



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

PADM–GP 2171

Evaluating Programs & Policies | Fall 2023

Key Course Information

- Professor Julia Kohn, PhD, MPA
 - Email: julia.kohn@nyu.edu
 - Phone: (646) 479-1800
 - Office hours: By appointment
- Class Meeting Time: Mondays 4:55–6:35pm (ET)
- Class Location: In-person, GCASL Room 375

Note: This course will meet in-person on Monday evenings. There will be no class on Monday, October 9th but Monday classes will meet on Tuesday, October 10th instead. On September 25th we will not meet in person; there will be a required asynchronous Zoom session.

Course Prerequisites

Students must have completed (or waived) CORE-GP 1011 (Statistical Methods), as this course builds on that introductory course.

Course Description and Objectives

Program evaluation is a critical component in designing and operating 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 publicly funded programs. 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 or policy.

Course Learning Objectives

Students will:

- 1) Become familiar with the concepts, language, methods, and applications of evaluation research;
- 2) Understand how to develop a logic model for an intervention and how to use it to guide evaluation;
- 3) Develop the ability to formulate clear, answerable research questions for evaluation;
- 4) Develop the ability to identify, modify, or develop appropriate measures of outcomes that are valid, reliable, and feasible;
- 5) Learn how to read evaluation research critically;
- 6) Develop a detailed, feasible, and rigorous evaluation proposal to assess the implementation and effectiveness of a program.

Learning Assessment Table

Course Learning Objective Covered	Corresponding Assignment(s)
#1	Program Memo Measurement Memo Midterm Exam Optional Review Memo
#2	Program Memo Logic Model Presentation Midterm Exam
#3	Measurement Memo Final Paper
#4	Measurement Memo Final Paper
#5	Midterm Exam Optional Review Memo
#6	Final Paper

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 and private 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.

Required Readings

The required textbook for this course is:

**Carol H. Weiss (1998) Evaluation: Methods for Studying Programs & Policies
2nd edition. Prentice Hall.**

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

There is a sizable body of literature that deals with program evaluation and policy analysis. The journal Evaluation Review (previously Evaluation Quarterly) is a rich source on the subject, as is the Evaluation Studies Review Annual. Evaluation Practice, Evaluation and Program Planning, New Directions for Program Evaluation, and Journal of Policy Analysis and Management are also recommended. There are also evaluation journals for specific fields such as 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 need to read the 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 are posted on the course site.**

Program Memo

October 10th (Tues)

Students will work in teams to submit a short description of a selected program/policy, indicating the problem to be addressed by the intervention, the intended beneficiaries, the intended benefits, and the causal model/program theory underlying the program/policy. This memo is a preliminary step in writing the final design paper. **Teams will give brief presentations to the class.**

Midterm Examination

There will be a take-home essay style examination due **October 23rd.**

Measurement Memo

November 13th

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 their program/policy.

OPTIONAL Evaluation Review (for extra credit)

December 4th

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

December 11th

The final paper builds on earlier assignments. Students will design a comprehensive evaluation plan for their chosen program/policy. The proposal will focus on outcome or impact evaluation but will include a section on process evaluation as well. Teams will present their proposals before the final paper is due.

Relative Weight of Assignments

Midterm Exam	40%	Two memos	10%
Final Paper	40%	Class Participation	10%

Final Grades

94.5+	A	78.5 – 82.4	B-
88.5 – 94.4	A-	76.5 – 78.4	C+
85.5 – 88.4	B+	73.5 – 76.4	C
82.5 – 85.4	B	68.5 – 73.4	C-

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I: Planning and Implementation

