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665 Broadway, Suite 805
phone: 212 998-5817
office hours: by appointment

Course Pre-requisites
Students must have completed (or waived) P11.1011 (Statistical Methods) and P11.1022 (Introduction to Public Policy). This course builds on these introductory courses and lays the foundation for P11.2875 (Estimating Impacts)

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.

Course Structure
The class includes lecture, 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:

An optional and recommended text is:


In addition to the required text, there are a number of other readings each week. Most of the articles are available through Bobst electronic journals. I am also making four copies of the packet available for self-copying. They can be picked up from my mailbox at Puck on the 3rd floor. Please return them promptly so your classmates can also photocopy them. I will also have one packet in my office available.

There is a sizable and growing body of literature, which deals with program evaluation and policy analysis. The journal *The American Journal of Evaluation* and *Evaluation Review* (previously *Evaluation Quarterly*) is an especially rich source on the subject, as is the *Evaluation Studies Review Annual* (Sage, more or less annually). *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, including *Evaluation and the Health Professions, Evaluation in Education,* and *Evaluation and Human Services.*

**Course requirements**

Class preparation and participation are important for this “tool based” course. Students need to read required text and articles in advance and be prepared to participate in class discussion. In addition to class participation, students will write three brief memos, take one in-class 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 posted.**

**Mid-Term Examination**

A take-home midterm will be due on 3/15. I will distribute the questions on Blackboard on Wednesday 3/9 at 10 am and it will be due at 8pm on 3/15. This is during spring break so you can return it to me by email. **LATE EXAMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

**Final Paper: Impact Evaluation Design**

Students will design a comprehensive evaluation plan for a program of their choice. The proposal will focus on outcome or impact evaluation but will include a brief section on process evaluation as well. Because most proposals are group efforts, students will partner with at least one person and no more than two for the final project. **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

**Writing Assignments – Preliminary Steps in Writing the Final Design Paper**

Short, thought pieces in which you are asked to apply the course readings to the development of your evaluation design paper. These assignments serve not only to encourage you to think about your final paper throughout the course, but to struggle with real-world applications of what you are learning in the readings and lectures. They are due in class. You are expected to get some things “wrong” in these exercises – that’s an important part of the learning process as these assignments often ask you to do something that you haven’t had sufficient time to fully understand or process. Don’t be concerned if the class lecture and discussion makes you realize that “missed the boat” in
your writing assignment. I will give constructive feedback on each assignment. These assignments are not graded but points will be deducted if they do not completely address the questions or are not turned in.

#1 Program selection/theory of change: Select a program and indicate the problem to be addressed by the program, the degree to which the need for the program has been established, the intended beneficiaries or targets of the program, the intended benefits, and most importantly the program theory underlying the program. Draw a logic model representing the program theory and/or describe/depict the causal model.

#2 Design Memo: Using your selected program, describe both an experimental and also a quasi-experimental research design that you think could be used to “evaluate” the impact of the program. Describe the goal of each evaluation and then discuss the merits of the design you’ve proposed for achieving that goal. Identify and describe three plausible threats to internal validity and then discuss the degree to which each design controls for or deals with each of these threats.

#3 Measurement Memo: For the program you’ve selected and the design you developed in assignment #2 (or if you’ve come up with an even better research design, use that design), describe the measures, data collection sources and strategies, and sampling procedures you would use to implement the evaluation

Group Feedback
You will be asked to provide feedback on the participation of your group members in the development, conceptualization, and writing of the proposal. Points will be deducted based on your group participation or failure to respond.

Student Feedback
Students are invaluable resources for each other and provide insights that go far beyond what this one professor can provide. In order to review what we’ve learned throughout the course, get a sense of the breadth of evaluation approaches and solutions, and get feedback from your like-minded colleagues, you will be required to present your evaluation proposal to a smaller group of students working on similar. Students proposing to evaluate programs in a particular sector or area will “workshop” their proposal within the group, get input or feedback on issues they are struggling with, and give input and feedback to others. This will occur during Week 12 of the course to give your group plenty of time to work recommendations into your final paper. Attendance is required.

Class Participation
Students are encouraged to actively engage with the course materials. To that end, every class will include opportunities for class discussion and students are strongly encouraged to ask questions and interrupt lectures whenever they need clarification.

OPTIONAL Evaluation Review (for extra credit)
It is important to become a good consumer of evaluations, if not a good evaluator oneself. Review one of three selected evaluation articles. In 2 - 3 pages, students will summarize the type of
evaluation described, its design and methods, and write a critique of the evaluation. **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

**Grading**

- Midterm Exam: 30
- Final Paper: 40
- Memos: 15
- Optional Paper: 10
- Group Feedback: 5
- Student Feedback: 5
- Class Participation: 5

**Course Schedule**

**Part I: Planning and Implementation**

**Week 1: Introduction to the course and the field of program evaluation; stakeholders.**
- Weiss Chapters 1 & 2

**Week 2: Pre-program evaluation activities: needs assessment**

**Week 3: Explicating and assessing program theory**
- Weiss Chapter 3

**Week 4: Formative evaluation, program monitoring, and implementation analysis**
Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs

Week 5: Outcome/Impact Evaluation: Design, Internal and External Validity
- Weiss Chapter 8
- Cook & Campbell Quasi-Experimentation “Internal Validity”

Week 6: Outcome/Impact evaluation: randomized experimental design
- Weiss Chapter 9

Week 7: Outcome/Impact evaluation: quasi-experimental designs with comparison groups
- RFL Chapter 9

Week 8: Spring Break

Week 9: Formulating Research Questions and Measurement
- Weiss, Chapter 6

Week 10: Sampling

Week 11: Guest Speaker

Week 12: Workshops

Week 13: Full coverage and reflexive designs/other designs
- Weiss, review Chapter 8 pp. 191-199, Chapter 10, pp. 235-244


**Week 14: No class**

**Week 15: Evaluations in the real world: context, politics, and ethics**

- Weiss, Chapter 14
- NYU Human Subjects Application: [http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/docs/application.doc](http://www.nyu.edu/ucaihs/docs/application.doc)
## Class Schedule and Assignment Due Dates

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>Needs Assessment</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Program Theory</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Internal and External Validity</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>Experimental Designs</td>
<td>Program Memo – 10/11</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>Quasi-Experimental Designs</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>Formative Evaluation</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>Spring Break – No Class</td>
<td>Midterm due</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3/22</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Design Memo</td>
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<td>Guest Speaker</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>Other Designs</td>
<td>Measurement memo</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>4/26</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>5/3</td>
<td>Context and Ethics</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>5/10</td>
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<td>Final Paper Due: 8pm</td>
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Additional Readings

Part I: Planning and Implementation

Week 1: Introduction to the course and the field of program evaluation; stakeholders.
  - RFL Chapters 1 & 2

Week 2: Pre-program evaluation activities: needs assessment
  - RFL Chapter 5

Week 3: Explicating and assessing program theory
  - RFL Chapter 5

Week 4: Formative evaluation, program monitoring, and implementation analysis
  - RFL Chapter 6

Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs

Week 6: Outcome/Impact evaluation: randomized experimental design
  - RFL Chapter 8

Week 7: Outcome/Impact evaluation: quasi-experimental designs with comparison groups

**Week 9: Formulating Research Questions and Measurement**

**Week 13: Full coverage and reflexive designs/other designs**
- RFL Chapter 10

**Week 15: Evaluations in the real world: context, politics, and ethics**
- RFL Chapter 12