Policy and Program Evaluation  
POGO 646 001  
Summer 2019  
Syllabus

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Course Information

Meets: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:30 – 7:10 pm, Founders Hall 476  
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00 – 4:00 pm, or by appointment, FH 652  
Contact: Email bstabile@gmu.edu

Course Description

The purpose of program evaluation is to improve 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 their social and political contexts.

Learning Outcomes

The objectives for this course are for students to:

1. Be knowledgeable about general fundamental concepts of policy and program evaluation.  
2. Understand what different kinds of program evaluation approaches are available.  
3. Collect, manage, and manipulate select data for policy and program evaluation.  
4. Select appropriate evaluation methods and interpret results based on policy or program evaluation.  
5. Communicate and present evaluation findings to a non-technical audience in ways understandable to them.

Required Readings

Required course readings consist of a main textbook, available in the George Mason University bookstore, and various peer reviewed journal articles and government reports available by accessing e-journals through the George Mason University library electronic databases.
Textbook

Course Requirements

Prerequisite

Students who have not yet taken POGO 511, PUBP 511, PUBP 704, or an equivalent class need permission of the instructor.

Class Attendance/Participation/Behavior

Students are required to attend class. If students have to miss class for professional, i.e., a time conflict at work, or medical reasons they are expected to notify the instructor in advance and to familiarize themselves with the materials missed in class. Students are expected to arrive on time and to participate in class discussions.

The class participation grade takes into account a student’s presence in class and contributions to the course dialogue. Conscientious participation entails:
- earnest discussion and demonstrated knowledge of assigned readings
- application of course concepts to relevant current events or the work circumstances and experience of individual students
- courteous, professional, and respectful dialogue with course colleagues
- meaningful engagement in class, while refraining from using a computer (except for note taking) or electronic devices

Writing and Presentation Assignments

1) Proposal 10% Due Session 3
2) Need Statement 10% Due Session 5
3) Annotated Bibliography 10% Due Session 7
4) Participation 15% All Sessions
5) Presentation 15% Session 13 or 14
6) Evaluation Synthesis 40% Due Session 13

All written work is expected to be of the highest quality, representing both grammatically correct and carefully considered analysis. Elements of central importance to sound analysis include adequate depth, breadth, relevance and clarity of the concepts considered. Language is the most important tool available to evaluators. Use it well.

I encourage the use of the GMU Writing Center. Explore their offerings at http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/

Assignments must be submitted on time to receive full credit.
All assignments should be sent to the instructor as an email attachment, labeled first with the student’s last name, at bstabile@gmu.edu by class time on the date due.

Finally, you must have a functioning GMU email account in order to receive class notifications and correspondence.

**Citation Rule of Thumb**

You are responsible for knowing how to properly cite referenced material. To be on the safe side, if you use more than **three consecutive words** of another author or speaker, put them in quotation marks and cite them. If you are citing five lines or more from another’s work, those lines should be single-spaced and indented. Plagiarism will automatically result in a grade of “F” for the assignment, and could lead to expulsion from the class or program.

Plagiarism is using another’s words or ideas and representing them as your own. In this age of clicking, cutting and pasting, it is easier than ever to plagiarize (and to detect plagiarism), but it is as important as ever to respect the rights of owners and originators in the marketplace of ideas. The use of quotation marks and meticulous, proper citation will help you to avoid going astray.

Every written assignment you submit should have a bibliography, and should make use of either footnotes, endnotes or in text citations.

**George Mason Academic Policies**

George Mason University policies are in effect. All your work must be your own, unless the instructor for this course authorizes collaboration, in which case you must, in writing, acknowledge the help you have received. Presenting as one's own the words, ideas, or expression of another in any form is cheating through plagiarism, and will not be tolerated.

The claim of ignorance is no excuse.

Honor Code: The Honor Code Policy endorsed by members of the Department of Public and International Affairs relative to the types of academic work indicated below is set out in the appropriate paragraphs.

1. Quizzes, tests, and examinations. No help may be given or received by students during the taking of quizzes, tests, or examinations, whatever the type or wherever taken, unless the instructor specifically permits deviation from this standard.

