NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
Evaluating Programs & Policies
Summer 2020
Wednesdays 6:45–8:25pm | Online via Zoom
Professor Julia Kohn

NB: This course will meet Wednesday evenings with two additional Monday sessions (7/20 & 8/3). This is a synchronous course that requires online attendance and participation.

Contact Information: Email: julia.kohn@nyu.edu
Phone: 646-479-1800
Office hours: by appointment

Course Pre-requisites
Students must have completed (or waived) P11.1011 (Statistical Methods) and P11.1022 (Introduction to Public Policy), as this course builds on these introductory courses.

Course Description and Objectives
Program evaluation is a critical component in designing and implementing effective programs. Evaluations supply information to program managers and policymakers that can assist them in making decisions about which programs to fund, modify, expand, or eliminate. Evaluation can be an accountability tool for program managers and funders. This course serves as an introduction to evaluation methodology and evaluation tools commonly used to assess programs and policies. Students will become familiar with the concepts, methods, and applications of evaluation research; learn how to read evaluation research critically; understand how to use evaluation results to anticipate or improve program performance; and be able to propose an appropriate evaluation plan to assess the implementation and effectiveness of a program.

Course Structure
The class includes lectures, readings, and discussion. There is no specific policy or sector focus to this course, as evaluation tools are used in all policy areas and by public (government) and private (foundation) funders as well as by public and private sector program managers. Students are encouraged to relate the general material of the course to their specific policy interests.

Readings
The required textbook for this course is:


In addition to the required text, you will have additional readings, which are mostly articles (case studies). All of the articles are available through Bobst electronic journals and are posted on the course site under ‘Resources’. There are also additional optional readings, all of which can be downloaded.

There is a sizable body of literature which deals with program evaluation and policy analysis. The journal *Evaluation Review* (previously *Evaluation Quarterly*) is an especially rich source on the subject, as is the *Evaluation Studies Review Annual. Evaluation Practice, Evaluation and Program Planning*, and *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* are also recommended. There are also
evaluation journals for specific fields, including *Evaluation and the Health Professions*, *Evaluation in Education*, and *Evaluation and Human Services*.

**Course requirements**
Class preparation and participation are important for this course; students are expected to attend and participate at the regularly schedule course time. Students must read required text and articles in advance and be prepared to participate in class discussion. In addition to class participation, students will write two brief memos (with an optional third for extra credit), complete one take-home midterm exam, and write a final evaluation design paper. *Note: the following descriptions are not enough to complete the assignments adequately. More detailed instructions for each assignment will be distributed.*

**Program Memo**  
*June 17th*
Students will submit a short description of a selected program, indicating the problem to be addressed by the intervention, the intended beneficiaries or targets of the program, the intended benefits, and the causal model/program theory underlying the program. This memo is a preliminary step in writing the final design paper. Teams will give brief presentations on their memos to the class.

**Midterm Examination**
There will be a take-home essay style examination due *July 1st*.

**Measurement Memo**  
*July 15th*
Using the program model developed in the first memo, students will specify the research questions, operational definitions, and specific measures they would use in an evaluation of the program.

**OPTIONAL Evaluation Review (for extra credit)**  
*August 3rd*
It is important to become a good consumer of evaluations, if not a good evaluator oneself. Review one of three selected evaluation articles. In three pages, students will summarize the type of evaluation described, its design and methods, and write a critique of the evaluation.

**Final Paper: Outcome Evaluation Design**  
*August 5th*
The final paper builds on earlier assignments. Students will design a comprehensive evaluation plan for their chosen programs. The proposal will focus on outcome or impact evaluation but will include a brief section on process evaluation as well. Students will work in groups and will present their proposals before the final paper is due.

**Relative Weight of Assignments**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two memos</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Final Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>88.5 – 94.4</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85.5 – 88.4</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>82.5 – 85.4</td>
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<td>78.5 – 82.4</td>
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<td>76.5 – 78.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>73.5 – 76.4</td>
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<td>68.5 – 73.4</td>
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Course Schedule

Part I: Planning and Implementation

May 27  
**Class 1: Introduction to program evaluation; pre-program evaluation activities**
- Weiss Chapters 1 & 2

Jun 3  
**Class 2: Explicating and assessing program theory**
- Weiss Chapter 3
- *FINALIZE TEAMS*

Jun 10  
**Class 3: Process evaluation, formative evaluation and implementation analysis**

Jun 17  
**Class 4: Program Memo Presentations**
- *Program memo due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 5:00pm (ET)*

3 Revised 7.18.20
Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs

Jun 24

Class 5: Outcome/Impact evaluation: design, validity; randomized experiment
- Weiss Chapter 8 & 9
- Program memos returned
- Midterm questions posted online

Jul 1

Class 6: Outcome/Impact evaluation: quasi-experimental designs
- Midterm answers due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 5:00pm (ET)

Jul 8

Class 7: Formulating Research Questions and Measurement
- Weiss, Chapter 6
- Midterm exams returned
Jul 15  Class 8: Full coverage and reflexive designs; Sampling
- Weiss, review Chapter 8 pp. 191–199
- Measurement memo due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 5:00pm (ET)

Jul 20 (Mon.) Class 9: Measurement Team Working Sessions
- No full class meeting – teams sign up for group feedback sessions
- Measurement memos returned and have working sessions with professor

Jul 22  Class 10: Qualitative Methods; Participatory Evaluation
- Weiss, Chapter 11

Jul 29  Class 11: Group Presentations & Feedback
- Group Presentations (exact format and timing to be explained)

Aug 3 (Mon.) Class 12: Evaluation and Research Ethics
- Group Presentations Continued (as needed)
- Weiss, Chapter 14
- OPTIONAL Evaluation review memo due (for extra credit)

Aug 5  FINAL PAPERS DUE
- Final Papers due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 5:00pm (ET)