



**NYU**

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

**PADM-GP 2171**

## **Evaluating Programs and Policies Summer 2023**

### **Instructor Information**

- Tomas Soto, Ph.D., MPH
- Email: tomas.soto@nyu.edu
- Zoom Office Hours: by appointment.

### **Course Information**

- Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays 4:55-6:35pm (est.) + 3 additional Wednesdays (4:55-6:35pm)
- Class Location: Online only (synchronous)
- Note: This course is online with **three additional Wednesday sessions on June 7<sup>th</sup>, July 5<sup>th</sup> (in place of Tuesday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, and August 2<sup>nd</sup>**. This is a synchronous course that requires live attendance and participation.

### **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 and privately 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<br>Research Questions and Measurement Memo<br>Exam<br>Debates<br>Optional Review Memo |
| #2                                | Program memo Exam  |
| #3 & 4                            | Research Questions and Measurement Memo<br>Final Paper   |
| #5                                | Exam<br>Debates<br>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 online sessions will include additional lectures, opportunities for questions & answers, discussion of case studies, 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 week and 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Memo 1: June 13<sup>th</sup>**

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.

### **Take-home Examination due: June 27<sup>th</sup>**

There will be a take-home essay style examination due April 3 via email. Students are strongly encouraged to prepare for the exam with classmates. Students may submit the answers to the exam individually or in groups of up to four.

## **RQs & Measurement Memo 2: July 18<sup>th</sup>**

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: Tuesday, August 1<sup>st</sup>**

### **Debate Participation Ratings due: August 4<sup>th</sup>**

Students will participate as part of a pro or con team in one debate during the next-to-last in-person session of the semester. Teammates will rate one another's participation as part of the debate grade. Additionally, students will submit questions ahead of time to me about the other two cases (i.e., the two debates where they are NOT on a debate team). Failure to submit participation ratings or questions will dock points from the debate participation grade.

## **Final Paper: Impact Evaluation Design: Tuesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>**

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 **required** to work in groups of 2-5, unless I have authorized a solo paper. Groups will submit a single final paper as well as a single program statement memo and measurement memo.

## **OPTIONAL Evaluation Review (for extra credit): Tuesday August 8<sup>th</sup>**

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.

## **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 areas. 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 online synchronous sessions (denoted as “live”).

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

**Week 1: May 23 Online Session:** Course requirements & expectations; slides for *Topic 1: Evaluation purposes and stakeholders*

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

- Video lecture: *Topic 1 video. Introduction to program evaluation & the scientific method*

Readings & resources:

- *Optional:* Weiss Chapters 1 & 2
- YouTube video: *The scientific method* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMGRe824kak>
- Handout: Evaluation activities

**Week 2: May 30 Online Session:** slides for *Topic 2: Needs assessment*; breakout groups to discuss Nadeem, et al case study & finalize teams

#### Topic 2: Types of Data and Needs Assessment

- Video lecture: *Topic 2a video. Types of data*

Readings & resources:

- Witken, B.R. (1994). Needs Assessment Since 1981: The state of the practice.
- Altschuld, J.W. (2004). Emerging dimensions of needs assessment.
- Nadeem E, Shernoff ES, Coccaro C, Stokes-Tyler D. Supporting teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A community-partnered rapid needs assessment ***We will discuss in 5/30 live session; see guide questions.***
- Suiter, S.V. (2017). Community health needs assessment and action planning in seven Dominican bateyes.
- Handouts: qualitative vs quantitative data; needs assessment methods



**Week 3 (Tuesday & Wednesday sessions): Tuesday, June 6 Online Session 1:** slides for *Topic 3 Explicating program theory and logic model development*; discuss evaluation examples as whole class; breakout groups to discuss Chen case study

### **Topic 3: Explicating and Assessing Program Theory**

- Video lecture: *Topic 3a video. Rationale for 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
- Chen, W. & Lin (1997). Evaluating the process and outcome of a garbage reduction program in Taiwan ***We will discuss in 6/6 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.
- Handout: Logic model template

**Wednesday, June 7 Online Session 2:** slides for *Topic 4: Conducting process evaluation*; hear about & discuss HIP study example (McNall study) as whole class; breakout groups to discuss Mye case study; & review assignment 1

- Program Statement memo due via email by 6/13 by 4:30 pm***
- Program memo returned via email by 6/20***

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

- Video lecture: *Topic 4a video. Purpose of process evaluation*

Readings & resources:

- Mye, S.C. and Moracco, K.E. (2015). "Compassion, pleasantry, and hope": A process evaluation of a volunteer-based nonprofit. ***We will discuss in 6/7 online session; see guide questions***
- Whiting-Collins L, Tawk M, Karp C, Robinson WC, Metzler J. Fostering Protective Assets Among Syrian Refugee Girls Who Experience Child Marriage: Findings from a Formative Program Evaluation
- McNall, M., Welch, V., Ruh, K. Mildner, C. and Soto, T. (2004). The Use of rapid-feedback evaluation methods to improve retention rates of an HIV healthcare intervention. *Evaluation and Public Planning* 24:287 - 294. ***Background for Prof Soto example in Topic 4a video and 6/7 online session.***

## Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs

**Week 4: June 13 Online Session:** slides for *Topic 5: 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 5: Internal Validity

- Video lecture *Topic 5 video. Internal validity*
- Youtube video: *What is internal validity?* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxU59eGT5wI&t=1s>

Readings & resources:

- Optional:* Weiss Chapter 8

**Week 5: June 20 Online sessions:** slides for *Topic 6 live. Randomized experimental design*; discuss ITT/TOT supportive housing example; breakout groups to discuss Seron case study; breakout groups to discuss vaccine hesitancy program.

