Program Evaluation
15063 PUAD 646-002, 3 credits
Spring 2015
Gary Bettger - MPP, PMP, ASPA CAP Fellow
Adjunct Professor
School of Policy, Government and International Affairs (SPGIA)

Course Information
Meets: Thursdays, 7:20-10:00PM, Main Campus, Innovation Hall 137
Office Hours: Thursdays, 6:00-7:00PM (if class held that week) or by appointment
Contact: Email gbettger@gmu.edu or phone 703-408-1098 (mobile)

Course Description
Public and non-profit sector managers must solve complex problems everyday even as resources continue to be constrained. As a result, an ongoing imperative for all types of stakeholders (the Administration, Congress, State/Local governments, non-profit organizations, grant recipients, academics, the public, just to name a few) is to understand in systematic fashion how effectively and efficiently a program/policy/process is achieving its stated objective. Program evaluation is thus an essential area of concern for policy design, assessment, and decision-making. To deepen your study of Public Administration, this course provides a detailed treatment of the concepts/methods used in this particular discipline. We will cover major facets of program evaluation including purpose and types of evaluations, evaluation strategies, research designs, tools/methodologies, data collection, and social/political context. Focus will be placed on practical applications and critical understanding/use of resulting data.

Specific student learning outcomes include:
• Understand the types and uses of program evaluation
• Develop a supportable program evaluation plan
• Identify the “right” underlying question(s) and related issues
• Build and use a logic model highlighting inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes
• Construct and implement an evaluation design to answer evaluation questions
• Collect, analyze, and interpret reliable and valid evaluation data
• Communicate evaluation purpose, design, results, and recommendations

Course Prerequisites
Students should have at least a basic understanding of data analysis and statistical methods, and previously completed PUAD 502: Administration in Public and Nonprofit Organizations and PUAD 511: Problem Solving and Data Analysis I.

Required Text/Resources (copies available in GMU Bookstore)
Other required readings as listed in the syllabus are available either on the Internet or by accessing e-journals through George Mason University library electronic databases. For the latter, go to library.gmu.edu, use In Primo, and follow links to additional databases as needed.

Students should also subscribe to “AEA365 Tip-a-Day by and for Evaluators” at http://www.aea365.org/blog. The issues addressed in this resource will enrich your understanding of program evaluation and provide go-to resources as you complete assigned projects. Additionally, please scan the entire www.aea.org cite periodically for resources.

Course Requirements/Evaluation
Evaluation Analysis (Individual take home - week long) 20%
Evaluation Report (Group Exercise/Presentation - four weeks) 35%
Final Exam (Individual - 3 hour, taken virtually) 40%
General Class Participation (In-class across the semester) 5%
Total 100%

Course Grading
A+: 98-100  B+: 87-89  C+: 77-79  D+: 67-69
A:  94-97    B:  84-86    C:  74-76    D:  64-66
A-: 90-93    B-: 80-83    C-: 70-73    D-: 60-63
F:  below 60

Grading Considerations

- Class Participation will take into account a student’s presence in class but more importantly contributions to ongoing course dialogue. Note that quality is significantly more important than quantity – i.e., more credit will be given to in-class contributions reflecting thoughtful analysis, deep insights, class-wide applicability, best practices, etc. as compared to mere recitation of facts from reading assignments or other sources. Also courteous, professional, and respectful consideration of course colleagues is expected. I reserve the right to cold call so be prepared with your pre-reading each week.
- Language and ability to present clearly and succinctly are fundamental to successful evaluation practice. Work is expected to be of the highest quality, representing carefully considered analysis communicated through grammatically correct and clear writing. If you would like assistance in this area please refer to the GMU Writing Center at http://writingcenter.gmu.edu. Written work should have footnotes and a bibliography.
- We will use a mix of assignment types. The evaluation analysis is individual and you will be given time outside of class to complete a short (up to 7 pages), written analysis memo to a case problem. This one is not a collaborative exercise. The evaluation report is a collaborative, group exercise that will span multiple weeks and include contributions to a joint team paper (no more than 25 pages) and accompanying joint oral presentation (no more than 12 power point slides) your group will deliver in front of me/peers in class. Your individual grade for that second assignment will be a composite built upon my evaluation of your group’s final written/oral products (80 percent of the 35 percent) as well as team member’s evaluations of your relative contributions to final products (20 percent of the 35 percent). Teams are encouraged to work out internal differences but if all avenues of communication have been exhausted, you may seek mediation from me. The final exam will be individual work and a three-hour timed opportunity to apply key ideas from across the semester to a case. This exam will be
open book/notes. You will be given the test period to write clear and concise responses (no more than 4 pages) from a location of your choosing.

• Assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit. Please send them to me as an email attachment at gbettger@gmu.edu on or before the stated due date and time. You may only be excused from deadlines under extreme circumstances that will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by me with appropriate documentation from you. Please notify me in advance of any potential issues.

Additional Class Policies

• Blackboard – We will discuss whether the class wants to use this tool or other means.

• Preparation and Attendance – As described above, you will be graded on your attendance, preparation, and participation. As a result, you are responsible for completing the assigned readings each week before the associated class session and attending/participating in each class session to the best of your ability.

• Paper guidelines – Unless otherwise noted, written material should be double-spaced, in no less than 12 point (Arial or Times New Roman) font with one-inch margins on all sides. Again, quality is more important than quantity. Use a cover page with a title, name(s), course name and number, Professor Name, and date.

• Citations – You are responsible for knowing how to cite referenced material properly. If you use more than three consecutive words other than your own, they must be in quotes and cited. If you are citing five lines of more, the quote should be single spaced and indented. However, remember that quotes are not your work and therefore should be used only if absolutely necessary to make a point.

• Academic Integrity – Be sure you are familiar with and adhere to the GMU Honor System and Code at http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/9798/honorcod.html#code.

• Use of electronic devices in the classroom – The use of laptops, PDAs, iPads, phones, etc. are permitted for the purpose of taking notes, referring to course related materials, etc. during class. I reserve the right, however, to deny use of such devices to anyone that becomes disruptive with use of these tools in the classroom, chooses to use class time to view non course related Internet material, and/or texts incessantly. Of course, emergencies may require the use of such devices for non-traditional purposes. The rule of reason will apply in such cases (searching for sports scores, stock quotes, post-lecture restaurant destinations, etc. will not qualify as “reasonable” during class time)!

• Respect for diversity – “George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study, and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds, and practices have opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.” Source – George Mason University Diversity Statement.

• Students with special needs – If you are a student with a disability, and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

• Other – The University Catalog is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. If you have questions about any other part of the conduct of this course, do not hesitate to ask.
Weekly Assignments
(Assigned materials are required to be read ahead of each class unless otherwise noted)

January 22: Module 1 - Introduction to Program Evaluation
• Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 1
• [http://managementhelp.org/evaluation/program-evaluation-guide.htm#anchor1575679](http://managementhelp.org/evaluation/program-evaluation-guide.htm#anchor1575679) Basic Guide to Program Evaluation

January 29: Module 2 - Context and Tailoring Evaluations
• Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapters 2 and 12
• [http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51](http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51) American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles For Evaluators

February 5: No regular class will be held – please use time to stay on top of reading

February 12: Module 3 - Identifying Issues and Formulating Evaluation Questions
• Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 3

Note that during this class we will also start to discuss the Evaluation Report Group Exercise due later in the semester. We will discuss ideas around program/policies/organizations of which you have interest and might collaborate with others in deeper study later in the semester.
February 19: Module 4 - Assessing Need for Program, Program Theory, Logic Models

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapters 4 and 5
- http://ryanwatkins.com/na/guidebook/Section%201.pdf  What is a Needs Assessment?
- United Way of America Measuring Program Outcomes http://www.unitedwayslo.org/ComImpacFund/10/Excerpts_Outcomes.pdf  (skim this document only for general understanding)
- Logic Models online course located at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/lmcourse/ and the examples and templates located at http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/progdev/index.html under the Logic Model link (skim this document only for general understanding)

February 26: Module 5 - Assessing and Monitoring Program Progress

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 6

Note that we will use the latter two documents for an in-class discussion during this session. In particular, formulate a viewpoint on whether the Senate’s report accomplishes its goals of determining “what was done well, to identify what was done poorly or not at all, and to recommend changes in our national system for emergency response that will put local, state, federal, and private responders in a better position to provide prompt and effective relief when disaster strikes again?” Why or why not? Which types of performance processes and systems were recommended to address shortcomings and lessons learned from FEMA’s Hurricane Katrina assistance efforts? What is your reaction to FEMA’s and DHS’ comments to GAO’s evaluation findings? Do you think any of their comments were warranted? Why or why not?

Note also that during this class the Evaluation Analysis Exercise (Individual take home) will be distributed and will be due by email prior to the start of class on March 5. More content information will be provided on this date but in general terms you will be asked to write a short, up to 7 page, response to a case question that I provide to the entire class. Likely topics might
include, for instance, description of key evaluation questions/issues, stakeholder map and relevance, appropriate evaluation type (e.g., needs assessment, assessment of program theory, assessment of program process, etc.), and potential logic model (and its implications). The best way to prepare for this first written assignment is to stay current with the reading and practice actively in applying lessons learned to case examples in the reading and class discussions. Again, specific detail on the type and scope of the assignment will be provided in class.

