Course Number: PPPA 6016-10
Course Title: Public and Non-Profit Program Evaluation
Class Time: Tuesdays 6:10-8:00 p.m.
Location: Duques 362
Course Description: This course is intended to give students an appreciation for public and non-profit program evaluation, including familiarity with the basic skills needed to conduct and use evaluations. Emphasis will be placed on the conceptual, methodological, organizational, political, policy, and ethical issues evaluators face. The tasks involved in conducting evaluation will be discussed, from developing the questions to presenting statistics and data analysis.
Prerequisites: Preferably PPPA 6002 or an equivalent basic course on research design.
Professor: Nick Hart, Ph.D.
Telephone: 202-218-6762 (office)
Email: nrhart@gwu.edu
Twitter: @NickRHart
Office Hours: By appointment only. Please email me to arrange meetings about assignments outside of class via phone or skype.
Course Approach and Expectations

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

1. work with clients to scope evaluations, frame relevant questions, and develop useful evaluation products;
2. design reliable data collection instruments for evaluation;
3. identify pertinent professional standards and ethical principles;
4. recognize and develop different types of evaluations;
5. develop useful performance measures and performance measurement systems;
6. design useful reports to convey evaluation findings;
7. develop useful recommendations based on evaluation findings;
8. review and assess quality and relevance of evaluations; and
9. understand ethical issues that may arise in designing and using evaluations.

Method of Instruction: The tasks, questions, constraints, and problems facing professionals involved in the design, implementation, and use of program evaluations will be explored through class participation in both in-class and written exercises. Assigned readings are selected to provide students a sample of relevant evaluation literature, and to expose students them to the issues which arise in conducting evaluations.

Course Effort: In 15-week semester, including exam week, students will spend a total of 128 hours of effort on the course. This includes 2 hours per week in class and an average of 6 hours per week on assigned reading, class preparation, and assignments.

Guest Speakers: The instructor seeks to engage guest speakers throughout the semester to discuss ongoing and emerging evaluation issues. They will be announced as they are scheduled.

University and Trachtenberg Policies

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 must submit written work electronically.

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. See the GW Academic
Integrity Code (http://www.gwu.edu/~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. 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. Excused absences will be given for absences due to religious holidays as per the
university schedule, but please advise the instructor ahead of time.

7. University Policy on Religious Holidays:
   □ Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be
   absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
   □ Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such
   occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
   □ Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the
   semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related
   activities.

8. Support for Students Outside the Classroom:
   □ Disability Support Services (DSS). Any student who may need an accommodation based on the
   potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-
   8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable
   accommodations. For additional information please refer to: gwired.gwu.edu/dss/
   □ Mental Health Services (202-994-5300). The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7
   assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems.
   Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential
   assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals.
   counselingcenter.gwu.edu/

9. Academic Integrity Code: Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including
misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and
without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code,
see: studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity

Grading

1. Participation and Readings: 10%
2. Evaluation Critiques:
   a. Critique #1: 10%
   b. Critique #2: 20%
3. Applied Evaluation Design Project:
   a. Logic Model: 5%
   b. Final Project: 30%
4. Final Exam: 25%
Assignments

1. **Class Participation and Weekly Readings (10%)**: Attendance is required for successful completion of this course. In-class exercises will also be held periodically throughout the semester. Students are expected to complete required readings prior to the class meeting for which they are listed. Participation includes engagement during class discussions based on assigned readings.

**Required Readings:**

- Available on Blackboard:
  - Selected chapters from U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, *The Promise of Evidence-Based Policymaking*, 2017.
  - Selected articles from peer-reviewed academic journals, including *New Directions for Evaluation, Public Administration Review*, and the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.
  - Selected evaluations and other readings as assigned.

2. **Evaluation Critiques (30%)**: Students will critically review two different types of evaluations selected by the student. Students must have articles approved by the professor before beginning the critique.


The evaluation critiqued must present the evaluation design and results. Articles about how to conduct surveys or that summarize multiple research studies will not be permissible. There is no mandatory length for the paper, but students should aspire to address the following issues in 3-4 single-spaced pages. The critique should address each of the following:

- The title and citation of the document, including the name of the evaluator(s) and publisher.
- Brief description of the evaluation focus (i.e. a program or policy), type of evaluation, and key findings.
- Identification of the key evaluation questions addressed.
- Brief summary of the design, data collection methods, and types of analysis conducted;
- A discussion and table that contains a systematic list of threats to the reliability and validity. Threats should be clearly presented, including the type of threat and explanation.
- Identification of which threats the authors disclosed and addressed, which were not addressed, and which the authors did not acknowledge.
Suggestions for how the evaluation could be improved.
An assessment of any policy recommendations made and whether the analysis justifies the recommendations.

