



**NYU**

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

# **PADM–GP 2171**

## **Evaluating Programs and Policies**

### **Fall 2023**

#### **Instructor Information**

- Dr. Anne Marie Brady
  - Email: [amb228@nyu.edu](mailto:amb228@nyu.edu)
  - Office hours: by appointment
- Class Meeting Time: Wednesday 6:45 pm – 8:25 pm
- Class Location: GCASL Room 375

#### **Course Prerequisites**

Students must have completed (or waived) CORE-GP 1011 (Statistical Methods) and CORE-GP 1022 (Introduction to Public Policy), as this course builds on these introductory courses.

#### **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. Students will become familiar with the concepts, methods, and applications of evaluation research; learn how to read evaluation research critically; understand how to use evaluation results to anticipate or improve program performance; and be able to propose an appropriate evaluation plan to assess the implementation and effectiveness of a program.

#### **Course Learning Objectives**

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 Measurement memo Midterm exam Optional review memo
#2	Program memo Logic model in-class presentation Midterm exam
#3	Measurement memo Final paper
#4	Measurement memo Final paper
#5	Midterm exam Optional review memo
#6	Final paper

## Course Structure

The class includes lecture, readings, and discussion. 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 policy interests.

## Required Readings

The required textbook for this course is:

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

In addition to the required text, you will have additional readings, which are mostly articles (case studies). Most of the articles are available through Bobst electronic journals, and ones that aren't will be posted in Brightspace. There are also additional optional readings, all of which can be downloaded.

There is a sizable body of literature that deals with program evaluation and policy analysis. The journal "Evaluation Review" (previously "Evaluation Quarterly") is an especially rich source on the subject, as is the "Evaluation Studies Review Annual" (Sage, more or less annually). "Evaluation Practice," "Evaluation and Program Planning," "New Directions for Program Evaluation," and "Journal of Policy Analysis and Management" 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."

## Course Requirements

Class preparation and participation are important for this course. Students need to read required text and articles in advance and be prepared to participate in class discussion. In addition to class participation, students will write two brief memos, complete one take-home midterm exam, and write a final evaluation design paper. **Note: The following descriptions are not enough to complete the assignments adequately. More detailed instructions for each assignment are posted in Brightspace.**

### Program Statement Memo – October 4

Students will submit a short description of a selected program, 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.

### Midterm Examination – November 1

There will be a take-home essay style examination

### Measurement Memo – November 15

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.

### Final Paper: Outcome Evaluation Design – December 13

The final paper builds on earlier assignments. Students will design a comprehensive evaluation plan for their chosen programs. The proposal will focus on outcome or impact evaluation but will include a brief section on process evaluation as well. Students will work in groups.

### Relative Weight of Assignments

- Midterm Exam: 40%
- Two Memos: 10%
- Final Paper: 40%
- Class Participation: 10%

## Final Grades

- A: 94.5+
- A-: 88.5 - 94.4
- B+: 85.5 - 88.4
- B: 82.5 - 85.4
- B-: 78.5 - 82.4
- C+: 76.5 - 78.4
- C: 73.5 - 76.4
- C-: 68.5 - 73.4

## Course Schedule

### Part I: Planning and Implementation

#### Class 1: September 6

##### Topics:

- Introduction to the course and the field of program evaluation
- Purposes and stakeholders

##### Readings:

- Weiss Chapters 1 & 2

#### Class 2: September 13

##### Topics:

- Pre-program evaluation activities: needs assessment

##### Readings:

- Witkin BR. (1994) "Needs Assessment Since 1981: The state of the practice." *Evaluation Practice*, 15(1): 17-27.
- [Lascher, S. et al \(2013\)](#) Government Public Housing Health Needs Assessment.
- Hutchinson, K. (2019). [Evaluation Failures. Chap 15. Isaac Castillo opens in new window](#)'s "Are you my amigo or my chero?" p. 99-103.
- Collier AF, Munger M, & Moua YK. (2012) "Hmong mental health needs assessment: a community-based partnership in a small mid-western community." *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(1-2): 73-86.

### **Class 3: September 20**

#### Topics:

- Explicating and assessing program theory

#### Readings:

- Weiss Chapter 3
- Chen HT, Wang JCS, & Lin LH. (1997) "Evaluating the process and outcome of a garbage reduction program in Taiwan." *Evaluation Review*, 21(1): 27-42.
- Becker KL. (2017) "Dance your heart out: a community's approach to addressing cardiovascular health by using a logic model." *Family and Community Health*, 40(3): 212-220.
- Brown, M. (2020). Unpacking the Theory of Change (ToC). *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

### **Class 4: September 27**

#### Topics:

- Process evaluation and implementation analysis

#### Readings:

- Robbins LB, Ling J, Kilicarslan Toruner E, Bourne KA, & Pfeiffer KA. (2016) "Examining Reach, Dose, and Fidelity of the 'Girls on the Move' After-School Physical Activity Club: A Process Evaluation." *BMC Public Health*, 16: 671.
- Mye SC & Moracco KE. (2015) "'Compassion, pleasantry, and hope': a process evaluation of a volunteer-based nonprofit." *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 50: 18-25.
- Taniguchi, T. et al (2020). Process Evaluation Tool Development and Fidelity of Healthy Retail Interventions in American Indian Tribally Owned Convenience Stores: the THRIVE Study. *Current Developments in Nutrition*. Volume 4.

