: Mondays 2-3 p.m.,
Wednesdays 3:30-4:30, or by appt.

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Note: This syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

Course Focus and Purposes

This course will focus on program evaluation and a number of related topics, including models of applied research, performance measurement and management, and cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis. All of these topics refer to aspects of the assessment of the operation and impact of public and nonprofit sector programs. This assessment has been a growth area in applied social research since the late 1960s, and has become a vocation for many professionals who hold doctorates in the social sciences (including public policy), working in academia, governmental agencies, the nonprofit sector, and private research firms.

This course is designed to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the field of program evaluation, focusing especially on:

- The approaches and techniques used for evaluating public policies and programs,
- The organizational and political contexts in which evaluations are performed and how they affect the conduct of evaluation research, and
- Standards and guidelines for conducting evaluations.

After completing this course, each student should be able to:

- Design and conduct an evaluation of a public program or policy,
- Design performance measures and performance management systems, and
- Analyze and critique evaluations and performance management systems that others have conducted.

Required Readings

There are two required books:


There are extensive additional required readings, mostly in scholarly journals, chosen to reflect the most current published research on various aspects of program evaluation. Unless otherwise indicated below, these articles may be accessed online through GSU Libraries.

**Student Responsibilities:**

*Seminar participation.* The format of most classes will combine lecture and discussion. I will usually lecture at the start of class with the remaining time devoted to discussion in a seminar format. Each student is expected to read and be prepared to discuss all of the week’s assigned readings. Class participation will include two components:

1. Questions/comments on assigned readings: Each student is required to submit to me, before class begins, a question or comment on each of the designated readings (*) in that week’s assigned readings. Each week’s questions should not exceed one page.

2. Informed participation in class discussions: Each student is expected to join in class discussions, in part by voicing their questions and comments.

3. Attendance: No one should have more than 2-3 absences. No provision will be made for excused absences.

Participation grades will be based on a) submissions of weekly questions or comments on the readings and b) participation in class discussions as assessed by my weekly, post-class, admittedly flawed notes. Preliminary class participation grades will be reported once or twice during the semester.

*Proposal for a program evaluation.* Each student will prepare a program evaluation proposal as the term paper, detailing the plan for evaluating a specific program. This does not entail actually conducting the evaluation. The design will be drafted in segments across the semester, with each segment submitted (by email in Word), reviewed by the instructor, and returned for revision in the final paper. Grades on the segments are advisory, designed to indicate how much additional work may be needed. The required segments and due dates are:

1. A description of the program and the anticipated purpose of the evaluation (*Jan. 29*).

2. Definition of the program goals in the context of a program logic model and prior research on the program area, proposed measures of effectiveness for those goals, and a plan for process evaluation or implementation assessment (*Feb. 19*).

3. Explanation of the outcome evaluation research designs (i.e., techniques of control and comparison) (*March 25*).
The final paper will consist of these segments in revised form plus a conclusion that discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the design and potential for utilization of the findings, if a full evaluation were conducted. This paper is due Wednesday, April 15, and students will present their designs in the last two class sessions, April 15 and 22. The final paper is due in Word via email before the April 15 class.

**Online midterm examination:** There will be a several-hour online midterm examination from 1:00-5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 26.

**Online final examination.** There will be a daylong online final examination from 12 noon to 5 or 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 29. (A makeup is possible for either exam where a student has an excused absence, but a makeup would be more difficult than the regular exam.)

The various responsibilities will carry the following weights in the final grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation research design paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online midterm examination</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online final examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
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Total 100%

**Note:** Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability for any of the requirements may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan, and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to the instructor if any accommodation will be sought.

**Schedule of Topics and Readings:**

1. Introduction to program evaluation research (Jan. 15)

   *Handbook, Preface, Ch. 1, & Ch. 30 (pp. 798-805 only)

   *Loud & Mayne, Ch. 1


Recommended:


2. Planning if, what, and how to evaluate (Jan. 22)

*Handbook, Chs. 2 & 4
*Loud & Mayne, Ch. 2

3. Program goals, program theory & logic models, & process evaluation/implementation assessment (Jan. 29)

**Paper segment #1 due**

*Handbook, Ch. 3
*Loud & Mayne, Ch. 6

Recommended:

Steckler, Allan, et al., “Pathways Process Evaluation Results: A School-Based Prevention Trial to Promote Healthful Diet and Physical Activity in American Indian Third, Fourth, and Fifth Grade Students.” Preventive Medicine, 37 (2003), S80-S90.
4. Measures of effectiveness (Feb. 5)

*Handbook, Chs. 5 & 13-14 & 18-22 (note: everyone should Ch. 5 plus at least 3 of the other chapters)


Recommended:


5. Evaluation research designs: experiments (Feb. 12)

*Handbook, Ch. 7


*Loud & Mayne, Ch. 3

Recommended:


6. Evaluation research designs: quasi-experiments (Feb. 19)

*Paper segment #2 due*

*Handbook, Ch. 6*


*Loud & Mayne, Ch. 4*

Recommended:


7. *Online midterm examination (Feb. 26)*

8. Evaluation research designs: statistical and other techniques (March 4)


*Loud & Mayne, Ch. 5*

Recommended:

Handbook, Ch. 20


9. Evaluation research designs: meta-analyses & case studies (March 11)

*Handbook, Ch. 8 & 25
*Loud & Mayne, Ch. 7

Recommended:


**Week of March 18: spring break—no class**

10. Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis (March 25)

**Paper segment #3 due**

*Handbook, Ch. 24
*Loud & Mayne, Ch. 8

Recommended:

11. Performance measurement and management I: overview (April 1)

“Balanced Scorecard basics.” [pdf on iCollege.]

12. Performance measurement and management II: challenges (April 8)

Gerrish (see week 9).

Recommended:


13. Getting evaluation results used (April 15)

*Handbook, Ch. 30 (pp. 805-815)
*Loud & Mayne, Chs. 9 & 10

Completed papers due & first set of student paper presentations


Recommended:


Handbook, Ch. 25

14. Trends in evaluation research (April 22)

**Second set of student paper presentations**

*Handbook, Ch. 31


Recommended:


15. **Online all-afternoon final examination (April 29)**

*Caution:* Plagiarism on a paper—that is, using the writing of others without proper citation—is grounds for a failing grade on the work in question and for the course overall. Plagiarism includes, for example, using another person’s writing, word for word, while leaving the impression that the choice of words is your own.