3. **Applied Evaluation Design Project (35%)**: All students must prepare a written program evaluation design report either alone or with one other student. There are two options: (A) The primary way to satisfy the requirement is to prepare a proposal in response to a real Request for Proposals (RFP); OR (B) Students may prepare a comprehensive design and evaluation for a hypothetical evaluation. This is more difficult than responding to an RFP. Both options will be discussed in more detail in class. All projects must be approved by the professor before proceeding.

- Proposal for Applied Evaluation Design Project due Oct. 30
- Logic Model for project due Nov. 13 (5% of grade)
- Final Applied Evaluation Design Project due Nov. 27 (30% of grade)

This assignment is intended to provide you with training for developing an evaluation proposal and study design. You are asked to identify a 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:

- **Executive Summary**: Guidance and examples will be provided in class on formatting the Executive Summary.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.)

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **Proposed Summary Workplan and Schedule:** This section should be brief and consist of a Task List and schedule for tasks and the proposed project.

- **Conclusion:** A brief conclusion should be provided.

4. **Final Exam (25%)**: A take-home essay exam covering the readings and content of the course will contribute 25% to the course grade.

    - Take-Home Final Exam distributed on Dec. 4 in class and due Dec. 12 at 11:59 p.m. EST.

**Notes about Assignments:**

- **Written assignments must be submitted in electronic copy via Blackboard, on or before the due date.** Due dates are firm for all written assignments.

- **Written assignment submission requirements:** Points will be deducted if you do not follow these specifications:
  - Submissions must be single spaced
  - Submissions must have page numbers
  - Your name is required at the top of the document ON EACH PAGE in the header
  - Your name and submission title are required in the ELECTRONIC “document name” (e.g., “Name – Assignment.pdf”) when you post it to Blackboard
Key Dates

August 28 – Session 1: Course Overview and Introduction to Program Evaluation

September 4 – Session 2: Components of an Evaluation and Types of Evaluation

September 11 – Session 3: The Role of Theory, Scoping Evaluations, and Engaging Stakeholders

September 18 – Session 4: Counterfactuals, Validity, Reliability, and Credibility

September 25 -- Session 5: Process and Implementation Evaluation

  September 25 – Title and Citation for Evaluation Critique #1

October 2 – Session 6: Cost-Effectiveness, Outcome and Impact Evaluation

  October 2 – Evaluation Critique #1 Due (10% of grade)

October 9 – Fall Break: No Class

October 16 -- Session 7: Data Collection, Access, and Measurement Issues (Part 1)

  October 16 – Title and Citation for Evaluation Critique #2

October 23 -- Session 8: Data Collection, Access, and Measurement Issues (Part 2)

  October 23 – Evaluation Critique #2 Due (20% of grade)

October 30 -- Session 9: Performance Systems

  October 30 – Proposal for Applied Evaluation Design Project Due

November 6 -- Session 10: Meta-Analysis and Systematic Reviews

November 13 -- Session 11: Evaluation Capacity Building and Institutional Capacity

  November 13 – Logic Model for Applied Evaluation Design Due (5% of grade)

November 20 – Session 12: Learning from Failure

November 27 – Session 13: Analyzing, Reporting, and Using Evaluation

  November 27 – Applied Evaluation Design Project Due (30% of grade)

December 4 – Session 14: Useful Evaluation and Review (Final exam distributed in-class)

  December 12 – Final Exam Due (25% of grade)
Session Outlines

August 28 / Session 1: Course Overview and Introduction to Evaluation

Readings:
- Cronbach pp. 12-22

Questions:
- What is program evaluation?
- How does program evaluation differ from other forms of analysis?
- What are the different approaches to evaluation?
- How did the field of evaluation evolve?
- Where does evaluation take place and who conducts evaluations?
- What are critical issues facing the evaluation profession?

September 4 / Session 2: Components of an Evaluation and Types of Evaluation

Readings:
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 1: “Planning and Designing Useful Evaluations”
- Wholey Chapter 2: TK
- Gertler Chapter 1: “Why Evaluate?”
- Kimmel Chapter 1: “Introduction (to ethics)”
- Kimmel Chapter 2: “An Overview of Ethical Problems in Social Research”

Questions:
- What are the different types of evaluation?
- What is the relationship between performance management and evaluation?
- What are the main components of an evaluation?
- Who commissions or requests evaluations? And why?

