



NYU

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

PADM-GP 2171

Evaluating Programs and Policies

Fall 2021

Instructor Information

- Carolyn Berry
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- Zoom Office Hours: by appointment

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Mondays 4:55-6:35pm
- Class Location:
- GCASL Room 379

Course Pre-requisites

All students must have completed (or waived) P11.1011 (Statistical Methods) or a similar course. This course builds on these introductory courses and lays the foundation for P11.2875 (Evaluation of Health and Social Programs).

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.

Course objectives include:

- 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 Title
#1	Program Memo Research Questions and Measurement Memo Exam Debates Optional Review Memo
#2	Program memo Exam
#3 & 4	Research Questions and Measurement Memo Final Paper
#5	Exam Debates Optional Review Memo
#6	Final Paper

Course Structure

The class includes asynchronous and in-person synchronous components. Asynchronous components include pre-recorded lectures, readings, and youtube videos. Our weekly in-person sessions will include additional lecture, opportunities for questions & answers, discussion of case studies presented in class, break-out groups to discuss case study readings and other examples, and debates towards the end of the semester. 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 program/policy interests.

Readings

Most of the required readings are articles in peer-reviewed journals that provide “real life” case studies of evaluations. There are also a few required chapters from textbooks. All of the required articles and chapters are available on BrightSpace (by topic). The optional Weiss textbook is also available on Brightspace. There is a complete bibliography in the Readings folder within Resources. For the interested student there is an additional list of *optional* readings, also located in the Readings folder.

There are two **optional** basic evaluation textbooks students may use to supplement lectures and required readings:

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

Peter Rossi, Howard Freeman, and Mark Lipsey (2004) Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, 7th ed. Sage Publications. (Abbreviated in syllabus as “RFL”)

Suggested chapters for each topic are noted on the syllabus.

Course requirements

Active participation is important for this “tool based” course. Students need to read required articles and chapters, view recorded lectures and videos, and be prepared to participate in class discussion. In addition to class participation, requirements include two brief memos, one take-home exam, participation in debates, and a final paper that is a proposal for an outcome evaluation. ***Note: the following descriptions are not enough to complete the assignments adequately. See Assignments section in Brightspace.***

Program Statement: October 4

Students will submit **via email** a short (1 - 2 pages) description of a selected program/policy, 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.

Examination: November 8

There will be a take-home essay style examination due November 8. Students are strongly encouraged to prepare for the exam with classmates. Students may submit the answers to the exam individually or in groups up to five.

RQs & Measurement Memo: November 22

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. This memo represents a critical step towards the final paper.

Debates: December 13

Debate participation ratings due December 17

Students will participate as part of a pro or con team in one debate during the last two synchronous sessions of the semester. Teammates will rate one another's participation as part of the debate grade. Additionally, when not directly participating in a debate, students will submit questions ahead of time to me about the case. Failure to submit participation ratings or questions will dock points from the debate participation grade.

OPTIONAL Evaluation Review (for extra credit): December 22

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. The review memo is an individual assignment.

Final Paper: Impact Evaluation Design: December 22

The final paper builds on earlier assignments. Students will design a comprehensive evaluation plan for their chosen programs. The proposal will focus on outcome/impact evaluation but will include a brief section on process evaluation as well. Students are **strongly encouraged** to work in groups of 2-5. Groups will submit a single final paper as well as a single program statement memo and measurement memo.

Relative Weight of Assignments

- Exam: 30%
- Two memos: 10%
- Final Paper: 30%
- Class Participation: 20%
- Debate participation: 10%

Course Schedule

The course is organized by topic. Under each topic there is a list of required readings, online resources, and optional textbook chapters, followed by the date of the corresponding in-person synchronous session and a brief description of what we will cover in that live session. The list of readings and resources clearly indicates which case studies will be discussed in the live sessions. Slide decks are available on NYU Classes for both recorded lectures (denoted as “video”) and synchronous sessions (denoted as “live”).

Part I: Evaluation Activities for Program Development, Planning and Implementation

Topic 1: Introduction to the course, the field of program evaluation, scientific method, stakeholders.

Readings & resources:

- *Optional*: Weiss Chapters 1 & 2
- Video lecture: *Topic 1 video. Introduction to program evaluation & the scientific method*
- Youtube video: *The scientific method* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMGRe824kak>
- Handout: Evaluation activities

September 13 Live Session: Course requirements & expectations; evaluation purposes and stakeholders

Topic 2: Types of Data and Needs Assessment

Readings & resources:

- Witken, B.R. (1994). Needs Assessment Since 1981: The state of the practice
- Altschuld, J.W. (2004). Emerging dimensions of needs assessment.
- Suiter, S.V. (2017). Community health needs assessment and action planning in seven Dominican bateyes. (CS) **We will discuss in 9/20 live session; see guide questions.**
- Lee, S.J., Hoffman, G., and Harris, D. (2016). Community-based participatory research (CBPR) needs assessment of parenting support programs for fathers. (CS)
- Video lecture: *Topic 2a video. Types of data*
- Handouts: qualitative vs quantitative data; needs assessment methods