March 5: Module 6 - Measuring and Monitoring Program Outcomes
(Note that Evaluation Analysis Exercise due by email today before class begins)

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 7

March 12: No class will be held this week due to Spring break.

March 19: Module 7 - Assessing Program Impact: Randomized Field Experiments

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 8

Note also that during this class the groups and topics for the Evaluation Report (Group Exercise and Presentation) will be finalized. We will create groups of approximately 4 students per, each group assigned to a different topic area (however we will determine the most appropriate breakdown once the course begins). You will then have four weeks to work together in your group to complete joint written (no more than 25 pages as a team) and joint oral (no more than 12 slides as a team) work products. These assignments will be due from each team no later than Wednesday night, April 15 at 6pm. Footnotes and individuals/sources consulted are expected as part of the paper and count towards the page limit (these also should not be less than 8 font). Appendix pages also count to the page limit. A few tables can be used in your paper (again at no less than 8 point font).

From there, we will draw lots to determine when each group will present their oral presentation in front of the class. Some of the groups will present on April 16th and others on April 23rd but written papers and Power Points from all groups will be due Wednesday April 15 at 6pm (this way no group will have an unfair advantage being able to tweak presentations, etc. after the first
few are presented in class). For the oral presentation, I will be looking for a well thought out/constructed Power Point slide deck of no more than 12 slides, purpose of which is to brief a hypothetical senior leader with oversight of the organization/program about purpose of your study, status, key findings, and recommended next steps & accountabilities. I will allot 30-45 minutes for each team to present and field questions from me and/or your colleagues. Course participants are expected to attend the presentations of all other groups.

More detail forthcoming on the content of this exercise but rest assured it will include most if not all of the major topics covered in the readings and lectures (e.g., evaluation requirements, stakeholders, key questions/issues, appropriate evaluation type, logic model, evaluation design, analysis/interpretation of data, communicating key results, and outstanding issues). We will discuss potential subjects/topics in class and then allow you to self-select against topics of interest. Please bear with me if we have too many students wanting to work on one program or another as everyone’s exposure/learning will be maximized if we end up with multiple, and distinct, group topics.

March 26: Module 8 - Assessing Program Impact: Alternative Designs
- Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 9
- [http://www.urban.org/toolkit/data-methods/quasi-experimental.cfm](http://www.urban.org/toolkit/data-methods/quasi-experimental.cfm) (read the opening page as well as the link on that page to the Hope VI Report as we will talk about the latter in class)
- [http://onlinestatbook.com/2/regression/intro.html](http://onlinestatbook.com/2/regression/intro.html) Intro to Linear Regression (skim this document only for general understanding)

April 2: Module 9 - Detecting, Interpreting, and Analyzing Program Effects
- Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 10

April 9: Module 10 - Measuring Efficiency
- Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 11
  [http://www.hsaj.org/?article=7.1.16](http://www.hsaj.org/?article=7.1.16)

Note that we will also use part of this class to answer any final questions that groups have about the [project materials due 6pm on April 15th](#).
April 16: Module 11 - Group Presentations
- There is no new reading assigned for this week. I recommend that, in addition to finalizing work with your group, you begin reviewing material covered to date in anticipation of the upcoming May final.
- We will do half of the presentations on this date. Note you should aim to present for approximately 35 minutes leaving at least 10 minutes for questions and dialogue. Remember though that all group written papers and all oral presentations are due to me no later than Wednesday April 15th before 6pm, no exceptions, regardless of when your group presents.

April 23: Module 12 - Group Presentations
- There is no new reading assigned for this week. I recommend that, in addition to finalizing work with your group, you begin reviewing material covered to date in anticipation of the upcoming May final.
- We will do the remaining presentations on this date. Note you should aim to present for approximately 35 minutes leaving at least 10 minutes for questions and dialogue. Remember though that all group written papers and all oral presentations are due to me no later than Wednesday April 15th before 6pm, no exceptions, regardless of when your group presents.

April 30: Module 13 - Applicability and the Future
- Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Chapter 12, review pp. 418-419 again

During this class, also please come prepared with any remaining questions on topics/materials we have covered during the semester. This is your chance to clear up any confusion you might have on course content prior to the final exam.

May 7: Module 14 - Final Exam

The 3-hour final exam will be individual and an opportunity for each of you to apply key insights from across the semester. This exam will be open book and open notes. You will be given the entire test period that evening to write clear and concise responses (up to four pages) to a case situation(s). Note that even though it will be open book I will not be particularly interested in your ability to recite basic concepts; rather, I will be looking for your ability to apply those concepts. You will be able to take this exam independently wherever you like and return by email by end of the test period.

**Thanks for being part of this course, best of luck to all of you in the future!**