September 11 / Session 3: The Role of Theory, Scoping Evaluations, and Engaging Stakeholders

Readings:
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 2: “Analyzing and Engaging Stakeholders”
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 3: “Using Logic Models”
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 4: “Exploratory Evaluation”
- Gertler Chapter 2: “Determining Evaluation Questions”

Questions:
- What is the guidance provided to evaluators by the AEA professional Standards?
- What role should staff and external stakeholders play in evaluation?
- What role do stakeholders play in evaluation?
- How might stakeholders be most fruitfully engaged?
- What role can the evaluator play in program development and design?
- What pre-design steps are desirable for the evaluator to take?
- What is the program theory? How can it be developed and refined?
- What is logic modeling?
How might logic models guide evaluation?
What is evaluability assessment? What are the steps? How can it be used to guide evaluation?
What are complex, adaptive systems? And what are the key concepts relevant to program evaluation from systems thinking?
What should be contained in a Statement of Work (SOW)?

September 18 / Session 4: Counterfactuals, Validity, Reliability, and Credibility

Readings:
- Gertler Chapter 3: “Causal Inference and Counterfactuals”
- Gertler Chapter 4: “Randomized Selection Methods”
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 26: “Pitfalls in Evaluation”
- Kimmel Chapter 4: “Methodological issues and Dilemmas”
- Newcomer paper: “Threats to Validity and Reliability”

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 and disadvantages of using random assignment?
- What types of bias can arise in random assignment studies?

September 25 / Session 5: Process and Implementation Evaluation

Deadlines:
- Title and Citation for Evaluation Critique #1

Readings:
- Holcomb and Nightingale: “Conceptual Underpinnings of Implementation Analysis”
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 7: “Conducting Case Studies”
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 17: “Collecting Data in the Field”
- Skim Chapters 2 and 3 in EPA 2009: “Environmental Professional’s Guide to Lean and Six Sigma”
- Skim Heinrich 2007: “False or fitting recognition? The use of higher performance bonusses in motivating organizational achievements”

Questions:
- How should formative evaluations be designed?
- What makes a “good” case study?
- How do you measure program implementation?
- How do you use quantitative data in implementation and process analysis?
- How should feedback be incorporated in an implementation study?
- How should an implementation study be linked with an outcome study?

October 2 / Session 6: Cost-Effectiveness, Outcome, and Impact Evaluation

Deadlines:
Evaluation Critique #1 Due (10% of grade)

Readings:
- Gertler Chapter 10: “Operationalizing the Impact Evaluation Design”
- Carroll 2018: “This Drug is Safe and Effective. Wait. Compared with What?”
- Skim HUD Family Options Study
- Skim NIJ Second Chance Evaluation

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?
- What is cost-effectiveness and what is the role of cost information in evaluation?

October 9 – NO CLASS

October 16 / Session 7: Data Collection, Access, and Measurement Issues (Part 1)

Deadlines:
- Title and Citation for Evaluation Critique #2

Readings:
- Gertler Chapter 11: “Choosing the Sample”
- Gertler Chapter 12: “Collecting Data”
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 13: “Using Agency Records”
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 14: “Using Surveys”
- CEP Chapter 2: “Secure, Restricted Access to Confidential Data”

Questions:
- How can data on individuals, households, or firms be collected and how should they be managed?
- 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 evaluation?
- What are “multi-method” evaluations?
- What procedures can be developed for maintaining the credibility and fairness of evaluation?
- What design characteristics bolster the validity of survey instruments?
- How are program participants most effectively surveyed?
- When are focus groups most helpful?
- How should focus groups be designed and implemented?

October 23 / Session 8: Data Collection, Access, and Measurement Issues (Part 2)
Deadlines:

- Evaluation Critique #2 Due (20% of grade)

Readings:

- Kimmel Chapter 5: “Confidentiality and the Right to Privacy”
- CEP Chapter 3: “Enhancing Privacy Protections for Federal Evidence Building”
- Lauger et al. 2014: “Disclosure Avoidance Techniques at the U.S. Census Bureau”

Questions:

- What protections should be given to participants in an evaluation?
- What procedures are possible in ensuring confidentiality?
- What are the essential elements and desired format for informed consent agreements?
- What are Institutional Review Boards and why are they important?
- What is disclosure avoidance and why does it matter for evaluation?
- What practices can organizations deploy to protect confidential data?
- What is the role of transparency and accountability for data management?

