

01/01/2015
subject to change

**The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration
George Washington University**

Spring 2015

Course Number: PPPA 6016-10 (Dr. Nightingale)

Course Title: Public and Non-Profit Program Evaluation

Class time/Location: Tuesdays 6:10-8pm Phillips 217

Course

Description: This course provides students with an understanding of the basic dimensions of program evaluation as applied to public policy and public administration, including an appreciation of the contributions and limitations of public and non-profit program evaluation. Students learn the basic skills needed to conduct and use evaluations, with an emphasis on conceptual, methodological, organizational, political, and ethical issues evaluators must address. The various tasks involved in evaluations will be covered, from developing the questions to presenting the data and analysis. The specific issues addressed in class sessions are noted on the class schedule below.

Prerequisites: PPPA 6002 or an equivalent basic course on research design is required; a more advanced statistical course is helpful but not required.

Professor: Dr. Demetra Smith Nightingale
Chief Evaluation Officer, U.S. Department of Labor
Telephone: 202-693-5924 (office)
703-447-2129 (cell)
E-mail: dnightingale@gwu.edu

Nightingale.Demetr@dol.gov

Office hours: Trachtenburg School, 6th Floor (Dr. Newcomer's office) (MPA Bldg) Mondays 5:15 - 6pm and by appointment

Required Books:

Allan Kimmel, *Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research*, Sage 1988.

Michael Lewis, *Moneyball*. 2004.

Selected Chapters from Joseph Wholey, Harry Hatry, and Kathryn Newcomer, *The Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, Jossey-Bass, 3rd Edition, 2010.

Selected Chapters from Paul J. Gertler, Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, and Christel M. J. Vermeersch, *Impact Evaluation in Practice*, The World Bank, 2011.

Other assigned readings on the class schedule

NOTE: All readings except *Moneyball* will be on Blackboard.

Student Learning Objectives:

Through course discussions, readings, and assignments, students will develop knowledge and skills to enable them to:

- frame appropriate evaluation questions and appropriate logic models;
- develop implementation, outcome, and impact evaluation designs;
- design clear and useful data collection instruments for evaluations;
- understand pertinent professional standards and ethical principles affecting specific dilemmas confronting evaluators in the field;
- understand performance management strategies, including identifying useful performance measures and performance measurement systems;
- review and assess the quality and relevance of evaluations;
- design reports to convey evaluation findings;
- develop recommendations based on evaluation findings; and

- understand ethical issues that may arise in designing, conducting, and communicating results of evaluations.

Method of Instruction:

The course is designed as a seminar with a mix of lecture and active student presentations and discussions. The tasks and constraints facing professionals involved in designing, implementing, and using program evaluations are explored through readings, class participation, online (Blackboard) discussions, presentations, and written exercises. Questions and problems facing both evaluators and managers of programs being evaluated are examined. Attendance is required for successful completion of the course.

Assigned Readings:

Assigned readings are selected to give students a representative sample of the professional evaluation literature, as well as to expose them to the sorts of issues that arise in the context of real life evaluations.

Assignments:

NOTE: ALL written assignments must be submitted in hard copy on or before the due date, unless students are otherwise instructed. Due dates are firm for all written assignments. Written assignments will be graded on both content/substance and style/grammar—use a Style Guide of your choice for format and citations.

1. Weekly Readings: Students are expected to have read required readings prior to the class meeting for which they are listed. Class discussion on the required readings will affect course grades, especially in borderline cases. Class discussions will also supplement the required readings by introducing other materials and information.

2. One Critique: Every student will prepare a written critical review of an impact evaluation selected by the student and approved by the instructor (20% of grade).

NOTE: The evaluation article or report to be critiqued must present the evaluation design and results of an impact evaluation of a program, not an article about how to conduct surveys or research, and not an article that summarizes or synthesizes multiple research studies. Students must have the article or report approved by the Professor before beginning the critique.

There is no mandatory length for the paper, but 10 pages double spaced is an optimal length. The paper should include:

- The formal title and citation of the document, including the name of the evaluator(s) and journal (for articles).
- A brief introductory summary of the focus of the evaluation (e.g., policy or program), the type of impact evaluation design used, and key findings.
- A brief summary of the key evaluation questions addressed;
- A brief summary of the research design, data collection methods used, and type of analysis conducted.
- A systematic discussion of threats to the evaluation: measurement validity, internal validity, external validity, statistical conclusion validity, and reliability of the findings. The threats should be clearly presented. The threats should be identified as those the authors acknowledged and threats the authors did not acknowledge. The discussion should include an assessment of potential specification errors in any models estimated and the suitability of the comparison group (if there is one).
- Suggestions on how the evaluation could have been improved.
- An assessment of whether any policy recommendations made by the author are warranted and what are appropriate recommendations.
- A brief concluding statement summarizing your critique.