- Sep 11** **Class 1: Introduction to program evaluation; pre-program evaluation activities**
- Weiss Chapters 1 & 2
 - Berberet, H.M. (2006). Putting the pieces together for queer youth: a model of integrated assessment of need and program planning. *Child Welfare*, 85(2): 361–384.
 - Collier AF, Munger M, Moua YK. (2012). Hmong mental health needs assessment: a community-based partnership in a small mid-western community. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(1–2):73-86.
 - Witken, Belle Ruth. (1994). Needs Assessment Since 1981: The state of the practice. *Evaluation Practice*, 15(1):17–27.
- Sep 18** **Class 2: Explicating and assessing program theory**
- Weiss Chapter 3
 - Chen, Wang & Lin. (1997). Evaluating the process and outcome of a garbage reduction program in Taiwan. *Evaluation Review*, 21(1): 27–42.
 - Epstein D & Klerman JA. (2012). When is a Program Ready for Rigorous Impact Evaluation? The Role of a Falsifiable Logic Model. *Evaluation Review*, 36(5): 375–401.
 - Optional: Kaplan, Sue A. and Garrett, Katherine E. (2005). The use of logic models by community-based initiatives. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 28(2):167–172.
 - **FINALIZE PROJECT TEAMS**
- Sep 25** **Class 3: Process evaluation, formative evaluation and implementation analysis**
- Curran, A., Gittelsohn, J., Anliker, J., Ethelbah, B., Blake, K., Sharma, S. & Cabellero, B. (2005). Process evaluation of a store-based environmental obesity intervention on two American Indian reservations. *Health Education Research*, 20(6):719–729.
 - Robbins LB, Ling J, Kilicarslan Toruner E, Bourne KA, & Pfeiffer KA. (2016). Examining Reach, Dose, and Fidelity of the ‘Girls on the Move’ After-School Physical Activity Club: A Process Evaluation. *BMC Public Health*, 16: 671.
 - Optional: Mye SC & Moracco KE. (2015). Compassion, pleasantry, and hope: a process evaluation of a volunteer-based nonprofit. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 50:18-25.
- ***NOTE: WE WILL NOT MEET IN PERSON ON 9/25. ASYNCHRONOUS ZOOM SESSION.*****
- Oct 2** **Class 4: Facilitated Team Working Sessions**
- Review Memo Assignment and Q&A
 - Team Breakout Groups
- Oct 10 (Tues)** **Class 5: Program Memo & Presentations**
- Program Memo due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 4:00pm (ET)
 - In-class presentations (**additional instructions to be provided**)

Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs & Policies

Oct 16

Class 6: Outcome/Impact evaluation: design, validity; randomized experiment

- Weiss Chapter 8 & 9
- Seron, C., Ryzin, G.V., Frankel, M., & Kovath, J. (2001). The impact of legal counsel on outcomes for poor tenants in New York City’s housing court: results of a randomized experiment. *Law & Society Review*, 35(2):419–434.
- Kim, J.S., Capotosto, L., Hartry, A. and Fitzgerald, R. (2011). Can a mixed-method literacy intervention improve the reading achievement of low-performing elementary school students in an after-school program? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(2):183–201.
 - Optional: Lewin, A. (2001). Changing work ethic and welfare dependence through welfare reform: the 100-hour waiver experiment for AFDC-U. *Evaluation Review*, 25(3):370–388.
- **Program memos returned**
- **Midterm questions posted online**

Oct 23

Class 7: Outcome/Impact evaluation: quasi-experimental designs

- Ballart, Xavier & Riba, Clara. (1995). Impact of legislation requiring moped and motorbike riders to wear helmets. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 18:311–320.
- Chemin, M. (2008). The benefits and costs of microfinance: evidence from Bangladesh, *Journal of Development Studies*, 44(4):463–484.
 - Optional: Elbel B, Kersh R, Brescoll BL, & Dixon LB. (2009). Calorie Labeling and Food Choices: A First Look at the Effects on Low-Income People in New York City. *Health Affairs*, 28(6): w1110–w1121.
 - Optional: Connelly BS, Sackett PR, & Waters SD. (2013). Balancing Treatment and Control Groups in Quasi-Experiments: An Introduction to Propensity Scoring. *Personnel Psychology*, 66(2):407–442.
 - Optional: Cumberland, P., Edwards, T., Hailu, G., Harding-Esch, E., Andreasen, A, Mabey, D. & Todd, J. (2008). The impact of community level treatment and preventative interventions on trachoma prevalence in rural Ethiopia. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 37:549–558.
- **Midterm answers due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 4:00pm (ET)**

