The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration
Fall 2014

Course Number: PP 6016

Course Title: Public and Non-Profit Program Evaluation

Course Description: This course is intended to give the student an appreciation of the contributions and limitations of public and non-profit 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 which face evaluators. The various tasks facing evaluators will be discussed, from developing the questions to presenting the data. The specific issues addressed in class sessions are noted on the attached class schedule.

Prerequisites: Preferably PP 6002 or an equivalent basic course on research design.

Professor: Dr. Kathryn Newcomer  
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Office hours: Tuesday 2pm to 6pm, Monday and Wednesday 2-4:30pm and by appointment  
NOTE: I am here everyday, so please feel free to drop by anytime or email me to tell me when you want to meet.

Teaching Assistant: Estelle R. Raimondo  
Ph.D. Candidate: Public Policy and Evaluation Research  
Graduate Research Assistant: Office of Survey Research and Analysis
Required Readings:


Michael Lewis, *Moneyball*, 2004. (Note: this is optional)


GAO reports and other readings also will be provided by the instructor on blackboard. All readings except Kimmel and Lewis are 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 non-profit 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.
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 which arise in the context of real life evaluations.

Assignments:

1. Class Participation: Attendance is required for successful completion of this course and class should be expected to run until 8:30pm. Students are expected to have completed required readings prior to the class meeting for which they are listed. Students are asked to volunteer to lead the discussion on one reading during the semester. They should volunteer early in the semester and the assignments for readings will be on a first asked basis. When leading the discussion they should bring discussion questions to class to provide to the instructor. Class discussion on the required readings will affect course grades, especially in borderline cases.

NOTE: ALL written assignments must be submitted in hard copy, not electronic copy, on or before the due date. Due dates are firm for all written assignments - except the final applied project where the due date will be negotiated with each team. Late papers will be penalized by lower grades.

2. One Critique: Students will review critically an evaluation that may be selected by the student. (20% of grade). Due Nov. 11th.

NOTE: 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. Please show me information about the evaluation you select before you write the critique.

The three to four page single-spaced critique of the evaluation should be prepared in the following format:

1) a brief description of the focus and findings;
2) identification of the key evaluation questions addressed;
3) a brief summary of the research design and data collection methods used;
4) a systematic list of threats to the: measurement validity, measurement reliability, internal validity, external validity, and statistical conclusion validity. Note that the threats should be clearly presented, for example do not simply state “Hawthorne Effect,” but clarify how/why that threat occurred; AND

5) the 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.

3. In-Class Exercises and Debates: In-Class exercises will be held throughout the semester. Class debates over ethical issues in program evaluation also will be held throughout the semester and require an oral presentation. Students will be graded on their performance in the exercises and debates (accounting for 10% of course grade).

4. Exam: A take home essay exam covering the readings and content of the course will contribute 30% to the course grade. The exam will consist of three focused, brief memoranda that are spaced out across the semester. Guidance on writing clear memoranda can be found on Blackboard. Students will be given the topics and intended audiences for each memorandum at least one week before each is due. The memoranda will be due on Sept. 30, Oct. 28, and Nov. 25.

5. Applied Evaluation Project: Members of the class will be expected to participate in a program evaluation project either alone or with one other student during the semester. Students choosing not to participate in an evaluation project (Option A) or a performance management case study (Option B) are required to prepare an evaluation design for an actual program (Option C). If a student chooses Option C they must obtain approval before beginning work. The report is due no later than Dec. 16th unless a prior agreement on a later due date is negotiated with the instructor. The project contributes 40% to the course grade.

PLEASE DO NOT GIVE YOUR REPORT NOR ANY DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS YOU DRAFT TO THE CLIENT UNTIL THE INSTRUCTOR HAS REVIEWED IT.
APPLIED PROJECT

OPTION A

Student groups (of no more than 2 students) may respond to a request from a nonprofit organization in the D.C. community anxious 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 Project C 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 group decides to work with a nonprofit, they should submit a brief statement of the work (2 pages) to be performed first to the instructor, and then, upon securing her approval, to the management of the nonprofit organization.

