

The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration

Fall 2018

Course Number: PPPA 6016

Course Title: Public and Nonprofit Program Evaluation

Description: This course is intended to give students an appreciation of the contributions and limitations of public and nonprofit program evaluation, as well as a familiarity with the basic skills needed to conduct evaluations. Emphasis will be given to coping with the conceptual, methodological, organizational, political, and ethical problems that face evaluators. The various tasks facing evaluators will be discussed, from developing the questions to presenting the data.

Prerequisites: PPPA 6002 or an equivalent course on research design

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Office hours: Tuesday 5-6 and Thursday 5-6, or by appointment

Readings: Allan Kimmel, *Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research*, Sage 1988. (Borrow or buy a cheap used copy).

Chapters from J. Wholey, H. Hatry, and K. Newcomer, The Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, Jossey-Bass, 4th Ed., 2015 – linked on Blackboard

GAO reports and selected other readings – available on Blackboard

Student Learning Objectives:

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

1. develop program logic models;
2. work with clients to frame utilization-oriented evaluation questions;
3. design clear and useful data collection instruments for use in evaluation work;
4. identify pertinent professional standards and ethical principles affecting specific dilemmas confronting evaluators in the field;
5. design implementation, outcome, and impact evaluations;

6. develop useful performance measures and design performance measurement systems for public and nonprofit programs;
7. design user-oriented reports to convey evaluation findings; and
8. develop useful recommendations based on evaluation findings.

Method of Instruction: The tasks and constraints facing professionals involved in the design and implementation of program evaluations are explored by class participation in both in-class and written exercises. Questions and problems facing both evaluators and managers of programs being evaluated are examined.

Civility in the Classroom: Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process. At the same time, higher education demands that all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity.

Assignments:

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.

Format of Written Assignments: Written assignments, except for the final program evaluation report or if specified in class, must be submitted in hard copy, not electronic copy, on or before the due date. Due dates are firm for all written assignments. Late papers will be penalized by lower grades – one point per day from the maximum score of 100 for that assignment.

Class Participation: Attendance is required for successful completion of this course. Students are expected to have completed required readings prior to the class meeting for which they are listed. Class discussion on the required readings will affect course grades with the professor maintaining the option to take off up to 2 points (on the overall maximum of 100) for less than full and prepared participation.

Expected time commitment: In addition to class attendance students are expected to spend a minimum of 5 hours per week on readings and assignments.

Assignment Summary:

1. Logic Model (individual)	5%
2. Scope of Work with team logic model	10%
3. Critique (individual)	30%
4. Debate (individual)	10%
5. Draft Evaluation Project (team)	20%
6. Project Presentation (individual)	5%
7. Final Evaluation Project (team)	<u>20%</u>
	100%

1. **Logic Model:** A logic model is a graphic description of how the elements of a program (inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, and impacts) relate to each other and are expected to result in achieving program goals. The logic model should fit on one page, be clear and understandable as well as visually appealing. See samples included in the final program evaluation reports (#5-6 below).

2. **Scope of Work (aka Statement of the Work), including:**

1. concise description of the evaluation questions that the primary stakeholders have identified;
2. description of the methodology to be employed by the team to address the evaluation questions;
3. identification of specific tasks to be accomplished;
4. identification of the expectations of information that the organization will provide to the students, along with expected dates they will be provided, e.g., contact information for clients or other data required;
5. time line depicting deadlines for the tasks identified in #3.

Sample Statements of Work/Scope of Work

[good example of Scope of Work 2011-1.dot](#)

[Sample SOW_CO and GWU Feb 3-1.docx](#)

3. **Critique:** Students will select and critique an evaluation paper or report.

The evaluation report to be critiqued must present results about an impact or outcome evaluation of an existing program, not an article about how to

conduct surveys or research, nor a formative evaluation. You must get approval of the evaluation you select before you write the critique. The critique must **draw on and cite course readings**. Maximum 4-pages, double-spaced.

Critique components:

- 1) brief description of the focus and findings;
- 2) identification of the key evaluation questions addressed;
- 3) brief summary of research design and data collection methods;
- 4) table containing a list of relevant threats to validity. Note that the threats should be clearly presented, for example do not simply state "Hawthorne Effect," but clarify how/why that threat occurred; threats should be labeled as: those the authors acknowledged and addressed; threats the authors acknowledged but did not address; and those the authors did not acknowledge.
- 5) conclusion to wrap it up.

[Good Sources for Evaluations.doc](#)

[Good example of Critique - Sexual Assault Program Eval-1.doc](#)

4. Debates: Class debates over ethical issues in program evaluation will be held throughout the semester and require an oral presentation. Comments in debates should draw on class readings, especially the Kimmel book and the AEA Professional Standards.

[Ethical Issues in Evaluation.doc](#)

5-6. Program Evaluation Project (5=draft; 6=final): Students participate in a team program evaluation project with one other student during the semester. Students choosing not to participate in an evaluation project (Option A) are required to prepare an evaluation design for an actual program (Option B). **The report is due no later than December 15 unless a prior agreement on a later due date is negotiated with the instructor.**

DO NOT GIVE YOUR REPORT OR DRAFT DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT TO THE CLIENT UNTIL THE INSTRUCTOR HAS REVIEWED IT.

OPTION A – Evaluation Project

Student teams (of 2 students each) respond to a request from a nonprofit organization or public agency asking to receive evaluation technical support. Some of the requests will entail a specific project such as a one-shot customer survey, but many could result in development of a design, in which case, the requirements of Option B will apply.

The instructor will provide the list of requests during the first week of the semester and will facilitate initial contacts. Once a student team decides to work with an organization they should submit a brief (2 page) **statement of the work** to be performed first to the instructor, and then, upon securing approval, to the contact at the organization.

The written product will be submitted first to the instructor for suggestions, and then to the agency requestor. **The report should have all of the components identified in the list below.**

OPTION B – Evaluation Design

Individual students may develop a scoping and evaluation design paper for a program. You will conduct the scoping activities but will only propose the evaluation; you are not expected to conduct the actual evaluation itself.

Scoping out the evaluation entails collecting information on the program through interviews with key contacts (decision-makers, staff, etc.) on current information needs, and conducting a synthesis of past, related research and evaluation studies. With the focus of the evaluation identified, the project will then involve laying out an evaluation design, data collection plan, analysis plan, and briefing and presentation plan. Students are expected to prepare a logic model with the client, and design data collection tools and pilot-test them, e.g. surveys or interview schedules. The design should be developed with clear awareness of the political aspects of the situation and tailored to the needs of the agency leadership. Students are expected to research evaluations undertaken on similar types of programs to offer a comparative perspective. Strategies for encouraging the use of the resulting evaluation findings also should be discussed.

The report should have all of the components identified below.

Required Elements of the Report for the Applied Project

- 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 and how/why they became involved, 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 were addressed, or should be addressed if the project is an evaluation plan, should be provided.
- IV. **Evaluation Design:** A brief summary of the design(s) undertaken, 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 with clients and presented in the body of the report with an appropriate introduction, i.e., stating what it is, how it was developed and how it may be used by the client.
- V. **Data Collection:** 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 each type of 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 strongly recommended.
- VI. **Data Analysis:** If the project is an evaluation 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.
- VII. **Proposed Presentation and Utilization Plan (for Evaluation Plans):** 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 (for Evaluation Plans):** Identify the potential problems that may arise in conducting the evaluation and the strategies that should be used to either avoid the problem or deal with its occurrence.