



NYU

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

PADM-GP 4213

Policy Advocacy: Designing Rigorous and Useful Evaluations

Spring 2023

Instructor Information

- Instructor name: Chris Stalker
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- Office Address:
- Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Information

- March 23rd 2023 to May 4 2023
- Class Meeting Times: Thursdays 6:45PM - 8:25PM
- Class Location: Silver, Room 514 Loc: Washington Square

Course Prerequisites

- CORE-GP 1022 – required
- PADM-GP 2171, PADM-GP 2407 Advocacy Lab recommended
- Graduate students from other NYU schools should visit this site to request registration:

<http://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/academics/courses/non-wagnerstudents>

Course Description

This class explores the emerging and changing field of policy advocacy evaluation. As there is increasing focus on the structural drivers of poverty, inequality and human rights around the world, systemic interventions are seeking to shape policies, programs and social norms and achieve long-term transformational social and institutional change.

This class examines and reflects on both theory and practice of assessing efforts to influence policy change and implementation. It explores innovative approaches developed to provide rigor and actionable insights about what works, what doesn't and why, when organizations seek to promote change.

Students will gain practical skills for considering the purpose of advocacy evaluation. Identify the tools for commissioning and conducting policy advocacy evaluations, and their use in driving effectiveness in change strategies, advocacy and campaigning. This will be achieved through a mix of theory, reflection and hands-on practical exercises grounded in real life policy advocacy case-study examples.

Topics include: exploring trends in advocacy, social change processes and advocacy evaluation, matching evaluation design and methods to evaluation questions, contextual and organizational factors that affect evaluation use, and the use of evaluation findings to enhance learning and ensure accountability.

Students will gain theoretical grounding, familiarity with evaluation trends and debates, and the ability to situate policy advocacy evaluation within various evaluation approaches: qualitative, quantitative and mixed.

They will develop a working familiarity with critical reflections on 'how change happens', the approaches and tools and processes for commissioning an advocacy evaluation, the tools for designing and carrying out effective advocacy evaluations that will be rigorous, evidence-based, and useful.

Course and Learning Objectives. What Students Will Take Away

At the end of the Spring semester sessions, students will be able to:

1. Understand trends in advocacy and advocacy evaluation, the challenges and opportunities.
2. Think critically about how social change happens. How evaluations are situated within organizational settings and find approaches to increase the likelihood evaluations will be useful and actually used.
3. Assess the appropriateness evaluation design and methods in relation to evaluative research questions.
4. Develop a request for proposal or terms of reference for an evaluation that will ensure a high quality assessment that is used.
5. Design an evaluation plan for a policy advocacy campaign of their choosing.

Learning Assessment Table

Graded Assignment	Course Objective / Take Away Covered
Class Participation	#1 #2 #3 #4 #5
Assignment 1 – write a short memo on a policy advocacy campaign	#2 #3
Assignment 2 – write a terms of reference/request for proposal	#1 #3 #4
Assignment 3 – write an evaluation inception plan for the evaluation	#1 #4 #5

Level of Competency

[1] = Basic: Foundational understanding of knowledge/skill/competency [2] = Intermediate: Student demonstrates greater depth of understanding of this knowledge/skill/competency and can use this ability to analyze a problem [3] = Advanced: Student demonstrates expertise in this knowledge/skill/competency and can use this ability to evaluate, judge, and synthesize information

Required Reading

The required reading material is indicated below each session and is sequenced to align with the course content and help prepare students for the assignments. The specific sections to read of certain written material will be identified orally during class. All the reading list material will be posted in Brightspace usually as a hard copy or the relevant url link. Students should use the reading to inform their participation in class and informing and completing their three assignments.

When reading the material try to consider how it helps to contribute to highquality assignments and achieving the course objectives. For example, exploring the use of theories of change (how we think change happens) as a grounding for framing evaluative questions in the Terms of Reference/RFPs and Inception Plans (assignments 2 and 3).

During the course, continue to reflect on these illustrative questions:

- What are the key principles for effective, rigorous and used advocacy evaluations?
- What commonly shared understandings about evaluation can we challenge?
- How do we identify good evaluative questions that help inform judgements and assessments with integrity?
- Understanding that some reading is about *impact* evaluation, which is a specific kind of evaluation focused on assessing the effects of an effort, what are some useful transferable elements and insights for assessing policy advocacy efforts?