October 30 / Session 9: Performance Systems

Deadlines:

- Proposal for Applied Evaluation Design Project Due

Readings:

- Lewis, Moneyball
- Demaj 2017: “What Can Performance Information Do to Legislators?”
- Nielson and Hunter 2013: “Challenges to and forms of complementarity between performance management and evaluation”
- Skim performance.gov website
- Skim HHS 2012: “Administration for Children and Families Performance Plan”

Questions:

- How does performance analysis apply to the real world?
- What is performance measurement?
- What is program monitoring?
- What are the challenges to measuring performance?
- What is meant by performance management?
- What is outcome monitoring?
- How might performance measurement and program evaluation be effectively coordinated?
- Drawing upon the Lewis book, why is selecting (or changing) what to measure about performance difficult in any organizational culture that has been shaped over many years?
- How do performance measurement and evaluation contribute to “evidence?”

November 6 / Session 10: Meta-Analysis and Systematic Reviews

Readings:
Petrosino et al. 2013: “Scared Straight and Other Juvenile Awareness Programs for Preventing Juvenile Delinquency: a systematic review”

Skim one of the following:
- HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Synthesis: www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/research/prs/
- The Campbell Collaboration: http://campbellcollaboration.org/

Questions:
- What is meta-evaluation and how is it best conducted?
- What are systematic reviews?
- What is “evidence-based” policy/management/practice?
- When are findings from evaluations sufficient to constitute “evidence?”
- Why is it difficult to transfer evaluation and research findings into practice?
- What is practice-based evidence?
- What are evaluation clearhouses?

November 13 / Session 11: Evaluation Capacity Building and Institutional Capacity

Deadlines:
- Logic Model for Applied Evaluation Design Due (5% of grade)

Readings:
- HHS-ACF Evaluation Policy
- American Evaluation Association’s Evaluation Roadmap
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 29: “Contracting for Evaluation Products and Services”
- CEP Chapter 5: “Strengthening the Evidence-Building Capacity within the Federal Government”

Questions:
- What is evaluation capacity-building?
- What are the key components of an institutionalized evaluation function?
- What does the AEA recommend in terms of institutionalizing evaluation?
- What difference does the source of evaluation expertise make in terms of approach, methods and use?
- How do auditors (Inspector General offices) approach evaluation?
- What skills are required for effective evaluation practice and for oversight of contracted evaluation work?
- How do funders approach the evaluation process?
- Who conducts evaluation in the nonprofit sector?
- What are challenges facing nonprofit agencies in monitoring and evaluation?
November 20 / Session 12: Learning from Failure

Readings:
- Kimmel Chapter 6: “Special Problems in Applied Settings”
- Karlan and Appel, *Failing in the Field*

Questions:
- Why has the tendency been to focus on accountability rather than learning?
- What is the ethical role of evaluator as policy advocate?
- What is the role of credibility in useful evaluation?
- What skills are required for effective evaluation practice and for oversight of evaluation projects?
- What problems can be anticipated in a real-world evaluation? What solutions can be applied?

November 27 / Session 13: Analyzing, Reporting, and Using Evaluation

Deadlines:
- *Applied Evaluation Design Project Due (30% of grade)*

Readings:
- Wasserstein 2016: “The ASA’s Statement on p-values: Context, Process, and Purpose”
- Skim Newcomer et al. Chapter 22: “Qualitative Data Analysis”
- Gertler Chapter 13: “Producing and Disseminating Findings”
- Newcomer et al. Chapter 27: “Providing Recommendations, Suggestions, and Options for Improvement”
- Hart et al. 2018: “Evidence Use in Congress (volume 1)”

Questions:
- What factors influence utilization of evaluation results?
- What are rigorous procedures and useful strategies for analyzing qualitative data?
- What are characteristics of effective data presentation?
- How are null and negative results most appropriately reported?
- What do useful recommendations look like?
- How should results be displayed?
- What are the various types of utilization? How can they be measured?
- What can be done during evaluation design and implementation to enhance utilization?
- How can you help to build an evaluation and performance-friendly culture?
- What are emerging and continuing significant issues in the evaluation profession?
- What do stakeholders do with the findings?
- What are the challenges of applying evaluation in the sector?
- In what ways can evaluation be useful to nonprofits?
- Why is the use of evaluation challenging in political debates?

December 4 / Session 14: Useful Evaluation, Review, and Concluding Remarks

- *Final Exam (25% of grade) will be distributed on December 4 at the end of class. The take-home exam is due on December 12.*
Readings:
- Cronbach’s 95 Theses
- Kimmel Chapter 8: “Conclusion and Recommendations”

Questions:
- How do evaluators work with other professions?
- What is the relationship between evaluation, statistics, data science, etc.?
- What’s next for the field of evaluation?