



NYU

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

PADM-GP 2171 Section 2

Evaluating Programs and Policies, Fall 2021

Last updated 24 Oct 2021 - Always check course info on Brightspace for updates!

- Adjunct Assistant Professor Jodi F Paroff
- **Email:** Jodi.Paroff@nyu.edu
- **Virtual Office Hours:** Tuesdays 1:30-2:30pm EST, Thursdays 8:45-9:30pm EST or by appointment. It is helpful if you'd let me know you intend to drop-in to office hours. Project teams should request office hour consultations in advance. In-person meetings available immediately before class by request.
- **Weekly in-person course time:** Wed 6:45-8:25 pm EST. 45 West 4th St, Rm B06 Loc: Washington Square. Select class dates will be offered online via Zoom (please check Brightspace and enter class from the NYU Classes Zoom link).

Course Introduction

Welcome to Evaluating Programs and Policies. Program evaluation is a critical part of 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 discontinue. Evaluation can be an improvement and 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.

Course Prerequisites

You must have completed or waived P11.1011 (Statistical Methods). This course builds on this introductory course and lays a foundation for P11.2875 (Evaluation of Health & Social Programs).

Course Learning Objectives

Students taking this course can expect to:

1. become familiar with the concepts, methods and applications of evaluation results;
2. distinguish key stakeholders involved in evaluation planning and implementation;
3. understand how to translate program theory into logic model development and how to use it to guide evaluation, program management, grant proposals, and stakeholder communications;

4. apply an outcome mindset to your organization's programs, projects, and grants;
5. develop the ability to formulate clear, answerable evaluation questions;
6. develop the ability to identify, modify, or develop appropriate measures of outcomes that are valid, reliable, and feasible;
7. learn how to read evaluation research critically;
8. understand how to use evaluation results to improve program performance; and
9. be able to propose an appropriate evaluation plan to assess the implementation and effectiveness of a program.

Course Expectations

The class includes lectures, readings, and discussions. There is no specific policy focus, 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. You are encouraged to relate the material of the course to your specific policy interests by selecting from optional readings and choosing a final project in a policy area that interests you.

Readings

Required text: Peter Rossi, Mark Lipsey, and Gary Henry (2019). **Evaluation: A Systematic Approach**, 8e. Sage Publications. (abbreviated in syllabus as "RLH"). Older versions of Rossi will not be current or adequate for our class. If you need help locating an affordable copy of the text, please reach out to the Instructor.

In addition to the text, you are required read a few chapters from other textbooks, review slide decks outside of class, and review a number of journal articles for class discussion. All of the articles are available through NYU Bobst Library's resources. I will make many resources available on NYU Classes. The journal *Evaluation Review* is a rich source on the subject, as is the *Evaluation Studies Review Annual* (Sage, more or less annually). *Evaluation Practice*, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, and *New Directions for Program Evaluation* 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*.

Case Studies

We will often discuss a journal article together to illustrate an important class concept. These case studies are indicated by a "(CS)" on the reading list. Everyone is responsible for reading the case, and I will ask specific student volunteers to facilitate informal, short, small-group discussions of the study in breakout groups. Each student is required to volunteer to facilitate a breakout group at least once during the semester which counts toward your class participation grade. No advance written work is submitted. More details to follow.

Course Requirements

Class preparation and participation are important for this course. Read required text and articles **in advance** and be prepared to participate in class discussions. In addition to class participation, you will write 2 brief team memos, complete 2 individual essays, facilitate at least 1 small group discussion, present a team evaluation proposal for peer review, and submit an evaluation design proposal for your final team project.

I expect you to abide by NYU's honor code and uphold university standards for academic honesty in all of your work. See [NYU Academic Code \(https://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code\)](https://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code). Plagiarism is a matter of fact, not intent. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, failure to make appropriate citations constitutes plagiarism and will not be tolerated. Consult with me when you need guidance. I will use TurnItIn if I have concerns about improperly cited material.

Attendance

Your engagement, both in class and online, is an important element of this course. I expect you will join all live classes whenever possible, and I will be looking to you for meaningful online interactions in order to tailor the course to best meet your learning needs and make improvements to the course design overall. Online interactions include case study conversation contributions, your active preparation for whole-class engagement, and asynchronous VoiceThread contributions. I may digitally "read the room" by reviewing data on how students engage with different course materials and activities.

If you are unable to join class in-person, you will be missing important opportunities for application of class concepts and peer learning. You are responsible for missed information and meeting all assignment deadlines when you are absent. Regular participation in case study critiques and the team presentation session contributes to your class participation grade. When classes are offered online, you are expected to participate in each class with your Zoom audio and video on. Please review Wagner's [Zoom in the Classroom](#) series about classroom etiquette and participation. You may not share classroom recordings - recordings are kept within the NYU Classes site and are for students enrolled in this course only.

Team Work: Memos, Presentation, and Final Paper

(Descriptions here are *not* enough to complete assignments. Detailed instructions will follow.)

Program Statement Memo

Student teams submit a short (4-5 pp) description of a selected program, indicating the problem/need addressed by the intervention, the intended beneficiaries 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 evaluation proposal.

