

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:

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). 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

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

- May 27** **Class 1: Introduction to program evaluation; pre-program evaluation activities**
- Weiss Chapters 1 & 2
 - Witken, Belle Ruth (1994). Needs Assessment Since 1981: The state of the practice. *Evaluation Practice*, 15(1): 17–27.
 - 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.
 - *Optional*: Dietze, P.M., Rumbold, G.R., Cvetkovski, S., Hanlin, K.J., Laslett, A. and Jonas, H.A. (2000). Using population-based data on alcohol consumption and related harms to estimate the relative need for alcohol services in Victoria, Australia. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 23: 429–436.
- Jun 3** **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.
 - 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.
 - *Optional*: Unrau (2001). Using client interviews to illuminate outcomes in program logic models: a case example. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 24: 353–361.
 - *FINALIZE TEAMS*
- Jun 10** **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.
 - Heinz, Laura C. & Grant, Peter R. (2003). A process evaluation of a parenting group for parents with intellectual disabilities. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 26(3): 263–274.
 - *Optional*: Dewa, Horgan, Russell & Keates (2001). What? Another form? The process of measuring and comparing service utilization in a community mental health program model. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 24:239–247.
 - *Optional*: Katayoun Rabiei, K., Kelishadi, R., Sarrafzadegan, N., Ali Abedi, H., Alavi, M., Heidari, K., Bahonar, A., Boshtam, M., Zare, K. & Sadeghi, S. (2009). Process evaluation of a community-based program for prevention and control of non-communicable disease in a developing country: The Isfahan Healthy Heart Program, Iran. *BMC Public Health*, 9:57.
- Jun 17** **Class 4: Program Memo Presentations**
- *Program memo due by email to julia.kohn@nyu.edu at 5:00pm (ET)*

Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs

Jun 24 Class 5: 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**

Jul 1 Class 6: 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:* Wiener, R.L., Baron-Donovan, C., Gross, K., & Block-Lieb, S. (2005). Debtor education, financial literacy, and pending bankruptcy legislation. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 23: 347–366.
- *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 5:00pm (ET)**

Jul 8 Class 7: 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.
- **Midterm exams returned**

- Jul 15** **Class 8: Full coverage and reflexive designs; Sampling**
- Weiss, review Chapter 8 pp. 191–199
 - 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.
 - Babbie, Earl (1992). Chapter 8: The logic of sampling. In *The Practice of Social Research, 6th Edition*.
 - *Optional*: Bickman & Hamner (1998). An evaluation of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum. *Evaluation Review*, 22(4): 435–446.
 - *Optional*: Cook, Cynthia (2002). The effects of skilled health attendants on reducing maternal deaths in developing countries: testing the medical model. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 25:107–116.
 - *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 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
 - Norris, Niles (2005). The politics of evaluation and the methodological imagination. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 26(4): 584–586.
 - O’Sullivan, R.G. (2012). Collaborative Evaluation within a framework of stakeholder-oriented evaluation approaches. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 35(4): 518–522.
 - *Optional*: Knickman & Jellinek (1997). Four lessons from evaluating controversial programs. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 19(7): 607–614.
 - *Optional*: Coupal, F.P. and Simoneau, M. (1998). A Case Study of Participatory Evaluation in Haiti. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 80: 69–79.
- 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*: Shaw, I.F. (2003). Ethics in qualitative research and evaluation. *Journal of Social Work*, 3(1): 9–29.
 - *Optional*: Blustein, J. (2005). Toward a more public discussion of the ethics of federal social program evaluation. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 24(4): 824–852.
 - **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)**