Department of Political Science (MPA)
915A Methods and Issues in Program and Policy Evaluation

Fall 2004

Instructor:
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Purpose: The purpose of the course is to familiarize students with the major issues in the fields of program and policy evaluation. Students will develop an understanding of the theoretical frameworks used for evaluative research, validity issues in evaluative research, and the multi-methods, theory-driven approach to evaluation. Students will also develop an understanding of the relative value of different designs that can be applied to evaluation research. Students will have the opportunity to develop their theoretical, methodological and interpretive skills through various examples and applications and through the development of a proposal on an evaluation question of interest to them.

Classes: Friday 3:00 -7:00 pm       September 17-18
Saturday 9:00 - 5:00 pm       October 29-30
Room 8440 Social Science Centre       December 3-4

Textbooks:


(3) 915a Selected Course Readings: available from book store

Supplemental references:
(1) Other downloadable references (e.g. Literature Review - Study on the Function of Evaluation Focusing on Results: A Guide to Performance Measurement) at:
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/pubs/pub96_e.asp


Grades in this course will be based on the following:
Term Paper: (20 p. proposal for an evaluation study) 60%
Midterm test 40%

Students are expected to attend the classes and to prepare for each class by reading the articles and chapters listed below, and to actively participate in the discussions. For each class, a number of critical themes, as outlined below, have been provided to guide students through the readings and activities, and to frame the lectures and discussion.

Teaching and learning is a shared responsibility, influenced by individual knowledge and experience, but achieved through expanding our awareness of the different issues and epistemologies. Commitment, preparation and active participation are important ingredients to realize this goal. Your preparation and participation is important to your learning and the learning of your colleagues.

September 17 Introduction
What is evaluation research and how do we apply it to programs and policies?
Readings: Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapters 1, 2
Treasury Board (1998) Chapter 1
examples of evaluation - skim through
Alberts et al., (1992) abstract ONLY
Barsan et al., (1994) abstract
Ho et al., (1988) abstract
White et al., (1985) abstract

Key concepts in Evaluation Research, Part 1
 Measurement and construct validity
 Internal validity and causality
 Methods of control
Readings: Lipsey (1988)
Sims (2001)
Trochim (2000) Introduction to validity: go to Web at this URL:
http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/INTROVAL.HTM

September 18 Key Concepts in Evaluation Research, Part 2
Generalizability and external validity
Chance and statistical validity
Carr et al., (1998)
Ross et al., (1991)
Theory-driven evaluation: why "black box paradigms" don't work
Methods-oriented vs. theory-driven evaluations
Mayne (2001)
Brown and Goel (1996)
Vingilis et al., (1998)

Research Designs
Pre-experimental, true experimental and quasi experimental research designs
Sources of invalidity for designs
Readings: Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapters 8, 9, 10
Grant et al., (1995)
Stevens (1997)
Social Research & Demonstration Corp. (1998)

October 29 Midterm test and Class Discussion of Projects

Research Approaches and Data Collection Methods
Qualitative and quantitative methods
Triangulation and multiple methods
Pre-existing data sets
Development of original data sets
Readings: Treasury Board (1998) Chapter 4

October 30 Approaches to Model Development
Program Logic Model
Readings: Rush and Ogborne (1991)
Porteus et al., (2002)

Components of Evaluation Research, Part 1
Program Rationale
Needs Assessment
Examples of needs assessments (skim through)

December 3 Components of Evaluation Research, Part 2
Process Evaluation
Short-term Outcome Evaluation
Long-term Outcome/Impact Evaluation
Readings: Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapters 7, review 8, 9, 10
Dwyer & Komorowski (1999)
Rubin (1997)
December 4  Components of Evaluation Research, Part 3
  Efficiency Evaluation
  Effectiveness Evaluation
           Clyne & Edwards (2002)
           Beck (2000)

Evaluation in the Read World and Student Project Assistance
  Issues, challenges and examples
  The ideal:
Readings:  Langevin (2001)

  The real:
Readings:  Seasons (2002)
           Lord & Rush (2002)
           Poland et al., (2002)

Student Presentations and Discussions of Logic Models and Proposals