2. Course Requirements. All work submitted in fulfillment of course requirements is to be solely the product of the individual(s) whose name(s) appears on it. Except with permission of the instructor, no recourse is to be had to projects, papers, lab reports or any other written work previously prepared by another student, and except with
permission of the instructor, no paper or work of another type submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of another course may be used a second time to satisfy a requirement in the Department of Public and International Affairs. No assistance is to be obtained from commercial organizations that sell or lease research help or written papers. With respect to all written work as appropriate, proper footnotes and attributions are required.

3. Required Reading. A signed pledge that reading required for a course has been completed may be made a condition of receiving credit in this course. Inability to sign the pledge when required on the final exam will result in the assignment of a grade of I.

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.

Weekly Readings and Assignments

Session 1: (June 3) Course Introduction: What is Evaluation and Why Do It?

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 1

Further reading:


Session 2 (June 5): Getting Started: Planning an Evaluation

This afternoon’s class session will take place asynchronously via Blackboard, as I will be at Rutgers University for the Social Equity Leadership Conference – details to follow.

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 11

Session 3 (June 10): Social Problems and Asserting Program Need

**Evaluation Project Proposal Due** (Program is identified, and evidence that sufficient literature exists to conduct the inquiry – that is, the program you have selected is “evaluable” – *be prepared to present your project idea and discuss in class, with a hand out for your classmates identifying the program or policy of interest, and a list of six sources)

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 2

Session 4 (June 12): Expressing and Assessing Program Theory

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 3

Further reading:


Session 5 (June 17): Monitoring Program Process and Implementation

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 4

**Statement of Need Due** (Craft a concise, well-articulated statement of need for your program or policy of interest; be prepared to discuss in class with a one page hand out)

Session 6 (June 19): Measuring and Monitoring Program Outcomes

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 5

Further reading:


Robert McNamara epitomizes the hyper-rational executive led astray by numbers.” *MIT Technology Review.* Available at http://www.technologyreview.com/news/514591/the-dictatorship-of-data/#ixzz2Us5VNqZC

Session 7 (June 24): Impact Evaluation: Isolating the Effects of Social Programs in the Real World

**Brief Annotated Bibliography of Selected Studies Due** (identifying Research Question, Methods, and primary Conclusions)

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 6


Session 8 (June 26): Impact Evaluation: Comparison Group Design

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 7


Session 9 (July 1): Evaluating Program Impact: Designs with Strict Controls on Program Access

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 8

Session 10 (July 3): Detecting, Interpreting, and Exploring Program Effects

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 9

Session 11 (July 8): Assessing Economic Efficiency of Programs

Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 10

Session 12 (July 10): Social and Political Context of Evaluation/Go Forth and Evaluate!
Rossi, Lipsey and Henry, Chapter 12

Early Bird Presentations

Session 13 (July 15): Student Research Presentations

All Student Research Papers Due

Session 14 (July 17): Student Research Presentations

Appendix: Evaluation Project*

Conduct an Evaluation Synthesis of an existing policy or program

Select a government or non-profit policy or program to evaluate. An evaluation synthesis involves bringing together existing literature to gain an understanding of just how well functioning a program appears to be, and what facets of the program may be in particular need of improvement. In order to conduct a meaningful synthesis, an adequate amount of studies must have already been conducted on the program or policy in question. For the purposes of this paper, it is strongly recommended that your literature review contain no fewer than the equivalent of six academic journal articles, GAO, CRS or PART reports, or independently commissioned studies. Your methodology section should describe how you have selected the included studies and give your readers confidence that the studies from which you are drawing conclusions fairly represent the extant literature on the program or policy at hand. You may also include additional sources with information on the program and its context, such as articles from the popular press and information from think tanks.

The primary purpose of the synthesis is to convey to what extent the program or policy in question achieved its goals. Was it successful or unsuccessful, and to what degree, or were the analyses inconclusive? What methods were employed in making a determination of the program’s success, and how well designed were the studies under consideration? Given your findings, what would you recommend to policymakers regarding the further use of the program model?


Evaluation reports are due at the beginning of Session 13, and should be about 12 pages in length, excluding references and appendices. During Sessions 12, 13 and 14, students will give presentations of about 10 minutes in length on the results of their Evaluation Projects and have an additional few minutes for questions and discussion, for a total of no more than 15 minutes each.
Final projects should be double-spaced, in 12 pt font, and on numbered pages with standard margins. They are due by the start of class on the designated days, and should be submitted to me in one document only as an email attachment, labeled with your last name, the course number and the assignment title as follows: “Smith 646 Eval Project.”