- Potential exam questions posted June 20th***

### Topic 6: Randomized Experimental Design

- Video lecture: *Topic 6a video. Levels of analysis* (watch before 6/20 class)
- Video lecture: *Topic 6b video. Variations on classic RCT* (watch before 6/20 class)
- YouTube video: *Why randomize?* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxqw2Pgm7s8&t=128s>

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. ***We will discuss in 6/20 live session; see guide questions***
- Modestino, A. S., & Paulsen, R. J. (2019). Reducing inequality summer by summer: Lessons from an evaluation of the Boston Summer Youth Employment Program. (*case study for debates*)



**Week 6: June 27 Online Session:** slides for *Topic 7 live. Quasi-experiment with comparison group*; breakout groups to discuss Bowen case study; breakout groups to check in on final paper (if time allows)

- ☐ **Midterm questions due by email by 6/27 by 4:30 pm Est**

### **Topic 7: Quasi-experimental Designs with Comparison Groups**

- ☐ *No asynchronous videos*

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. **We will discuss in 6/27 live session; see guide questions**
- ☐ Robinson M, Mackay D, Giles L, Lewsey J, Richardson E, Beeston C. (2021) Evaluating the impact of minimum unit pricing (MUP) on off-trade alcohol sales in Scotland: an interrupted time-series study. *(case study for debates)*
- ☐ 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 debates)*

**Week 7: Wednesday July 5<sup>th</sup> Online session in place of Tuesday, July 4<sup>th</sup>:** slides for *Topic 8 live. Formulating research questions*; examples from prior studies (case studies and in-class examples); breakout groups to formulate RQs for prior class examples; breakout groups to discuss RQs from former students.

### **Topic 8: Formulating Research Questions**

Readings & resources:

- ☐ none
- ☐ **Midterm Exams returned via email by July 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Week 8: July 11<sup>th</sup> Online Session:** slides for *Topic 9 live. Measurement reliability & validity*; breakout groups/class discussion of former students' measures

### Topic 9: Measuring Outcomes

- Video lecture: *Topic 9a video. What is measurement?*
- Youtube video (refresher only): *Nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio data*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPHYPXBK\\_ks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPHYPXBK_ks)

#### Readings & resources

- *Optional:* 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 7/11 online 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

**Week 9: July 18<sup>th</sup> Online Session:** slides for *Topic 10 live. Strengthening SS designs examples*; discuss home attendant study as a whole class; breakout groups to discuss Wheeler-Martin case study.

- **RQs & Measurement memo due via email July 18 by 4:30 pm**
- **RQs & Measurement memo returned via email by July 25**

### Topic 10: Strengthening Single Sample Designs

- Video lecture: *Topic 10 video. Strengthening single sample designs*
- Youtube video (optional): *Interrupted time series analysis*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGHrYwhOtO0>

#### Readings & resources:

- *Optional:* 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 live session; see guide questions**
- Bilal Iqbal Avan, Della Berhanu, Yirgalem Mekonnen, Emma Beaumont, Keith Tomlin, Elizabeth Allen, Joanna Schellenberg. (2021) Embedding Community-Based Newborn Care in the Ethiopian health system: lessons from a 4-year programme evaluation

**Week 10: July 25 Online Session:** slides for *Topic 11 live. Sampling methods*; discuss response rates; discuss sampling for STEM high school program in breakout groups and as a class

### **Topic 11: External Validity and Sampling**

- Video lecture: *Topic 11a. External validity*
- 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>

Readings & resources

- Babbie, E. (2012). *The Practice of Social Research*, Chapter 7

### **Week 11: (Tuesday and Wednesday Sessions):**

#### **Tuesday, August 1<sup>st</sup> Online Session: DEBATES**

**Note: The number of debates and review articles for debate will be determined based on final class size**

- Debate 1**
  - Modestino, A. S., & Paulsen, R. J. (2019). Reducing inequality summer by summer: Lessons from an evaluation of the Boston Summer Youth Employment Program.
- Debate 2**
  - Robinson M, Mackay D, Giles L, Lewsey J, Richardson E, Beeston C. (2021) Evaluating the impact of minimum unit pricing (MUP) on off-trade alcohol sales in Scotland: an interrupted time-series study.
- 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

**Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> Online Session:** slides for *Topic 13 Internal Evaluation in Organizational settings*

## **Topic 12: Ethical Considerations in Program Evaluation**

- Video lecture: Topic 12 video: Ethical considerations in program evaluation

### Readings & resources

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

## **Topic 13: Internal Evaluation in Organizational Settings**

### Readings & resources

- Volkov, V. (2011) Beyond being an evaluator: The multiplicity of the internal evaluation. In B.B. B.B. Volkov & M.E. Baron (eds.). Internal evaluation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 132, 25-42.

**August 4<sup>th</sup>: Debate team ratings due (midnight, via email)**

**Week 12: August 8<sup>th</sup>: NO Class Session**

**August 8<sup>th</sup> OPTIONAL Evaluation review memo due (midnight, via email)**

**August 8<sup>th</sup>: Final Paper Due (midnight, 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](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodation 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.