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

The written product will be submitted first to the instructor for suggestions, and then to the nonprofit agency requestor. The report should have all of the components identified in the list below.
Student groups (of no more than 2 students) may conduct a case study of one intergovernmental program that focuses on the use (or nonuse) of performance data collected on services provided. The case study should describe how agencies analyze and use performance and related information, and include:

1. Documentation [including graphs or tables] illustrating how agencies analyzed goals, performance measurements, data systems, program evaluation studies, and related information;

2. Information on factors related to variations in program performance;

3. Information on the use of resulting information in efforts to improve program management, performance, and results; and to the extent such information is available:

4. Information on subsequent changes in program management, performance, and results.

The instructor will provide a set of interview questions that can be modified for use. The report will have components identified in the list below except for: 4, 7, 8 and 9.
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 pre-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 sorts 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 in the list below.**
Required Elements of the Report for the Applied Project

The suggested 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 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.
 IX. Proposed Budget, Budget Narrative, and Workplan (for Evaluation Plans):
Budgetary estimates may range from specific to general depending upon the complexity of the proposed project.

X. Conclusion: A brief conclusion should be provided.
Class Schedule and Assignments

Session 1 (Aug. 26)

Introduction to the Course and Overview of the Field of Program Evaluation

Readings:

Newcomer, Wholey and Hatry, Chapter 1
Scheirer article

Questions:

- What is program evaluation? What types of studies and analytical support fall under this concept?
- 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 some of the more critical issues that face the evaluation profession?
- Who are “professional evaluators?”
- What is the status of program evaluation in other nations, e.g. performance auditing?
- What role does program evaluation play for international funders, e.g. the World Bank?
- How do current performance measurement efforts relate to program evaluation?
- How does organizational culture shape evaluation capacity?

Session 2 (Sept. 2)

Scoping Evaluations: Establishing Objectives for Evaluation Work

Readings:

McLaughlin and Jordan Chapter
American Evaluation Association Evaluation Guiding Principles
Parsons on Complexity Theory

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 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 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)?

Session 3 (Sept. 9)

Strategies for Engaging Stakeholders

Readings:

Bryson and Patton Chapter
And skim Preskill and Catsambas, Introductory sections and pp. 1-74 (Blackboard).

Questions:
- What role do stakeholders play in evaluation?
- How might stakeholders be most fruitfully engaged?
- What is appreciative inquiry, and when is it helpful and when is it not as applicable?
- How do nonprofits measure outcomes?

Session 43 (Sept. 16)

An Overview of Evaluation in the Non-profit Sector: Conducting Evaluations in Non-profit Agencies and Expectations of Foundations and Other Funders

Readings:

Newcomer Book Chapter
Carman article
“Randomistas” set of two articles on BB
and visit the website:
http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/encouraginggoodpracticeindevelopmentevaluation.htm

Questions:
- What/who drives evaluation in the nonprofit sector? Who funds it?
- How do funders approach the evaluation process?
• What information is sought?
• 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?
• What are the various models or approaches used in the sector?
• Who conducts evaluation in the nonprofit sector?
• What is the state of practice of evaluation in international development?
• What are the arguments, pro and con, of the use of RCTs in the international context?
• What are expectations of funders of capacity building in developing countries? And how realistic are they?
• What are challenges in developing countries to using monitoring and evaluation?

Session 4 (Sept. 16)

Strategies for Engaging Stakeholders

Readings:

Bryson and Patton Chapter
And skim Preckill and Catsambas, Introductory sections and pp. 1-74 (Blackboard).

Questions:

• What role do stakeholders play in evaluation?
• How might stakeholders be most fruitfully engaged?
• What is appreciative inquiry, and when is it helpful and when is it not as applicable?
• How do nonprofits measure outcomes?

Session 5 (Sept. 23)

Evaluating Implementation and Process, and Anticipating Pitfalls in Evaluation Work
(PLUS Please remember we will go over the McMahon article as if you were critiquing it to help prepare you for the critique due Nov. 4th)

Readings:

Holcomb and Nightingale article
Wholey Chapter 4
Hatry and Newcomer Chapter
“Threats to Validity and Reliability” by Newcomer
Sample Article – McMahon, et al.

Questions:
• How should formative evaluations be designed?
• How do you measure program implementation?
• How should feedback be incorporated in an implementation study?
• How should an implementation study be linked with an outcome study?
• 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?
• What are the most common threats to measurement validity and measurement reliability, and to internal, external, and statistical conclusion validity?