Other reading pieces introduce the context we will be focusing on, advocacy efforts to shape policy change processes. Keep in mind the following questions as you read:

- What is different about policy advocacy that sets it apart from evaluating other kinds of governmental or non-governmental development efforts?
- What kinds of effects might be relevant to pay attention to in order to know if a policy influencing effort is being effective?
- What are the potential but typical evaluative threads to follow that inform rigor in our thinking e.g. context, strategy, tactics, political, power shifts?
- How has the field developed in the last ten years? What has been developed and become more clear? Do you see a progression from the

earlier to the most recent pieces? What debates and tensions can you detect from the reading?

Overall, continue to seek to understand what is unique about policy advocacy evaluation and what is common with other forms of evaluation. The reading will also inform class discussion and discourse, what are the gaps, the challenges, the debates and possible future directions for the field of policy advocacy evaluation.

Note that the required reading list is well defined but more reading material may be added – with sufficient time given to read and absorb - as the course adapts to the particular needs of students and their areas of policy advocacy interest. These additions are likely to be case study examples of policy advocacy strategy and/or evaluations.

Assessment Assignments and Evaluation

There are three individual assignments for this course during the Spring semester.

- (1) Students will write an ***advocacy case study Framing Memo*** (2 page max') that describes an example of advocacy, a campaign, and/or social change process
- (2) Students will write a ***Terms of Reference or Request for Proposals*** (2 page max') for an evaluation of the advocacy case study, and
- (3) Students will write an ***Inception Plan or Report*** (3 page max') that details an evaluation design, methodologies, and overall approach to ensuring the evaluation is rigorous, evidence-based and useful.

Each assignment has limits of page numbers, all single spaced and 11pt font minimum. See the table above for which course learning objective is assessed in each assessment. More details for these three assignments are provided below.

Individual Assessment

Class Participation – 15%

A portion of your grade will be based on participation in classroom discussions, discourse and critical reflection. Class attendance and contributions to class discussion and group exercises are mandatory. Class participation will be assessed based on students' ability to engage with the materials covered and with fellow students' presentations with curiosity, critical thinking and contextual analysis.

Students are invited to consider questions like: what surprises you, what challenges your thinking, what enhances your analytical thinking, what do you find particularly useful, what do you struggle with and why? We will use both written and verbal forms of real-time classroom participation to encourage wide participation and engagement.

Assignment #1: Advocacy Case Study Framing Memo – 25%

Ahead of the third class you will identify a specific effort to influence a change in institutional, government, or private sector policy or program. The assignment is due 5pm Tuesday before the third class, Thursday April 6th.

This advocacy case example will form the basis for the other two assignments for this course. The case can be a current or past advocacy or campaign or social change strategy. It can be led by formal organizations, coalitions and networks, social movements or private citizens, can be in the US or anywhere else in the world, can focus on change in the public sector or private sector.

It could include efforts to shape the course of an important decision or the outcome of a deliberative process, or it could involve stopping a policy or program that is already underway. Some examples might be, state or federal climate policy, state or federal affordable housing policy, criminal justice reform efforts, immigration policy, women's right to choose, children's rights, budget allocations, infrastructure projects, private overseas investments, reducing land grabs by food and beverage companies, etc.

Prepare a two-page maximum (single space and 11pt) ***Advocacy Case Study Framing Memo*** that briefly describes the effort, covering the following questions:

- Description. What is the issue and why is it important? Who does it affect? What concerns are motivating change efforts? What stage is the change effort in? Just beginning? Or already underway for a number of years? Or an effort that has already concluded, and is now focused on monitoring of implementation?
- Change goal and objectives. What do/did the proponents seek to achieve through the desired change?
- Stakeholders. Who are/were the proponents? How are/were they organized? Who is/were the opposition? How are/were *they* organized?
- Power holders. Who has/had the power to make the change they seek/sought (who are the targets)? Who has/had the power to influence those people?
- Change Strategy. What strategy or pathways of change are/were the proponents pursuing to bring about the change they seek/sought?

You should draw on existing literature to develop the memo. These may include web sites, media coverage, government debates, policy papers, evaluations, academic studies, and other publicly available materials. Provide footnotes with citations to support the factual information that underpins your case.

