Schar School of Policy and Government
Fall 2018
POGO 646-606
Policy and Program Evaluation

Date/Time       Wednesday 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm
Location        City of Fairfax Fire Dept Training Room, 3rd Floor, 4081 University Drive, Fairfax
Professor       Michelle A. Casciato, Ph.D.
Email           mcasciat@gmu.edu
Phone           703.581.7162 (cell); 703.792.5539 (office)
Office Hours    By appointment

Course Description

Program evaluation improves the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies and programs through systematic research. As such, evaluation is a major tool for policy analysis, assessment and decision making. This course examines many facets of the evaluation process, including the purposes and types of evaluations, evaluation strategies, evaluation methodology, and applications. The course will also consider how evaluations are shaped by social and political contexts.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Understand general fundamental concepts of policy and program evaluation
- Develop a program evaluation plan that presents a supportable business case and road map for an evaluation
- Collect, analyze, and interpret reliable and valid evaluation data to answer evaluation questions
- Select appropriate evaluation methods and interpret results based on policy or program evaluation.
- Prepare a report documenting the purpose, design, results, conclusions, and recommendations of an evaluation
- Assess evaluations to determine reliability, validity, and utility of recommendations

Course Prerequisites

One of the following: POGO 511, PUAD 511, PUBP 511, GOVT 511, HAP 602 or 719
**Required Text**


**Graded Course Assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Synthesis Program Summary – 5%</td>
<td>September 5</td>
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<td>Evaluation Synthesis Summary – 5%</td>
<td>September 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation Synthesis Logic Model – 15%</td>
<td>October 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Evaluation Project Phase I – Design – 10%</td>
<td>October 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Evaluation Project Phase II – Data Analysis – 10%</td>
<td>November 7</td>
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<td>Group Evaluation Project Phase III – Recommendations – 10%</td>
<td>November 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Evaluation Synthesis Paper – 25%</td>
<td>November 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation Synthesis Presentation – 10%</td>
<td>November 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation – 10%</td>
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**Evaluation Synthesis Paper**

- **Final Paper** – Written evaluation reports must be submitted via Blackboard prior to the start of class on November 28. Reports should not exceed 20 pages (including references and appendices), double-spaced, in 12 pt. font, and on numbered pages with standard margins, in APA format. The reports should be structured as follows:
  - Executive Summary – single page
  - Introduction: purpose of evaluation, audiences targeted for report, limitations or boundaries of evaluation report, and overview of report contents
  - Focus of Evaluation: evaluation description related to purpose, criteria/standards used to judge success/failure, and the evaluation questions
  - Diagrammatic expression
  - Methodology discussion
  - Conclusions and Recommendations: summary of results from methodology section in layman’s terms with linkages to any criteria/standards used to judge success/failure, evaluation recommendations and judgment of value/worth based on findings, and discussion of shortcomings or weaknesses with recommendations for improvement

- **Presentation** – Each student will present the evaluation using PowerPoint or Prezi. The presentation must be uploaded into Blackboard prior to the start of class on November 28, and a paper copy of the presentation provided to the professor on November 28. Each student will have 15 minutes to present the evaluation synthesis results followed by a short question and discussion session.

**Group Evaluation Project Details**

- A portion of each class will be devoted to practical application of the course concepts utilizing evaluation methods and tools. The class will prepare a written evaluation plan for an existing local
government program including data assessment and analysis, and will prepare recommendations for the program manager. All students must participate in all elements of the evaluation plan in order to receive full credit.

**Class Participation Details**

- **Daily Participation** – Students will be fully prepared for each class, demonstrate knowledge of assigned readings and provide thoughtful responses to discussion questions and exercises.
- **Evaluation in the News** – Students will sign up for one date to discuss an article from the popular press that references an evaluation topic of interest (5 minutes max). Evaluation can be hard to spot, but it is out there in many forms. This exercise will help us practice identifying the empirical and evaluative bases of assertions made in the press (or perhaps suggest where they are needed).
- **Read and Lead** – Students will sign up for one date to lead the class in discussion on the day’s topics. Be prepared to outline the main points of the readings, highlight relevant analytical frameworks or practical tips, suggest complementary issues of public policy interest or related readings, and raise relevant questions.

**Academic Accommodation for a Disability**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please advise the professor and contact the Office of Disability Services. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services (https://ds.gmu.edu).