Session 6 (Sept. 30)
Outcome and Impact Evaluation NOTE: First memo due.

Readings:
Henry Chapter
Torgerson, Torgerson, and Brown Chapter
Impact Evaluation in Practice (World Bank) Chapters 5 and 6

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 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 (Oct. 7)
Data Collection and Measurement Issues in Program Evaluation

Readings:

AEA Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation
SenGupta et al.
Hatry Chapter
Nightingale and Rossman Chapter

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 considerations in using existing 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?

Session 8 (Oct. 14)

Qualitative Data Analysis: Different Conceptions of Causality

Readings:


- **Read pp. 23-35** (from 3.4 Design approaches to 3.6 ‘the strength of causal inference’)
- **Skim the Appendix**: Befani, B. (2012) ‘Models of Causality and Causal Inference’: Appendix

Configurational approaches:

**Process-tracing:**


**Applications:**


**Questions:**

- What are the various types of causality? How is understanding these different modes of causal inference relevant to evaluation work?
- For what evaluation questions are QCA and process-tracing approaches most useful?
- Is the qualitative vs. quantitative conceptual divide useful?

**Session 9 (Oct. 21)**

**Performance Measurement and Performance Management**

**Readings:**

Poister Chapter  
Behn Paper on “PerformanceStat”  
and  
highly recommended: *Moneyball* by Michel Lewis  
and skim “Baltimore Outcome Budgeting.”

**Questions:**

- 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?
• 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 10 (Oct. 28)

"Evidence-based Decision-making": Assessing Evidence, Meta-Evaluation and Systematic Reviews NOTE: Second memo due.

Readings:

Boruch and Petrosino Chapter

And skim Data Analytics II and Politics of Knowledge (several short articles)

AND

Please visit and assess one of the following websites and be ready to discuss your impression of it:

2. HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Synthesis
   www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/research/prs/
4. National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices
   www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/
5. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Effective Health Care
   http://www.effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/what-is-comparative-effectiveness-research1/
7. The Collaboration for Environmental Evidence at
   http://www.environmentalevidence.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 such “Evidence?”
• Why is it difficult to transfer evaluation and research findings into practice?
• What is practice-based evidence?

**Session 1 (Nov. 4)**

**The Institutional Context for Evaluation and Evaluation Capacity Building**

Readings:

American Evaluation Association Roadmap
And skim both GAO Report “International Food Assistance” (GAO 09-980)
Partnerships Help Build Agency Capacity” (GAO-03-454).

Questions:

• What does the American Evaluation Association recommend in terms of institutionalizing evaluation?
• What is evaluation capacity-building?
• 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?

**Session 12 (Nov. 11)**

**Ethical and Legal Dilemmas NOTE: Critique of an evaluation due.**

Readings:

Kimmel, entire book
Podems article

Questions:

• What protections should be given to participants in an evaluation?
• What procedures are possible in ensuring confidentiality?
• What procedures can be developed for maintaining the credibility and fairness of the evaluation?
• What are the essential elements and desired format for informed consent agreements?
• What are Institutional Review Boards and why are they important?
• What is the ethical role of evaluator as policy advocate?
• What is feminist evaluation?

Session 13 (Nov. 18)

Analyzing and Reporting Data NOTE: A draft Logic Model (from the applied project) is due today to be shared with the Class!

Readings:

Both of Grob chapters.
and skim Schulman, et. al. and "Sounding Board" article.

Questions:
• What are characteristics of effective data presentation?
• What are rigorous procedures for analyzing qualitative data?
• How should results be displayed?
• How are “null results” most appropriately reported?
• What do useful recommendations look like?

Session 14 (Nov. 25)

Enhancing Utilization of Evaluation and Performance Measurement, and Course Overview NOTE: Third memo due.

Readings:

Hatry, Wholey, and Newcomer last chapter

Questions:
• What factors influence utilization of evaluation results?
• 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?
AND No Later Than Dec. 16th: Applied Evaluation Project due – hard copy only to Professor Newcomer’s office by 5pm or on a date that has been negotiated with Instructor.

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.