### **Class 5: October 4**

#### Topic:

- Program Memo Presentations

#### Deliverable Due:

- Program memo due (send electronically)

## Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs

### **Class 6: October 11**

Program memo returned.

Topics:

- Outcome/Impact evaluation: design, internal and external validity.

Readings:

- Weiss Chapter 8
- Grace, AM, et al. (2014) Educating health care professionals on human trafficking. *Pediatric emergency care*, 30(12), 856–861.
- Editorial. (2008). The Importance of External Validity. *American Journal of Public Health*. January (98). No.1. pp. 9-10.

## **Class 7: October 18**

Topics:

- Outcome/Impact evaluation: randomized experimental design

Readings:

- Weiss Chapter 9
- Seron C, Ryzin GV, 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.” *Law & Society Review*, 35(2): 419-434.
- Kim JS, Capotosto L, Hartry A, and Fitzgerald R. (2011) “Can a mixed-method literacy intervention improve the reading achievement of low-performing elementary school students in an after-school program?” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(2): 183-201.
- Zinn A & Courney M. (2017). “Helping foster youth find a job: a random-assignment evaluation of an employment assistance programme for emancipating youth.” *Child and Family Social Work*, 22(1): 155-164.

## **Class 8: October 25**

Topics:

- Outcome/Impact evaluation: quasi-experimental designs

Readings:

- Moore, K. (2008). *Quasi-Experimental Designs*. Child Trends.
- Nakamura, R. et al (2014). Impact on alcohol purchasing of a ban on multi-buy promotions.
- Ballart X & Riba C. (1995) “Impact of legislation requiring moped and motorbike riders to wear helmets.” *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 18: 311-320.
- Chemin M. (2008) “The benefits and costs of microfinance: evidence from Bangladesh.” *Journal of Development Studies*, 44(4): 463-484.

## **Class 9: November 1**

### Topics:

- Formulating Research Questions and Measurement

### Readings:

- Weiss, Chapter 6
- Engle & Schutt (2014). Conceptualization & Measurement
- Litwin MS. (2003) How to assess and interpret survey psychometrics, 2nd edition, Chapters 2 and 3: 5-43.
- Scherer M, Debra Furr-Holden C, & Voas RB. (2013) "Drug Use Disorder Questionnaire: Scale Development and Validation." Evaluation Review, 37: 35-58.
- Dufrene RL. (2000) "An evaluation of a patient satisfaction survey: validity and reliability." Evaluation and Program Planning, 23: 293-300.

### Deliverable Due:

- Midterm answers due (send electronically).

## **Class 10: November 8**

### Topics:

- Full coverage and reflexive designs
- Sampling

### Readings:

- Weiss, review Chapter 8 pp. 191-199
- Karlan, D. and J Appel (2016) Chapter 5: Low Participation Rates in Failing in the Field: What we can learn when field research goes wrong. Princeton University Press. pp. 62-69
- Patton, MQ. (1990). "Purposeful Sampling" in Qualitative evaluation and research methods, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. pp. 169-186
- Babbie ER. (2013) Chapter 7: The logic of sampling. In The Practice of Social Research, 13th Edition.

Midterm exam returned.

## **Class 11: November 15**

### Topics:

- Evaluation and Research Ethics

#### Readings:

- Weiss, Chapter 14
- Feeney, L. Kopper, S. and A. Sautmann (2020). "Ethical conduct of randomized evaluations". J-PAL North America Evaluation
- Gugerty, MK and Karlan D. (2018). Ten Reasons Not to Measure Impact—and What to Do Instead. Stanford Social Innovation Review.
- Epley, N., & Tannenbaum, D. (2017). Treating ethics as a design problem. Behavioral Science & Policy, 3(2), 73–84.

#### Deliverable Due:

- Measurement memo due (send electronically)

### **November 22 No Class Thanksgiving**

Measurement memo returned

### **Class 12: November 29**

#### Topics:

- Qualitative Methods; Participatory Evaluation

#### Readings:

- Weiss, Chapter 11
- Scott S, D'Silva J, Hernandez C, Villaluz NT, Martinez J, & Matter C. (2017) "The Tribal Tobacco Education and Policy Initiative: Findings from a Collaborative, Participatory Evaluation." Health Promotion Practice, 18(4): 545-553.
- GreenMills LL, Davison KK, Gordon KE, Li K, & Jurkowski JM. (2013) "Evaluation of a Childhood Obesity Awareness Campaign Targeting Head Start Families: Designed by Parents for Parents." Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, 24(2)(S): 25-33.
- Richardson L. (2013) "Putting the Research Boot on the Policymakers' Foot: Can Participatory Approaches Change the Relationship between Policymakers and Evaluation?" Social Policy & Administration, 47(4): 483-500.
- O'Sullivan RG. (2012) "Collaborative Evaluation within a framework of stakeholder-oriented evaluation approaches." Evaluation and Program Planning, 35(4): 518-522.

### **Class 13: December 13**

- Final Project Group Presentations

Final Paper Due: December 13 electronically by end of day midnight.

## **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.

Using ChatGPT and related tools will reduce what you learn in this course. **Consequently, the use of ChatGPT, Bard, and other generative AI tools is not allowed in this course.** As a reminder, please review [Wagner's Academic Integrity Policy](#).

## **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 on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto: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.