September 20 Live Session: Needs assessment; breakout groups to discuss Suiter case study

Topic 3: Explicating and Assessing Program Theory

Readings & resources:

- *Optional*: Weiss Chapter 3
- Kaplan, S.A. and Garrett, K.E. (2005). The use of logic models by community-based initiatives (CS)

- Chen, W. & Lin (1997). Evaluating the process and outcome of a garbage reduction program in Taiwan (CS) **We will discuss in 9/27 live session; see guide questions.**
- Becker, K.L. (2017). Dance your heart out: a community's approach to addressing cardiovascular health by using a logic model.
- Video lecture: *Topic 3a video. Rationale for program theory*
- Handout: Logic model template

September 27 Live Session: Program theory explication & assessment; discuss BronxReach example as whole class; breakout groups to discuss Chen case study

Topic 4: Process Evaluation, Program Monitoring, and Implementation Analysis

Readings & resources:

- Mye, S.C. and Moracco, K.E. (2015). "Compassion, pleasantry, and hope": A process evaluation of a volunteer-based nonprofit. (CS) **We will discuss in 10/4 live session; see guide questions**
- DeCelles, J., Hershow, R.B., Kaufman, Z.A., Gannett, K.R., Kombandeya, T., Chaibva, C., Ross, D.A., and Harrison, A. (2016). Process evaluation of a sports-based voluntary medical male circumcision demand-creation intervention in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.
- Berry, C.A., Krutz, G.S., Langner, B., and Budetti, P. Jump-starting collaboration: the ABCD initiative and the provision of child development services through Medicaid and collaborators. *Public Administration Review*, 68(3):480 - 490. **Background for Prof Berry example in Topic 4a video and 10/4 live session.**
- Video lecture: *Topic 4a video. Purpose of process evaluation*

October 4 Live Session: Conducting process evaluation; hear about & discuss ABCD example as whole class; breakout groups to discuss Mye case study

- **Program memo due via email by Oct 4 by 4:55 pm**
- **Program memo returned via email Oct 11**

October 11 NO CLASS: FALL BREAK
(we will meet on Tuesday, Oct 12 legislative day)

Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs

Topic 5: Internal Validity

Readings & resources:

- *Optional:* Weiss Chapter 8
- Video lecture *Topic 5 video. Internal validity*
- Youtube video: *What is internal validity?*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxU59eGT5wl&t=1s>

October 12 Live Session (TUESDAY): Internal validity Q&A; slides for *Topic 5 live. Internal validity*; use Block Association example to identify threats to internal validity as whole class; introduction of use of comparison group to address threats to internal validity

Topic 6: Randomized Experimental Design

Readings & resources:

- *Optional:* Weiss Chapter 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. (CS) **We will discuss in 3/8 live session; see guide questions**
- Zinn, A. and Courtney, M. (2017). Helping foster youth find a job: a random-assignment evaluation of an employment assistance programme for emancipating youth. (case study for debate 5/3)
- Video lecture: *Topic 6a video. Levels of analysis*
- Video lecture: *Topic 6b video. Randomized experimental design*
- Video lecture: *Topic 6c video. Variations on classic RCT*
- Youtube video: *Why randomize?*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxqw2Pgm7s8&t=128s>

October 18 & 25 Live Sessions: RCT Q&A; slides for *Topic 6 live. Randomized control design*; discuss ITT/TOT supportive housing example; breakout groups to discuss Seron case study

- **Potential exam questions posted October 18**

Topic 7: Quasi-experimental Designs with Comparison Groups

Readings & resources:

- *Optional:* RFL Chapter 9 pp 265-286
- Bowen, D.J, Quintilian, L.M., Bhosrekar, S.G., Goodman, R. and Smith, E. (2018). Changing the housing environment to reduce obesity in public housing residents: a cluster randomized trial. (CS) **We will discuss in 11/8 live session; see guide questions**
- Nakamura, R., Suhrcke, M., Pechey, R., Morciano, M., Roland, M., and Marteau, T.M. (2014). Impact on alcohol purchasing of a ban on multi-buy promotions: a quasi-experimental evaluation comparing Scotland with England and Wales. (CS) (case study for debate 5/10)
- Cowen, J.M., Fleming, D.J., Witte, J.F., Wolf, P.J., and Kisida, B. (2013). School vouchers and student attainment: Evidence from a state-mandated study of Milwaukee's parental choice program. (case study for debate 5/10)
- Video lecture: *Topic 7 video. Quasi-experiment with comparison group*

November 1 Live Session: Quasi-experiment Q&A; slides for *Topic 7 live. Quasi-experiment with comparison group*; breakout groups to discuss Bowen case study; breakout groups to develop design options for ICM program

Topic 8: Formulating Research Questions

Readings & resources:

