

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

Fall 2005

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
Saturday 9:00 - 5:00 pm
Room 8440 Social Science Centre

September 16-17
October 28-29
November 18-19

Textbooks:

(1) Posavac, E. and R. Carey (2003) *Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies 6th edition*, Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice Hall.

(2) Treasury Board of Canada, Secretariat. (1998) *Program Evaluation Methods: Measurement and Attribution of Program Results, Third Edition* downloadable file:
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/pubs/meth/pem-mep_e.pdf

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

Supplemental references:

Other downloadable references

(1) *Literature Review - Study on the Function of Evaluation Focusing on Results: A Guide to Performance Measurement*

http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/stud_etud/func-fonc-02_e.asp

- (2) *Resources For Accountability and Financial Management in the Voluntary Sector*
http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/funding/financial_guide/index.cfm (provides synopsis on evaluation and examples of logic models)
- (3) *Theory at a Glance*
<http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancerinformation/theory-at-a-glance>
- (4) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*
<http://www.uea.ac.uk/care/elu/Issues/Research/Res1Cont.html>
- (5) *Resources for Methods in Evaluation and Social Research*
<http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/>
- (6) US General Accounting Office, Program Evaluation and Methodology Division. *Designing Evaluations*. http://www.gao.gov/policy/10_1_4.pdf
- (7) Frechtling, J. and L. Sharp (1997) *User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluations*
<http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/EHR/REC/pubs/NSF97-153/START.HTM>

Grades in this course will be based on the following:

- 1) Review of an evaluation (Midterm test) 40%
To give you practice as a consumer of program evaluation, you will be given a published evaluation for which you will be required to write a critique on the evaluation design, validity threats, whether the conclusions are warranted and what you would recommend to improve the research study.
- 2) Program evaluation proposal: (see pp 16-17?) 50%
To give you practice in conceptualizing, developing and writing up a proposal to conduct an evaluation of your choice within government funding agency guidelines.
- 3) Class participation 10%
This course, within the constraints of class size, intensive weekend format and quantity of material that needs to be covered, as is typical of graduate public administration program evaluation courses, attempts to provide some seminar experience, whereby each student is expected to have read all the required reading for a given class prior to the discussion of assigned readings. In the discussions, you should be prepared to query and comment on assigned readings, respond to questions posed by the instructor and join in the general discussions of each session.

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.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calender).

Plagiarism checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

September 16

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

These will be used in class exercises.

Alberts et al., (1992) abstract ONLY

Barsan et al., (1994) abstract

Ho et al., (1988) abstract

examples of evaluations - skim through (Traffic Tech, 2001; Von Baeyer et al.; Bonanno et al; Tobacco Survey program brief 2002.)

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://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intval.htm>

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/causeeff.htm>

September 17

Key Concepts in Evaluation Research, Part 2

Generalizability and external validity

Chance and statistical validity

Readings: Treasury Board (1998) Chapter 2

Carr et al., (1998)

Ross et al., (1991)

Theory-driven evaluation: why "black box paradigms" don't work

Methods-oriented vs. theory-driven evaluations
Readings: Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapter 3
Mayne-discussion paper:
http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/other.nsf/html/99dp1_e.html
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: Trochim: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intsing.htm>
Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapters 8, 9, 10
Grant et al., (1995)
Stevens (1997)
Social Research & Demonstration Corp. (1998)

October 28

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
Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapters 4, 12

October 29

Approaches to Model Development

Program Logic Model
Readings: Rush and Ogborne (1991)
(University of Wisconsin excellent self-study module on logic models if you need it:
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html>)
Thiessen (2002) "Evaluation framework for municipal...."

Components of Evaluation Research, Part 1

Program Rationale
Needs Assessment
Readings: Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapter 6
Brown & Hoffman (2000)
Examples of needs assessments (skim through)

November 18

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)

November 19

Components of Evaluation Research, Part 3

Efficiency Evaluation
Effectiveness Evaluation
Readings: Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapter 11
Clyne & Edwards (2002)
Marsh (2005)

Evaluation in the Real World and Student Project Assistance

Issues, challenges and examples
The ideal:
Readings: Langevin (2001)
The real:
Readings: Seasons (2002)
Poland et al., (2002) logic model

Student Presentations and Discussions of Logic Models and Proposals