Policy and Program Evaluation

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Dr. Jill Rough, Adjunct Professor
E-mail: jill.rough@1996.usna.com
Phone: 703-981-9216 (cell)

COURSE INFORMATION
Section 713-001: Thursdays, 7:20-10:00, Arlington Founders Hall- Room TBD

OFFICE HOURS
Office Hours: Thursdays 5:30-7:20, and Mondays-Fridays by appointment.
Location: Adjunct Offices, FH 656.
Please contact me via phone or email to schedule an appointment.

REQUIRED TEXTS

2. Additional articles and/or book chapters to be assigned as needed.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to systematic research conducted in the course of public policy and program evaluation. This course examines many facets of the evaluation process to include: the purposes and types of evaluation, identification of issues and program needs, evaluation methodologies, the measurement of program efficiency and program outcomes/impact. The course consists of seminar-style discussions, readings, and student presentations based on case studies of program evaluation in a variety of policy areas. Guest speakers may also present on several topics over the course of the semester.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the course is for you to become critical consumers and amateur practitioners of policy and program evaluation and develop your abilities to assess policy and program efficiency or effectiveness through systematic research. Specific objectives include:

1. Be knowledgeable about general fundamental concepts of policy and program evaluation.
2. To understand the fundamentals of evaluation design and select methods appropriate for policy and program evaluation.
3. To interpret results based on policy or program evaluation and communicate evaluation findings to a non-technical audience in ways understandable to them.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Your grade in this course will be based upon the elements listed below. Each element will be assigned a letter grade with corresponding numeric values based on the University grading policy for graduate students. The grades will be based on my professional judgment of the quality of your work. I take everything into consideration from substance to style. Written work is expected to be grammatically correct, carefully considered and well-presented. Analysis of the highest quality includes but is not limited to accurate information, adequate depth and breadth, relevance, and clarity of concepts considered.

For group projects, all members will receive the same grade. However, I reserve the right to assign an individual grade to any member of the group who does not participate, is disruptive, or otherwise impairs the group’s ability to function effectively.

Assignments are due in hard-copy format at or before the beginning of class. There is no need to submit electronic assignment unless requested to do so by the instructor. You must submit your work on the date assigned regardless of whether you are physically present for class. If you have a special need for a late submission, such as a medical emergency with doctor’s note, please contact me immediately. Late submissions will be considered on a case by case basis only.

Written work should be double-spaced, 12 point font, with 1 inch margins. Assignments must adhere to the page limit specified. Pages beyond the limit will not be read and may impact your grade for the assignment. Staple any assignments beyond one page (no paper clips or binders). Remember to indent paragraphs and put your name on every assignment.

**The graded elements of the course include:**

1. Class attendance and active participation (15%);
2. Two individual papers (15% each)
3. In-class Midterm (20%);
4. Group Evaluation Project (25%);
5. Peer evaluation of group work (10%)

The university graduate school grading policy can be found at: [http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1172](http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1172)

Grades are based on a 4.0 point system, as indicated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
<th>Graduate Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Passing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class attendance and participation: Class attendance and participation is critical to this course. Attendance is expected and required at class sessions. Contact the instructor in advance if you must miss a class session or are sick on the day of class and ensure you remain familiar with the course content. Participation in class takes into account the student’s earnest discussion of the topic and demonstrated knowledge of the assigned readings; application of course concepts to relevant current events or work experiences of individual students; and courteous, professional, respectful dialogue with the instructor and each other. Checking texts, emails, or other electronic media during class time is not considered professional or respectful.

Individual papers: Each individual will prepare two short papers on a topic related to program or policy evaluation. Maximum length of the short papers is 5 pages. Page limits are strictly enforced to encourage the ability to write in clear, concise language suitable for policymakers. Details of topic selection will be discussed in class.

Midterm: An in-class midterm exam will be provided on the date scheduled below. Students are required to bring blue books to the midterm.

Group Evaluation Project: Students will work in teams to conduct a formal evaluation of a policy or program as defined by this course. Topics will be selected and submitted for approval by Week 3 of the course. The group will work together throughout the semester and submit one final group paper (minimum of 25 pages). Students will also provide written evaluation of the quality and quantity of group member participation at the end of the semester.

REFERENCES

Legitimate sources are books, published manuals, magazines or newspapers, scholarly journals, and government documents, etc. You may cite internet-only sources to comment on the nature of the debate, but I don’t consider websites like Wikipedia to be legitimate sources of research in a graduate course in public policy. Also, it is always preferable to use original source documents rather than secondary sources.