3. Class Participation: Students will be graded on their participation in in-class discussions, debates, and presentations. Students must participate in class discussions and debates. Short debates on ethical issues will be assigned throughout the semester. The in-class discussions will be supplemented with 2 or 3 moderated online Blackboard discussions. (20% of course grade).

4. Exam: A take home exam covering the readings and content of the course will contribute 30% to the course grade.

5. Applied Project-Evaluation Design: All students must **prepare a written program evaluation design report (research proposal—see outline below) either alone or with one or more other students during the semester.** Students have two options:

Option A. The primary way to satisfy the requirement is to prepare a proposal in response to a real Request for Proposals (RFP).

Option B. Instead of preparing a design proposal in response to a real RFP, students may prepare a comprehensive design and evaluation for a hypothetical evaluation. This is more difficult to do than responding to an existing real-life RFP.

The two options will be discussed in more detail in class. An outline of the type of report expected is below. Regardless of the option students choose, all must get approval in advance from the Professor before proceeding.

The project contributes 30% to the course grade.

APPLIED EVALUATION DESIGN PROJECT OUTLINE AND OVERVIEW:

EVALUATION DESIGN IN RESPONSE TO A REAL OR HYPOTHETICAL RFP

This assignment is intended to provide you with on-the-job training for developing an evaluation proposal and study design. You are asked to identify a real request for proposals (RFP) from a federal, state, or local government agency, a foundation, nonprofit organization, or international organization calling for an evaluation of a program, project, or demonstration. You will only propose the evaluation; you are not expected to conduct the actual evaluation itself. That means you are to prepare the technical component of an evaluation proposal not the business component; and you do not have to prepare a formal budget. These details will be discussed in class before you begin.

The proposal you develop will be in the form of a written product, like a report, and should have all of the components identified below.

Required Elements (i.e., Outline) of the Proposal Report for the Applied Project

The preferred contents and order of presentation for the report are as follows:

- I. Executive Summary:** Guidance and examples will be provided in class on formatting the Executive Summary.
- II. Introduction and Background:** An introduction to the project, including the names of the team should be given along with a description of the scoping activities, including a brief description of the program, and a synthesis of relevant past research and evaluation findings; also, cite relevant literature on the program.

- III. Evaluation Questions:** The issues that have been identified and the specific questions that are addressed, or should be addressed should be provided. If you believe the RFP misses some important aspects of how the study should be conducted, include these as well and explain why they are useful.
- IV. Evaluation Design:** The design(s) under taken, or to be undertaken, including the concepts and variables, the theory underlying the policy/program, etc. should be provided. A **logic model** of the program/policy must be developed and presented in the body of the report with an appropriate introduction.
- V. Data Collection Plan:** The sources of data available, measures used to address the research questions, data collection methods, and sampling procedures should be discussed. Also, there should be a list of limitations to validity and reliability, as well as actions undertaken to reduce the impact of the limitations identified. Use of a design matrix to cover all of these issues is recommended.
- VI. Data Analysis Plan:** Proposed analytic strategies should be discussed. Appropriate tables and figures should be constructed in accordance with guidance given in class for projects that are completed. Describe the outcome and explanatory variables to be used, the statistical techniques to be used, and you will be able to draw inferences about the program's impacts. Discuss the size of the sample to be analyzed and indicate if it is large enough to obtain statistically significant findings if the program has the desired impact (i.e., conduct minimum detectable impact analysis.)
- VII. Reports and Products that will be Delivered: The Proposed Presentation and Utilization Plan (e.g., how the evaluation findings will be presented):** Strategies for presenting the results to key stakeholders and decision-makers and strategies for facilitating utilization should be provided,
- VIII. Potential Problems and Fall-back Strategies:** Identify the potential problems that may arise in conducting the evaluation and the strategies that will be used to either avoid the problem or deal with its occurrence.
- IX. Suggested Deviations from the RFP:** If you believe the evaluation could be improved by modifying the outcome variables, analytical method, alternative data sources, or anything else, present your alternative strategies here and explain the pros and cons.
- X. Proposed Summary Workplan and Schedule:** This section should be brief and consist of a Task List and schedule for tasks and the proposed project.
- XI. Conclusion:** A brief conclusion should be provided.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

SESSION 1 (Jan 13)

Introduction to the Course and Evaluation

Overview of the course and requirements

Critique of an evaluation (20%)

Applied evaluation project (e.g., response to an RFP) (30%)

Final Exam (30%)

Class participation, debates, and grasp of the topics (20%)

Program Evaluation: Framework and Concepts; Disciplinary Constructs

Questions:

What is evaluation? What types of studies and analytical approaches fall under this concept?

