Policy and Program Evaluation  
42808 - POGO 646 - 001, 3 credits  
Summer 2020 (May 21 - August 6)  
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Course Information
Meets: Thursdays, 5:00-8:30PM, Arlington Campus, Van Metre Hall 322  
Office Hours: Thursdays, after class (if class held that week) or by appointment  
Contact: Email gbettger@gmu.edu or phone 703-408-1098 (mobile)

Course Description
Practical exploration of assessment techniques used in studying results of public programs and policies, including evaluation of implementation strategies and impacts. 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. The discipline of program evaluation is therefore an essential area of concern for policy design, assessment, and decision-making. To deepen your study of Policy and Government, this course provides a detailed treatment of the concepts/methods applied in program evaluation. We will cover major facets 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 logic models 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. Required Prerequisites: POGO 511C, PUAD 511C, PUBP 511C, GOVT 511C, HAP 602C or 719C. “C” Requires minimum grade of C.
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 will also benefit by subscribing to “AEA365 Tip-a-Day by and for Evaluators” at http://www.aea365.org/blog. Note this is not mandatory. The issues addressed in this resource however will enrich your understanding of program evaluation and provide resources as you complete assigned projects.

Course Requirements/Evaluation
Evaluation Analysis (Individual take home - week long) 25%
Evaluation Report (Group Exercise/Presentation - multi week project) 40%
Final Exam (Individual - 3.5 hour, taken virtually) 30%
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 course dialogue/learning. 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 your classmates is expected. I reserve the right to “cold call” so please be prepared with your pre-reading each week.
• Language and ability to present ideas clearly and succinctly are fundamental to 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 page), 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 almost four 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 (primarily) of your group’s final written/oral products as well as team member’s evaluations (secondarily) of your relative contributions to final products. Teams are encouraged to work out internal team 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 3.5-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 responses (4 pages) from a location of your choice to another short case.

- All 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 unforeseen circumstances that will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by me with appropriate documentation from you. Please notify in advance per any potential issues.

Additional Class Policies

- **Blackboard** – We will discuss whether the class wants to use this tool.
- **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’s 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](http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/9798/honorcod.html#code).
- **Use of electronic devices in the classroom** – The use of laptops, 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 (searching for sports scores, stock quotes, post-class 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

May 21: Module 1 - What is Program Evaluation and Why is it Needed?

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapter 1

The below 5 resources in this module should be skimmed for basic understanding only

- https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/results/agenda/budgetperformance.html

May 28: Module 2 - Evaluation Plan and Stakeholder Context

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapters 11 and 12

Note that during this class we will also start to discuss in general terms 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. Please come to class with your interesting topics.

June 4: Module 3 - Assessing Need for Program, Program Theory, and Logic Models

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapters 2 and 3
- http://theimprovegroup.com/blog/2015-03/important-considerations-conducting-needs-assessment

Note also that during this class the Evaluation Analysis Exercise (Individual take home, no collaboration) will be distributed and will be due by email prior to the start of class on June 11.
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 that I provide to the class. Likely topics might include, for instance, description of key evaluation questions/issues, stakeholder map and relevance, appropriate evaluation type, 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 the case examples in the reading and class discussions. Again, detail on the type/scope of the assignment will be provided in class.

**June 11: Module 4 - Assessing & Monitoring Program Progress/Performance Measures**

(Nota that Evaluation Analysis Exercise is due to me by email today before 5pm)

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapter 4

**June 18: Module 5 - Measuring and Monitoring Program Outcomes/Impact Evaluations**

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapters 5 and 6

Note that during this class the group work for the **Evaluation Report (Group Exercise and Presentation)** will be started. We will create groups (size depends on class numbers), with each assigned to a different topic area. You will then have almost 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, July 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 straws to determine when each group will present their oral presentation in front of the class. Some of the groups will present on July 16th and others on July 23rd but written papers and Power Points from all groups **will be due Wednesday July 15th 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. No unique or different dress code expected for presentations, just come as you typically come to class.

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. Enjoy this team opportunity, as this is how most evaluations are done!

June 25: Module 6 - Randomized Field Experiments and Quasi-Experimental Designs
- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapters 7 and 8
- https://himmelfarb.gwu.edu/tutorials/studydesign101/rcts.html Study Design 101: Randomized Control Trial

Note that we will have some in class time for you to work on your team projects

July 2: Module 7 - Detecting, Interpreting, and Exploring Program Effects
- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapter 9
- http://onlinestatbook.com/2/regression/intro.html Intro to Linear Regression (skim this document as necessary)

Note that we will have some in class time for you to work on your team projects

July 9: Module 8 - Measuring Efficiency
- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapter 10

Note that we will have some in class time for you to work on your team projects
July 16: Module 9 - 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 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 July 15th before 6pm**, no exceptions, regardless of when your group presents.

July 23: Module 10 - 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 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 July 15th before 6pm**, no exceptions, regardless of when your group presents.

July 30: Module 11 - Applicability and the Future

- Rossi, Lipsey, and Henry, Chapter 12, review pp. 312-313 again

**During this last module, come prepared with any outstanding 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.**

August 6: Module 12 - Final Exam

The 3.5-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, but **not** a collaboration exercise with your peers. You will be given the entire test period to write clear and concise responses (up to four pages total) to a case situation(s) that I will have distributed earlier. 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 and integrate those concepts. You will be able to take this exam independently at whichever location you like but must return it to me by email by end of the prescribed test period.

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