DOCUMENTATION

You are responsible for accurately and consistently citing referenced material. You may use either the Chicago Manual of Style or the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Both are available in print and on-line. My preference is the Chicago Manual of Style.

PLAGIARISM
You are responsible for ensuring words and ideas you use are appropriately referenced. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any way. For additional information, see the SPP Policy on Plagiarism and the University Honor Code.

**SEMESTER OUTLINE**

*Readings marked with an asterisk have been posted to course content on Blackboard.

**WEEK 1**

*Course Introduction, Introduction to Evaluations*

- Student introductions and policy focus areas; exploration of potential group members
- Syllabus explained; assignments discussed
- Rossi, chapters 1 and 2

**WEEK 2**

*Social Context and Gold Standard Evaluations*

- 1-page thought piece (offering comments, questions, or a summary) of one of the readings below. Due to professor at the beginning of class. Reference your source using proper citation format.
- Group member selections due to professor by the END of class. Discussion of group project goals.
- Rossi, chapter 12
- GAO Design Matrix Power Point Presentation (will be reviewed in class).*

**WEEK 3**

*Formulating Questions and Introduction to Methodologies*

- Rossi, chapter 3.
2006). Read the overview section of “Survey Research” and each of its subtabs at http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/survey.php

**WEEK 4**
_Survey of Methodologies_

- GAO/PEMD91.10.1.9, _Case Study Evaluations_, November 1990. Available online. *

**WEEK 5**
_Methodologies (cont.)_

- First individual paper due to professor at beginning of class (methodologies).
- Group topic selections due to professor at END of class. (general description of initial topic; very brief, 1-page or less)
- Rossi, chapters 8 and 9, with a focus on randomized field experiments and quasi-experimental designs.
- Review of regression analysis (PUBP 704)

**WEEK 6**
_Research Design Issues: Bringing it Together_

- In-class research design practicum

**WEEK 7**
_Midterm_

- In-class midterm exam

**WEEK 8 – 3/20**
_Needs, Theory, Process_

- Rossi, chapters 4, 5, and 6.
- Sign up for group presentation dates
DRAFT SYLLABUS


**WEEK 9 – 3/27**

*Outcomes and Impact*

- Rossi, chapter 7.
- *Review* Rossi chapters 8 and 9. (These were originally assigned in the methodology week)

**WEEK 10 – 4/3**

*Cost-Benefit Analysis/ Experiments in the Fields*

**GUEST SPEAKER:**

*TBD*

- Rossi, chapter 11 (skim)
- [http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/01-jcbenefit.pdf](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/01-jcbenefit.pdf) Chapters 1 and 2
- [http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/family_support/BSF_impact_finalrpt.pdf](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/family_support/BSF_impact_finalrpt.pdf)

**WEEK 11 – 4/10**

*Outcomes/Impacts II: Impact Assessment Research Designs and How to Use them*

**GUEST SPEAKER:**

*TBD*

- **Second individual paper due to professor at beginning of class – journal article review.**
- Checklist for Reviewing a Randomized Controlled Trial of a Social Program or Project, To Assess Whether It Produced Valid Evidence (6 pages + references);
- Which Comparison-Group (“Quasi-Experimental”) Study Designs Are Most Likely to Produce Valid Estimates of a Program’s Impact?: A Brief Overview and Sample Review Form (4 pages + references).
DRAFT SYLLABUS

WEEK 12 – 4/17
Topical Wrap Ups and Course Review

- Non-Gold Standard CBAs:
  b. GAO-08-689, Afghanistan Reconstruction, July 2008. Available online* (Skim)
- Be prepared to discuss the status of group projects

WEEK 13 – 4/24
(Early Bird) Student Presentations

- Student presentations of group project
- Course evaluations completed in class

WEEK 14 – 5/1
Student Presentations

- Group papers due to professor at beginning of class (1 copy per group)
- Peer evaluation due (each student to submit written evaluation of group members, due at the beginning of class)
- Student presentations of group project

GMU SPP ISSUES AND POLICIES

Special Needs of Students

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.

SPP Journal

I will consider nominating the very best papers in this course for publication in New Voices in Public Policy. New Voices is a student- and faculty-reviewed journal that shares SPP’s finest student work with the rest of the world.

Plagarism

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public
Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.