Feedback on the Framing Memo will be provided within a week and before the fourth class. Students should use the feedback to inform Assignment #2 their Request for Proposals.

Assignment #2: Terms of Reference/Request for Proposal – 25%

You are the Advocacy Evaluation Commissioning Manager. Develop a maximum 2 page Request for Proposals (RFP) also called a Terms of Reference (ToR) for an evaluation of all or some aspect of your chosen policy advocacy effort. This assignment is due by 5pm Tuesday April 11, before the fourth class. Be sure to cover:

- The purpose and scope or boundaries of the evaluation
- The expectations and needs that you have from the evaluation
- The audience(s) for the evaluation. Who and how they will use the results, the findings and recommendations
- The key evaluation questions you want answered
- The general approach or methodology you anticipate the evaluators could take
- The evaluation process – anticipated steps of the process, including which stakeholders will be involved and what points • Timeframe and budget

Be clear who is commissioning the evaluation. Your ToR/RFP may focus on the beginning, middle or end of the effort, may be for an internal evaluator or external evaluator, and may have any purpose that you feel is relevant and useful. For example, you may want to learn from progress or non-progress, you may want to guide a significant decision between competing strategy options, you may need to report to donors, you may want to support the learning and adaptation of the influencing effort on an ongoing basis.

Feedback on the Advocacy Case Study Framing Memo will be provided within a week and before the fifth class. Students should then use the feedback to inform Assignment #3 their Inception Plan/Report

Assignment #3: Inception Plan/Report – 25%

You are the Advocacy Evaluator. Develop a maximum 3 page Inception Plan or Report for the evaluation as outlined in the ToR/RFP in Assignment #2. This assignment is due 5pm Tuesday April 25th before the sixth class and has a limit of 3 pages, single-space 11pt font including footnotes and annexes. Be sure to cover:

- A demonstrable understanding of the purpose and scope of the evaluation
- A demonstrable understanding of the needs and expectations
- The audience(s) for the evaluation and proposals for how they should use the evaluation
- The key evaluation questions, primary and secondary, and an indication of how it might adapt during the process.
- The methodology you propose to take and how it would be sequenced to ensure critical reflection and plausible assessments e.g. literature review, desk research, external and internal stakeholder interviews, focus groups, workshops and so on

- The evaluation plan: anticipated steps of the process, including which stakeholders will be involved and at which points and why
- The sequencing of consultation and communication for validation and concluding the evaluation • Timeframe and budget

Feedback and grades on the Inception Plan/Report will be provided by the end of the course.

Class Presentations – 10%

Students will make one brief (five minute maximum) presentation of one of their three assignment deliverables during this semester i.e class to be divided into three groups of presenters, one for each assignment. The presentations are fundamental to sparking discussion among course participants about social change and evaluation, different methodological options and design choices driven by the specific focus of each students’ chosen case.

Students will make clear, succinct presentations that lay out the content of one of their assignments, the thinking in the relationship between the three assignments, and also the reasoning behind the choices they made. Students may choose to use visual aids as they find useful, but the grade will focus on the clarity of ideas presented and the critical thinking and depth of analysis that went into developing the assignment.

All three student assignments are due by 5pm on the Tuesday before the class in which they will be discussed. They must be uploaded through NYU Classes in Brightspace. Each assignment and any specific format instructions will be in the Assignments section of the course page.

Late Submission Policy for Assignments

I accept late work (that is, having a time stamp later than the time and date on which assignments are due) after the due date only by prior arrangement. You must type and print out any grade appeals, attaching supplemental information as appropriate, and present them to the instructor in hardcopy. Extensions will be granted only in case of emergency, out of respect to those who abide by deadlines despite equally hectic schedules.

Overview of the Semester

Session	Date	Topic	Discourse and Assignment
Week 1	Mar 23	Introductions. Course outline. Situating policy advocacy evaluation. Trends in social change and advocacy and campaigning. Theories of Change.	Reflections on advocacy, campaign, social change to inform case study.