How does evaluation differ from other forms of analysis?

What are some key concepts and terminologies in evaluation and how do they differ across policy areas and academic disciplines?

How do political and organizational contexts affect evaluation?

What does ethics have to do with evaluation?

SESSION 2 (Jan 20)

Program Evaluation -- Definitions, Approaches, and “Users”

Different types of evaluations

Evaluation, performance management, and evidence-based policy making

Main components of an evaluation

Ethics in program evaluation

Readings:

Newcomer, Wholey and Hatry, Chapter 1

Burt and Nightingale chapter

Gertler et al, Chapter 1

“The Marketplace of Perceptions” Behavioral Economics Article, Harvard Magazine <http://harvardmagazine.com/2006/03/the-marketplace-of-perce.html>

Skim the following:

GAO Report “Program Evaluation: A Variety of Rigorous Methods Can Help Identify Effective Interventions” (GAO -10-30)

OMB May 18, 2012 Memorandum on Evidence-Based Budgeting

Questions:

What are the different approaches to evaluation?

How did the field of evaluation evolve?

Where does evaluation take place, who conducts evaluations under what conditions?

Who uses evaluations?

What are some of the more critical issues that face the evaluation profession?

What is informed consent?

What are Institutional Review Boards and why are they important?

What is the status of program evaluation in other nations and in international organizations?

How does program evaluation relate to performance management?

How does evaluation relate to “evidence-based” public policy?

What is a counterfactual?

How does organizational culture shape evaluation capacity?

What is the difference between impact and outcome evaluation?

What are experimental, non-experimental, and quasi-experimental designs?

What’s an RFP?

What are “behavioral economics” and “behavioral insights” and how do they relate to evaluating public policies and programs?

SESSION 3 (Jan 27)

Establishing Objectives for Evaluations and Formulating Research Questions

Research Design

Evaluation “readiness”

Readings:

Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer Chapters 2 and 4

Holcomb and Nightingale Chapter in Bogenschneider and Corbett

Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman Chapter 4

Kimmel Chapters 1 and 2

American Evaluation Association Evaluation Standards (Blackboard)

Questions:

What is in a research design?

Who are “professional evaluators?”

What is the guidance provided to evaluators by the AEA professional Standards?

What role should staff and external stakeholders play in evaluation?

What role can the evaluator play in program development and design?

How do questions of interest help decide on the type of evaluation to conduct?

What is evaluability assessment? What are the steps? How can it be used to guide evaluation? How can it be used as a management tool?

SESSION 4 (Feb 3)

Keys to a Successful Evaluation—Counterfactuals, Validity, Reliability and Anticipating Pitfalls in Evaluations

Readings:

Gertler et al Chapters 3 and 4

Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer Chapter 23

“Threats to Validity and Reliability” by Newcomer

Kimmel Chapters 5 and 6

Questions:

What are the most common threats to measurement validity and measurement reliability, and to internal, external, and statistical conclusion validity?

What can the evaluator do to avoid pitfalls? Rectify problems when they arise?

How can the credibility of evaluation findings be maximized?

How to decide on a counterfactual?

What are the advantages of using random assignment?

What are the disadvantages of using random assignment?

What types of bias can arise in random assignment studies?

SESSION 5 (Feb 10)

NOTE: TITLE AND CITATION OF THE EVALUATION YOU WANT TO CRITIQUE IS DUE NO LATER THAN TODAY

The Role of Theory in Evaluations

Logic Models, Conceptual Models, and Theoretical Frameworks

Incorporating theory, research design, and evaluation techniques into RFPs or Statements of Work

Readings:

Haskins and Baron “Building the Connection Between Policy and Evidence”
2011. <http://coalition4evidence.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Haskins-Baron-paper-on-fed-evid-based-initiatives-2011.pdf>

Gertler et al Chapter 2

Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer Chapter 3

Kimmel Chapters 3 and 4

Questions:

What pre-design steps should the evaluator take?

What is program theory? How can it be developed and refined?

What are theory-testing and theory-building concepts in the context of evaluations?

What is logic modeling?

How might logic models guide evaluation?

