



NYU

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

PADM-GP 2171.002 Spring 2022

Evaluating Programs and Policies

Instructor: Adjunct Prof Jodi F Paroff,

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Virtual Office Hours: Mondays 12:30-1:30pm EST (Use Zoom Link <https://nyu.zoom.us/j/4301238665>), or Thursdays 8:45-9:30pm EST or by appointment. It is helpful, but not required, that you let me know you intend to drop-in to office hours. Every student should plan to attend office hours at least once during the semester. Project teams should write to request office hour consultations ahead of time.

Weekly In-person Course Time/Location: Tuesdays 4:55 pm-6:35 pm EST / 194 Mercer St, Room 306A Loc: Washington Square.

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")

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. There is a body of literature which 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* (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. 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 during class time, present your team evaluation proposal for peer review, and write-up the evaluation design proposal as 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) opens in new window (<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 attend classes in-person. 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. The class participation portion of your grade includes case study conversation contributions, your active preparation for whole-class engagement, *and* timely online VoiceThread contributions.

In the event that you need to be out of class, relevant materials will be found on NYU Brightspace. In-person classes will not be recorded. Please contact the instructor when you know you will be out of class. If you are unable to join our in-person class time, 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. You should make plans to attend virtual office hours to review class concepts. Students who come to office hours often do well in this class. Try it!

In the event that a class needs to be offered entirely online for a particular date, we will meet synchronously at the standard class time using Zoom, at <https://nyu.zoom.us/j/4301238665> opens in new window. If we meet virtually, you are expected to participate in each class with your audio and video on. Please review Wagner's [Zoom in the Classroom](#) opens in new window series about classroom etiquette, participation, and more. Please note: you may not share the Zoom classroom recordings. The recordings are kept within Brightspace and are for students enrolled in this course only. Additional instructions about particular details of class meetings or work will be emailed to you in the event of a shift to online instruction.

Team Work: Memos, Presentation, and Final Paper

(The descriptions here are not enough to complete assignments. Detailed instructions will follow.)

Program Statement Memo

Student teams submit a short (3 - 4 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 receive 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 groups 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 2 - 3 pages, summarize the type of evaluation described, its design and methods, and write a critique of the evaluation.

Course Grading and Due Dates

Course grades are based on your performance in completing the assignments listed below. Please see Brightspace for any updates. Points indicate relative importance.

Assignment	Points	Due Dates
Program Memo (team)	10 points	Feb 22
Two essays (individual)	15 points each	Feb 8, Mar 8
Evaluation Questions & Measurement Memo (team)	10 points	Apr 12
Team Proposal Presentations, peer feedback (individual)	10 points	Apr 26
Class participation, Weekly online VoiceThread contributions	10 points	
Optional evaluation review (individuals may submit)	(4) points	May 3
Final evaluation proposal and team ratings (team)	30 points	May 6

In summary, here is how you will be assessed in this course: Written Assignments (Team & Individual): 80%, Contribution to Class Environment & Learning (Team Presentation, In-person and Online participation): 20%

Course Topics, Meetings, Readings, and Assignments

The class date represents the date we *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, JAN 25: COURSE OVERVIEW, EVALUATION PURPOSE, ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

WEEK 2, FEB 1: ETHICAL EVALUATION, NEEDS ASSESSMENT

WEEK 3, FEB 8: MAPPING PROGRAM THEORY

DUE: ESSAY 1

WEEK 4, FEB 15: PROCESS EVALUATION, PROGRAM MONITORING, DATA COLLECTION METHODS

II. Measuring Program Impact—Measurement

WEEK 5, FEB 22: FORMULATING EVALUATION QUESTIONS (EQS) & MEASUREMENT

DUE: PROGRAM MEMO

WEEK 6, MAR 1: MEASUREMENT RELIABILITY & VALIDITY

WEEK 7, MAR 8: VALIDITY & SURVEY DESIGN

DUE: ESSAY 2

- *March 15: NO CLASS - NYU Spring Break*

III. Measuring Program Impact - Design & Sampling

WEEK 8, MAR 22: EVALUATION DESIGN, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY

WEEK 9, MAR 29: RANDOMIZED EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS

WEEK 10, APR 5: QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS, COMPARISON GROUPS

WEEK 11, APR 12: SAMPLING & RESPONSE RATES

DUE: EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND MEASUREMENT MEMO

WEEK 12, APR 19: STRENGTHENING EVALUATION DESIGNS

WEEK 13, APR 26: STUDENT TEAM PRESENTATIONS- MANDATORY PARTICIPATION

DUE: TEAM POSTER PRESENTATION, INDIVIDUAL PEER FEEDBACK

WEEK 14, MAY 3: STRENGTHENING EVALUATION DESIGNS, ETHICAL EVALUATION

OPTIONAL DELIVERABLE: EVALUATION REVIEW MEMO

NO CLASS, MAY 6:

DUE: FINAL TEAM EVALUATION PROPOSAL, TEAM RATINGS

Miscellaneous

Team Work

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. I recommend that you skim the optional readings to compare the researcher's methods with the case discussed in class, especially if the article is in your policy area.

Join me during online office hours to review or clarify concepts, to say hello, to help you through rough spots, or to talk 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 concerns and 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 librarian for NYU Wagner (<https://guides.nyu.edu/citations>) opens in new window, 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 mosecsd@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.

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.