Week 2	Mar 30	Introduction to Policy Advocacy Evaluation, trends in the field and implications. Some initial frameworks.	Further reflections on advocacy, campaign, social change case study. Consider advocacy case study and its evaluation.
Week 3	Apr 6	Policy advocacy evaluation design & methods options and practice. The key principles of advocacy evaluation.	#1 advocacy case study framing memo due Tuesday April 4 before class 5-minute presentation of student advocacy case study memos
Week 4	Apr 13	Deep dive into policy advocacy evaluation methods, with case studies. Identifying pathways for assessing change.	#2 Students ToR/Request for Proposals due Tuesday April 11 before class. 5-minute presentations of student ToR/Request for Proposals
Week 5	Apr 20	Organizational Learning & The Politics of Evaluations. Contexts matter.	
Week 6	Apr 27	Advocacy evaluation design and planning. Student Presentations of Inception Report. Class Discussion	#3 Inception Reports due Tuesday April 25 before class. 5-minute presentation of student Inception Plan/Reports
Week 7	May 4	Course reflections and Recaps. Evaluating student-learning outcomes. Ends	Students identify and share their key learning outcomes and how they will consider their application.

Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points
A	4.0 points
A-	3.7 points
B+	3.3 points
B	3.0 points
B-	2.7 points
C+	2.3 points

C	2.0 points
C-	1.7 points
F	0.0 points

Student grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- (A) Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.
- (A-) Very good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.
- (B+) Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.
- (B) Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but shows some indication that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.
- (B-) Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in “good standing.”
- (C/-/+) Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.
- (F) Fail: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive.

DETAILED COURSE OVERVIEW

SESSION ONE: STUDENT INTRODUCTIONS. COURSE OUTLINE. POLICY ADVOCACY AND CHANGE THEORY.

Content:

- Course content, introductions and sharing expectations
- Providing a landscape view of how and why policy advocacy, strategies for social change, campaigning and advocacy.
- Introduce the context of and trends in policy advocacy; the focus of this course
- Situate where and how evaluation of policy advocacy fits into the wider field

Required Reading:

1. The How and Why of Advocacy. BOND Guidance Notes 2.1
2. PATHWAYS FOR CHANGE: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts. Sarah Stachowiak, ORS Impact. October 2013
3. Impact Evaluation: A Guide for Commissioning Managers. Prepared by Elliot Stern for the Big Lottery Fund, Bond, Comic Relief and the DFID, May 2015
4. The Elusive Craft of Evaluating Advocacy, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Steven Teles & Mark Schmitt. 2011

SESSION TWO: POLICY ADVOCACY EVALUATION- PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICE

Content:

- Key principles of the advocacy evaluation discipline. Different kinds and purposes of evaluations; exploring accountability and learning
- Understanding how policy advocacy evaluation is different
- Characteristics and cases of effective policy advocacy and the testing of research-based approaches to evaluation

Required Reading:

1. A Guide to MEASURING ADVOCACY AND POLICY. Prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation by Organizational Research Services
2. Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Influence and Advocacy. Working paper 395. ODI. Josephine Tsui, Simon Hearn, and John Young
3. Overview of Current Advocacy Evaluation Practice. Julia Coffman, Center for Evaluation Innovation. October 2009
4. Shiffman Framework: Political Priority for global health initiatives, Shiffman and Smith, The Lancet 2007
5. Tracking Progress in Advocacy: Why and How to Monitor and Evaluate Advocacy Projects and Programmes. O'Flynn, INTRAC. October 2009

**Assignment #1: Advocacy Case Study Framing Memo Due 5:00pm
Tues**

April 4

SESSION THREE: EVALUATION METHODS AND DESIGN CHOICES

Content:

- Understanding and analyzing frameworks for effective policy advocacy strategy and evaluation
- The key principles for policy advocacy evaluation
- Why and how to identify different options for evaluation

5-minute presentation by some students of Assignment #1: Advocacy Case Study Framing Memo. What it is, where it is, and what is it seeking to accomplish, and why it has been chosen.

Required Reading:

1. The Advocacy Strategy Framework: A tool for articulating an advocacy theory of change. Center for Evaluation Innovation. JULIA COFFMAN & TANYA BEER March 2015
2. The Value Iceberg: Weighing the benefits of advocacy and campaigning. Schlangen and Coe
3. Methodologies for Measuring Influence, Josephine Tsui and Brian Lucas 2013

SESSION FOUR: DEEP DIVE INTO IMPORTANT METHODS AND EVALUATION UTILIZATION

Content:

- Building on the principles of advocacy evaluation and identifying pathways for assessing change
- The importance of utilization of evaluations. How will it be used, for what purpose.
- Linking evaluation purpose, utilization and strategic learning

Assignment #2: Request for Proposal Due Tue April 11, 5:00 pm.