What is a framework for evidence-based evaluations?

What should be contained in a Proposal or Statement of Work (SOW)?

What is appreciative inquiry, and when is it helpful in evaluation and performance improvement--and when is it not as applicable?

SESSION 6 (Feb 17)

Outcome and Impact Evaluation

GUEST SPEAKER: Dr. Burt Barnow, GWU

Readings:

Burt S. Barnow (2010) “Setting Up Social Experiments: The Good, the Bas, and the Ugly.”

Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer Chapters 6, 7

Larry L. Orr. *Social Experimentation: Evaluating Public Programs with Experimental Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Part 1: Background and Rationale; Part 2: Basic Concepts and Principles; and Part 3: Alternative Random Assignment Models.

(Note: Do not be intimidated by the following readings! Read it quickly. The point is to understand the approaches and their limitations rather than being able to do all the detailed techniques yourself.)

Gertler et al Chapters 5 and 6 (Propensity score matching; Difference-in-Differences)

(AND...OPTIONAL FOR THOSE WANTING MORE ECONOMETRICS...)

Marco Caliendo and Sabine Kopeinig (2008). “Some Practical Guidance for the Implementation of Propensity Score Matching.” *Journal of Economic Surveys* 22:1, 31-72.

Howard Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos, Carolyn Hill, Ying Lei (2002). *Can Nonexperimental Comparison Group Methods Match the Findings from a Random Assignment Evaluation of Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Program?* New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Questions:

What are the commonly used designs to measure program outcomes?

What are the considerations in selecting a design to evaluate program impact?

How do the evaluators weigh the tradeoffs in various impact designs?

What strategies are available for controlling or ruling out various rival explanations?

What is propensity scoring, and how do you implement the technique?

What designs are applicable for longitudinal data?

SESSION 7 (Feb 24)

NOTE: EVALUATION CRITIQUE DUE

Formative, Process, and Implementation Evaluations and Combining Evaluation Designs

Readings:

Gertler et al Chapters 8 and 9

Holcomb, P.A., and Nightingale, D.S.. 2003. Conceptual Underpinnings of Implementation Analysis. In *Policy into Action: Implementation Research and Welfare Reform*, eds. Mary Clare Lennon and Thomas Corbett. 39-55. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

Fagan, A., Hanson, K., Hawkins, J., Arthur, M. 2008. Bridging Science to Practice: Achieving Prevention Program Implementation Fidelity in the Community Youth Development Study. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41, 235-249

Howard Bloom, Carolyn Hill, and James Riccio. "Linking Program Implementation and Effectiveness: Lessons from a Pooled Sample of Welfare to Work Experiments." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Fall 2003. (Skim this to see an interesting study that combines process and impact analysis.)

Questions:

What's the difference among formative, process, and implementation analysis?

How should formative evaluations be designed?

What makes a "good" case study design?

How do you measure program implementation or process? How do you use quantitative data in implementation and process analysis?

What is implementation science?

How should feedback be incorporated in an implementation study?

How should an implementation study be linked with an outcome or impact study?

How do you analyze qualitative data?

What are multi-method designs?

What are ways to protect privacy in qualitative evaluations?

What is an RFP? What's in a proposal?

SESSION 8 (Mar 3)

GUEST SPEAKER: Anne DeCesaro, House Ways and Means Committee Staff

Data Access and Measurement Issues in Program Evaluation

Readings:

Gertler et al Chapters 12

Wholey, Hatry, Newcomer book Chapters 11, 14

Kimmel Chapter 7

Questions:

What is involved in planning data collection and analysis?

What are the relative advantages of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods?

What are the advantages and considerations of using program administrative data?

What procedures can enhance validity and reliability in measurement?

How do we ensure more cultural competency in our evaluation work?

What are “multi-method” evaluations?

MAR 10 NO CLASS-SPRING BREAK

SESSION 9 (Mar 17)

**NOTE: TOPIC FOR YOUR APPLIED EVALUATION PAPER (e.g., RFP) DUE
NO LATER THAN TODAY**

Data Collection Instruments and Technology--Quantitative and Program Data

Readings:

Gertler et al Chapters 10 and 11

Wholey, Hatry, Newcomer book Chapters 12, 17

Questions:

How can survey instruments be designed to bolster the validity of the data collected?

How can you collect data on individuals and manage the data?

How are program participants most effectively surveyed?

When are focus groups most helpful?

How should focus groups be designed and implemented?

What protections should be given to participants in an evaluation?

What procedures are possible in ensuring confidentiality?