**Class Policies**

- **Academic Integrity**: Make sure you are familiar with and adhere to the GMU Honor System and Code located at https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/
- **Assignments**: Assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit. Assignments must be submitted via Blackboard by 7 pm on the scheduled due date (see Weekly Schedule for details). All assignments will be graded using the GMU graduate grading system.
- **Attendance**: Students are required to attend class. As described above, you will be graded on your preparation, participation and contribution to class discussion.
- **Blackboard**: Course materials, project instructions and other communications will be posted on Blackboard.

**Resources**

- American Evaluation Association www.eval.org
- Fairfax County Public Schools
  - https://www.fcps.edu/department/office-research-and-strategic-improvement
- GMU Libraries http://library.gmu.edu
- GMU Writing Center http://writingcenter.gmu.edu
- University of Wisconsin – Extension https://fyi.uwex.edu/programdevelopment/

**Weekly Schedule**

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Aug 29 Introduction: Overview of Policy and Program Evaluation Class 1

**Assigned Reading**

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 1
- *Guiding Principles for Evaluators*, [https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51](https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51)

**Classwork**

- Review syllabus, resource links, evaluation plan template
- Select dates for Read & Lead, Evaluation in the News

**Suggested Resource**

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Step by Step Guide to Evaluation

Sept 5 Identifying Issues & Formulating Questions Class 2

**Assigned Reading**

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapters 2 and 3

**Written Assignment Due**

- Submit one typed page identifying program chosen for evaluation paper synthesis with brief description of service provided, including intended outcome(s).

**Classwork**

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template - Purpose, Program Structure, Evaluation Questions

**Suggested Resource**

- GAO, Designing Evaluations, 2012

Sept 12 Assessing the Need for a Program Class 3
Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 4

Classwork

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template – Evaluation Questions, Stakeholder Matrix

Sept 19  Expressing & Assessing Program Theory  Class 4

Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 5

Written Assignment Due

- Submit typed summary of three evaluations chosen for synthesis paper. Three pages, excluding citations.

Classwork

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template – Logic Model

Suggested Resource

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

Homework – Prep for Stakeholder Interviews Next Week

- Review evaluation plan template; prepare questions

Sept 26  Create Juvenile Justice Evaluation Plan, Phase I  Class 5
Assigned Reading

- “Racial and Ethnic Disparities Reduction: Court Services Unit Progress Update 2013-2016.” 2017. Fairfax County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court.

Classwork

- Interview PWC Juvenile Justice stakeholders
- Begin Phase I of PWC JJ evaluation plan

Suggested Resource


**Oct 3** Monitoring Program Process & Implementation Class 6

Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 6

Written Assignment Due

- Submit program theory and logic model for evaluation synthesis paper. Maximum two pages.

Classwork

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template
- Continue work on PWC JJ Phase I plan

**Oct 10** Measuring and Monitoring Program Outcomes Class 7
Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 7

Classwork

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template
- Continue work on PWC JJ Phase I plan

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**Oct 17**  
Assessing Program Impact: Randomized Field Experiments  
Class 8

Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 8

Written Assignment Due

- PWC JJ Phase I group evaluation project plan design due at start of class

Classwork

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template
- Begin Phase II of PWC JJ evaluation plan – data collection & analysis

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**Oct 24**  
Assessing Program Impact: Alternative Designs  
Class 9
Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 9

Classwork

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template
- Continue PWC JJ Phase II data analysis

Oct 31

Detected, Interpreting and Analyzing Program Effects

Class 10

Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 10

Classwork

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template
- Continue PWC JJ Phase II data analysis

Nov 7

Measuring Efficiency; Evaluating Program

Class 11
Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 11

Written Assignment Due

- PWC JJ Phase II group evaluation project plan due at start of class

Classwork

- Evaluation Synthesis Plan Template
- Prepare PWC JJ recommendations and executive summary

Nov 14  Social, Political and Historical Context of Evaluation: Reinventing Government & Beyond  Class 12

Assigned Reading

- Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, Chapter 12

Written Assignment Due

- PWC JJ Phase III recommendations and executive summary due at start of class

Classwork

- Review individual evaluation synthesis outlines, Q&A for final paper
- Lottery draw for presentation date

Suggested Resource

- GAO 2013 - Strategies to Facilitate Agencies' Use of Evaluation

Nov 21  No Class - Thanksgiving Holiday (university closed)
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Nov 28</td>
<td>Evaluation Project Presentations</td>
<td>Class 13</td>
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