- Prior students RQs

November 8 Live Session: Formulating RQs Q&A; slides for *Topic 8 live. Formulating research questions*; examples from prior studies (case studies and in-class examples); examples from former students

- **Exam answers due via email November 8 by 4:55 pm**
- **Exams returned via email November 15**

Topic 9: Measuring Outcomes

Readings & resources

- Weiss, Chapter 6
- Litwin, M.S. (2003). How to Assess and Interpret Survey Psychometrics, Chapters 1- 3
- Berry, C.A., Shalowitz, M.U, Quinn, K.A., and Wolf, R. (2001) Validation of the Crisis in Family Systems-Revised, a Contemporary Measure of Life Stressors. **We will discuss in 11/15 live session; see guide questions**
- Kim, M.G. and Kim, J. (2010). Cross-validation of reliability, convergent and discriminant validity for the problematic online game use scale (CS)
- Video lecture: *Topic 9a video. What is measurement?*
- Video lecture: *Topic 9b video. Assessing measures - Reliability*
- Video lecture: *Topic 9c video. Assessing measures - Validity*
- Youtube video (refresher only): *Nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio data*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPHYXPBK_ks

November 15 Live Session: Measurement Q&A; slides for *Topic 9 live. Measurement examples*;

Topic 10: Strengthening Single Sample Designs

Readings & resources:

- Weiss, review Chapter 8 pp. 191-199
- RFL Chapter 9 pp. 289-295
- Wheeler-Martin, K., Sogholan, S., Prosser, J.M., Manini, A.F., Marker, E., Stajic, M., Prezant, D., Nelson, L.S., and Hoffman, R.S. (2015). Impact of mandatory carbon monoxide alarms: and investigation of the effects on detection and poisoning rates in New York City. **We will discuss in 11/29 live session; see guide questions**

- Rein, B.A., McNeil, D.W., Hayes, A.R., Hawkins, T.A., Ng, H.M. and Yura, C.A. (2018). Evaluation of an avatar-based training program to promote suicide prevention awareness in a college setting.
- Video lecture: *Topic 10 video. Strengthening single sample designs*
- Youtube video (optional): *Interrupted time series analysis*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGHrYwhOtO0>

November 22 Live Session: Single sample Q&A; slides for *Topic 10 live. Strengthening single sample design*; discuss home attendant study as a whole class; breakout groups to discuss Wheeler-Martin case study

- **RQs & Measurement memo due via email November 22 by 4:55 pm**
- **Measurement memo returned via email November 29**

Topic 11: External Validity and Sampling

Readings & resources

- Babbie, E. (2012). *The Practice of Social Research*, Chapter 7
- Video lecture: *Topic 11a. External validity*
- Video lecture: *Topic 11b. Sampling methods*
- Youtube video: *What is external validity?*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jX38E5mtNk>
- Youtube video: *Sampling: simple random, convenience, systematic, cluster, stratified*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=be9e-Q-jC-0>

November 29 Live Session

External validity & sampling Q&As; slides for *Topic 11 live. External validity & sampling*; discuss response rates; discuss sampling for STEM high school program in breakout groups and as a class

Topic 12: Ethical Considerations in Program Evaluation

- *Optional:* Weiss, Chapter 14; RFL Chapter 12
- American Evaluation Association Ethical Guiding Principles (2018 Update)

December 6 Live Session *Ethical considerations in program evaluation*

Topic 13 (OPTIONAL): Evaluation Synthesis

- Weiss Chapter 10, pp 235 – 244

- Webb, T.L., Joseph, J., Yardley, L., and Michie, S. (2010). Using the internet to promote health behavior change: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the impact of theoretical basis, use of behavior change techniques, and mode of delivery on efficacy. (CS)
- Video lecture: *Topic 13 video. Evaluation synthesis*
- Youtube video: *A three minute primer on meta-analysis*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i675gZNe3MY>
- No synchronous content for Topic 13

December 13 Live Session: DEBATES

- **Debate 1**
- Zinn, A. and Courtney, M. (2017). Helping foster youth find a job: a random-assignment evaluation of an employment assistance programme for emancipating youth.
- **Debate 2**
- Nakamura, R., Suhrcke, M., Pechey, R., Morciano, M., Roland, M., and Marteau, T.M. (2014). Impact on alcohol purchasing of a ban on multi-buy promotions: a quasi-experimental evaluation comparing Scotland with England and Wales
- **Debate 3**
- Cowen, J.M., Fleming, D.J., Witte, J.F., Wolf, P.J., and Kisida, B. (2013). School vouchers and student attainment: Evidence from a state-mandated study of Milwaukee's parental choice program

December 17: Debate team ratings due (midnight, via email)

December 22: OPTIONAL Evaluation review memo due (6:00 pm via email)

December 22: Final Paper Due (6:00 pm via email)

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 me.

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 the “Get Started” button. You can also call or email CSD (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.

NYU's Wellness Exchange

[NYU's Wellness Exchange](#) has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.