Evaluation Questions & Measurement Memo

Using the program model developed in the first memo, student teams specify the evaluation questions, operational definitions and specific measures they would use in an evaluation of the program. This memo is a second step towards writing the final evaluation proposal.

Team Presentations & Peer Review Feedback

Using the program model and evaluation questions and measures developed in earlier assignments, each team presents their evaluation design proposal (a brief draft of their final project) and receives peer critique with instructor's supervision. Presentations include program theory and descriptions and outcome measures from earlier assignments, as well as design rationale, and data collection strategies. Clarity, application of concepts discussed in class, and the rationale behind your evaluation design choices are emphasized. See me immediately if you have a conflict with the scheduled date for the team presentation & peer review.

Final Paper / Evaluation Proposal

The final paper builds on earlier assignments. Student teams will design a comprehensive evaluation proposal for their chosen program. The design proposal will focus on outcome or impact evaluation, with a strong emphasis on process evaluation and measurement strategies.

Individual Work

Essays/Homework: In lieu of a midterm, there are 2 individual homework essays. Each essay offers a scenario related to a different aspect of program evaluation. These 1000-word essays are completed independently, and are designed to assess whether you can apply the material from the course thus far to reach and support a position.

OPTIONAL Evaluation Review (4 pts extra credit): It is important to become a good consumer of evaluations. Review one of four provided evaluation articles. In 3 - 4 pages, summarize the type of evaluation described, its design and methods, and write a critique of the evaluation.

Course Grading and Due Dates- please see Brightspace

Course grades are based on your performance in completing the assignments listed below. In summary, here is how you will be assessed in this course:

- Written Assignments (Team & Individual): 80%
- Contribution to Class Environment & Learning (Team Presentation, and Synchronous and Online participation): 20%

Course Topics, Meetings, Readings, and Assignments

The class date represents the date we will *begin* a topic. Some topics continue into the following week. Here is an abbreviated list of topics with dates for your calendar this semester. Consult Brightspace for specific required and optional readings. Read **before** class.

I. Program Design, Planning, Monitoring & Implementation

Week 1, Sept 8: Course Overview, Evaluation Purpose, Engaging Stakeholders

Week 2, Thu Sept 16: (ONLINE via Zoom) Ethical Evaluation, Needs Assessment

Week 3, Sept 22: Mapping Program Theory (**ESSAY 1 DUE**)

Week 4, Sept 29: Process Evaluation, Program monitoring, Data Collection methods

II. Measuring Program Impact—Measurement

Week 5, Oct 6: Formulating Evaluation Questions (EQs) & Measurement (**PROGRAM MEMO DUE**)

Week 6, Oct 13: Measurement Reliability & Validity

Week 7, Oct 20: Validity & Survey Design

III. Measuring Program Impact – Design & Sampling

Week 8, Oct 27: Evaluation Design, Internal and External Validity (**ESSAY 2 DUE**)

Week 9, Nov 3: Randomized Experimental Designs

Week 10, Nov 10: Quasi-experimental Designs, Comparison Groups

Week 11, Nov 17: Sampling & Response Rates (**EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND MEASUREMENT MEMO DUE**)

Week 12, Nov 24: (ONLINE via Zoom) Strengthening Evaluation Designs (**TEAM POSTER ABSTRACT [UNGRADED] DUE**)

Week 13, Dec 1: Student Team Presentations– mandatory participation (**TEAM POSTER PRESENTATION, INDIVIDUAL PEER FEEDBACK DUE**)

Week 14, Dec 8: Strengthening Evaluation Designs, Ethical Evaluation (**OPTIONAL DELIVERABLE: EVALUATION REVIEW MEMO**)

No class, **Dec 15: Due: Final Team Evaluation Proposal, Team RatingS**

Miscellaneous

Teamwork

In the first few weeks of class you will be assigned to small project teams. Each team selects a program in a policy area of interest and this program will be the focus of your team's two written memos, presentation, and final paper. More details will be provided in class.

How to Approach Readings

Assigned readings should be accessible to any graduate student with some familiarity of basic statistics and general knowledge of social policy. Some readings use statistical techniques with which you may be unfamiliar and there is an optional reading listed with Week1 to help you brush up if you feel you need it. It's more important to be able to:

- identify the specific research or evaluation question that is being addressed,
- explain in simple terms the methods the author(s) are using to answer their evaluation question,
- describe what evidence the authors use (if any) to address their evaluation question, and
- discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the author's choices.

"Skim" means the reading selection provides a contrast to an earlier case study. Take 5 minutes to review the abstract, read the methods section, and read the conclusion.

Consider skimming the optional readings to compare the researcher's methods with the case discussed in class especially if the material is in your policy area.

Join me during online office hours (especially if you are falling behind!). Students with varied backgrounds take this class and I look forward to getting to know you, helping you through rough spots, and learning more about your career plans.

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 and how to abide by the academic code, check with the dedicated NYU Wagner librarian (<https://guides.nyu.edu/citations>), and consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [NYU 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 early in the semester for assistance.

COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund:

If you do not have the appropriate hardware technology nor financial resources to purchase the technology, consider applying for the NYU [Emergency Relief Grant](#).

Coronavirus Testing and Prevention:

<https://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/coronavirus-information/safety-and-health/coronavirus-testing.html>

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 deadlines to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.