Five-minute class presentation by some students of Request for Proposal. Brief summary of assignment: Purpose, Scope, Methodology and so on. What it is, what steps are involved.

Required Reading:

1. Utilization-Focused Evaluation. Michael Q. Patton. 2008
2. Eyes Wide Open: Learning as Strategy Under Conditions of Complexity and Uncertainty. Patricia Patrizi, Elizabeth Heid Thompson, Julia Coffman, and Tanya Beer
3. No Royal Road: Finding and Following the Natural Pathways in Advocacy Evaluation Schlangen and Coe. 2019
4. American Evaluation Association two-part blog June 2017: <https://aea365.org/blog/policy-advocacy-evaluation-in-turbulent-disrupted-times-or-the-loneliness-of-the-embedded-advocacy-evaluator-part-i-by-chris-stalker/> and 4(i)

<https://aea365.org/blog/policy-advocacy-evaluation-in-turbulent-disruptedtimes-or-the-loneliness-of-the-embedded-advocacy-evaluator-part-ii-by-chris-stalker/>

SESSION FIVE: ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND THE POLITICS OF ADVOCACY EVALUATIONS. CONTEXTS MATTER.

Content and Discussion Questions:

- Reflecting on basic principles of advocacy. The significance of contexts!
- Case study of support to advocacy networks. Exploring different stakeholder roles and competing interests. Exploring different roles evaluators often play
- How might you design your evaluation in a way that maximizes use by the relevant stakeholders? When could you include intentional steps to engage stakeholders, and what ways might you engage them?
- What challenges are there to making evaluations a useful input to strategic decisions, and what are some ways to address them?

Required Reading:

1. Advocacy and Campaigning: How To Guide, Ian Chandler, BOND July 2010
2. The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities, California Endowment 2005
3. HIV-related advocacy evaluation training for civil society organisations. ICASO. 2010
4. Action for Global Health Advocacy Network M & E handout. Stalker 2012

SESSION SIX: EVALUATION DESIGN & PLANNING WITH CASE STUDIES

Content:

- Ensuring rigor by linking the cycle of policy advocacy theory to practice, and practice to theory
- Using advocacy evaluation findings and recommendations in contested contexts
- Case studies of evaluation, purpose, scope, methods

Assignment #3: Inception Report Due Tues, April 25 5:00 pm.

5-minute in-class presentation of the Inception Report by some students.

The remaining students who have not yet presented, have an opportunity to present their Inception Plan and give and receive feedback from their peers.

Required Reading:

1. Pathfinder: A Practical Guide To Advocacy Evaluation. Innovation Network
2. USE OF IMPACT EVALUATION RESULTS, David Bonbright, Keystone 2014
3. EVALUATION REPORT. Women's Empowerment. NâNg Quyèn, CARE Vietnam

4. Free, Prior And Informed Consent (FPIC) Program Evaluation, Oxfam Australia 2014
5. Habitat for Humanity Cost of Home Campaign Evaluation Report, Stalker and Hilt, June 2022

SESSION SEVEN: COURSE REVIEW, REFLECTION AND RECAP. EVALUATING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES.

Content:

- Policy Advocacy evaluation course review, student reflection, identified learning and key takeaways for future application
- Policy Advocacy evaluation within different NGOs
- Recap: History and evolution of Advocacy. Capacity Building of Advocacy.

Required Reading:

1. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING IN NGO ADVOCACY. Comparative Policy Advocacy MEL Review. Coe & Majot 2013
2. INFLUENCING TO TACKLE POVERTY AND INJUSTICE Ruth Mayne, Chris Stalker, Andrew Wells-Dang and Rodrigo Barahona. 2019
3. Capacity Building for Advocacy. Stalker & Sandberg, INTRAC 2011

Brightspace

All announcements, resources, and assignments will be delivered through the Brightspace site. I may modify some content, required reading, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term, but with significant advance notice provided as soon as possible through the course website.

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 Student Accessibility

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.