SESSION 10 (Mar 24)

**GUEST SPEAKER: Holly Donnelly, Director, Performance Management Center,
U.S. Department of Labor**

Performance Measurement and Performance Management

Readings:

Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer book Chapter 5

Behn Paper on “PerformanceStat”

Moneyball by Michael Lewis

Questions:

What is performance measurement?

What is program monitoring?

What are the challenges to measuring performance?

What is outcome monitoring?

How can performance measurement and program evaluation be effectively coordinated?

What are challenges to “PerformanceStat”-like processes in government?

What are challenges to performance-based contracting?

What is the “balanced score card?”

Drawing upon the Lewis book, why is selecting what to measure about performance difficult in any context?

SESSION 11 (Mar 31)

The Institutional Context for Evaluation and Evaluation Capacity Building

Readings:

GAO Report, “Program Evaluation: An Evaluation Culture and Collaborative Partnerships Help Build Agency Capacity” (GAO-03-454)

Skim GAO Report “ International Food Assistance” (GAO 09-980)

Kimmel Chapter 9

Questions:

How can evaluation be institutionalized in an agency, organization, or program?

What does the American Evaluation Association recommend in terms of institutionalizing evaluation?

What is evaluation capacity-building?

What skills are required for effective evaluation practice and for oversight of contracted evaluation work?

SESSION 12 (Apr 7)

GUEST SPEAKER: John Trutko, President Capital Research Associates—Electronic Tools for evaluation and performance management

Assessing Evidence, Meta-Evaluation and Systematic Reviews

Readings:

Labin, Susan, “Research Synthesis: Toward Broad-Based Evidence” in *Fundamental Issues in Evaluation* edited by Nick L. Smith and Paul R. Brandon, New York: Guilford Press 2008.

Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer book Chapter 22

Pawson, Wong, and Owen. “Known Knowns, Known Unknowns, Unknown Unknowns: The Predicament of Evidence-Based Policy,” *American Journal of Evaluation* December 2011 32: 518-546,

AND

Visit and be prepared to discuss **at least one** of the following websites and your impressions of it:

U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Educational Science (IES) What Works Clearinghouse <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

U.S. Department of Labor, Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research CLEAR <http://clear.dol.gov/>

CDCs Replicating Effective Practices (REP-PLUS)
http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/prev_prog/rep/

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs OJJDP Model Programs Guide
<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/programs/mpg.html>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Effective Health Care
<http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/what-is-comparative-effectiveness-research1/>

The Campbell Collaboration (health) <http://campbellcollaboration.org/>

Questions:

What is evaluation synthesis?

What is meta-analysis?

What are systematic reviews?

What is “evidence-based” policy/management/practice?

When are findings from evaluations sufficient to constitute such “Evidence?”

Why is it difficult to transfer evaluation and research findings into practice?

What is practice-based evidence?

What are evaluation clearinghouses?

SESSION 13 (Apr 14)

NOTE: APPLIED EVALUATION PAPER DUE TODAY

Analyzing and Reporting Findings and Data to Make Evaluation Relevant

Readings:

Charles E. Metcalf. "Presidential Address: Research Ownership, Communication of Results, and Threats to Objectivity in Client-Driven Research." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. Vol. 17, 1998, pp. 153-163.

Gertler et al Chapter 13

Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer book Chapters 24, 25, 28

Questions:

What procedures can be developed for maintaining the credibility and fairness of the evaluation?

What is the ethical role of evaluator as policy advocate?

What are characteristics of effective data presentation?

What do useful recommendations look like?

What factors influence utilization of evaluation results?

What are the various types of utilization? How can they be measured?

How are null and negative results most appropriately reported?

What can be done during evaluation design and implementation to enhance utilization?
What are emerging and continuing significant issues in the evaluation profession?

SESSION 14 (Apr 21) LAST CLASS

Concluding discussion and review

NOTE: TAKE-HOME FINAL DISTRIBUTED TODAY

May 5: LAST DAY FOR SUBMITTING FINAL EXAM

Policies in The Trachtenberg School Courses:

1. Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of I (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director. Please consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook or visit our website for the complete CCAS policy on incompletes.
2. Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.
3. Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work: All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.
4. Academic Honesty: Please consult the “policies” section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information.” All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity.
5. Changing Grades After Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.
6. The Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, change content and requirements during the semester.
7. Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: In order to receive accommodations on the basis of disability, a student must give notice and provide proper documentation to the Office of Disability Support Services, Marvin Center 436, 202-994-8250. Accommodations will be made based upon the recommendations of the DSS Office.