Oct 30

Class 8: Formulating Research Questions and Measurement

- Weiss, Chapter 6
- Beebe, Timothy J., Harrison, Patricia A., Sharma, Anu, Hedger, Scott. (2001). The Community Readiness Survey: Development and Validation. *Evaluation Review*, 25(1):55-71.
- Boyd, D. and Marwick A. (2011). “Bullying as True Drama.” *NY Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/opinion/why-cyberbullying-rhetoric-misses-the-mark.html>
- Litwin, Mark S. (2003). How to assess and interpret survey psychometrics, 2nd edition, Chapters 2 and 3: 5-43.
 - Optional: Dufrene, Roxane L. (2000). An evaluation of a patient satisfaction survey: validity and reliability. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 23: 293-300.
 - Optional: Scherer M, Debra Furr-Holden C, & Voas RB. (2013) “Drug Use Disorder Questionnaire: Scale Development and Validation.” *Evaluation Review*, 37: 35-58.
- **Midterm exams returned and review**

- Nov 6** **Class 9: Facilitated Measurement Working Session**
- Group Working Session
- Nov 13** **Class 10: Full coverage and reflexive designs; Sampling**
- Weiss, review Chapter 8 pp. 191–199
 - Babbie, Earl (1992). Chapter 8: The logic of sampling. In *The Practice of Social Research*, 6th Edition.
 - Pettifor, A., Taylor, E., Nku, D., Duvall, S., Tabala, M., Mwandagalirwa, K., Meshnick, S., & Behets, F. (2009). Free distribution of insecticide treated bed nets to pregnant women in Kinshasa: an effective way to achieve 80% use by women and their newborns. *Tropical Medicine and International Health*, 14(1):20–28.
 - Gettleman G. (2015) “[Meant to Keep Malaria Out, Mosquito Nets are Used to Haul Fish In.](#)” NY Times, January 24, 2015. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/25/world/africa/mosquito-nets-for-malaria-spawn-new-epidemic-overfishing.html>
 - Optional: Gorman, D.M., Huber Jr, J.C., & Corozza, S.E. (2006). Evaluation of the Texas 0.08 BAC law. *Alcohol & Alcoholism*, 41(2): 193–199.
 - **Measurement memo due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 4:00pm (ET)**
- Nov 20** **Class 11: Qualitative Methods; Participatory Evaluation**
- Weiss, Chapter 11
 - Scott S, D’Silva J, Hernandez C, Villaluz NT, Martinez J, & Matter C. (2017). The Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy Initiative: Findings from a Collaborative, Participatory Evaluation. *Health Promotion Practice*, 18(4):545–553.
 - GreenMills LL, Davison KK, Gordon KE, Li K, & Jurkowski JM. (2013). Evaluation of a Childhood Obesity Awareness Campaign Targeting Head Start Families: Designed by Parents for Parents. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 24(2)(S):25–33.
 - Optional: Coupal, F.P. and Simoneau, M. (1998). A Case Study of Participatory Evaluation in Haiti. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 80: 69–79.
 - Optional: O’Sullivan, R.G. (2012). Collaborative Evaluation within a framework of stakeholder-oriented evaluation approaches. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 35(4):518–522.
- Nov 27** **Class 12: Evaluation and Research Ethics**
- Weiss, Chapter 14
 - Norris, Niles (2005). The politics of evaluation and the methodological imagination. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 26(4): 584–586.
 - Murphy K. (2017). [Some Social Scientists Are Tired of Asking for Permission.](#) The NY Times, May 22, 2017. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/22/science/social-science-research-institutional-review-boards-common-rule.html>
- Dec 4** **Class 13: Group Presentations & Feedback**
- **Group Presentations** (format and timing to be explained)
 - **OPTIONAL Evaluation review memo due by email at 4:00pm (ET)**

Dec 11

FINAL PAPERS DUE

- **NO CLASS MEETING**
- **Final Papers due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 5:00pm (ET)**

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with the professor.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.