

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

September 17-18  
October 29-30  
December 3-4

**Textbooks:**

- (1) Posavac, E. and R. Carey (2003) *Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies 6<sup>th</sup> 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/pub96\\_e.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/pubs/pub96_e.asp)
- (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](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/pubs/pub96_e.asp)
- (2) *Theory at a Glance*: <http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancerinformation/theory-at-a-glance>
- (3) Isaac, S. and W. Michael (1990) *Handbook in Research and Evaluation 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, San

Diego, Ca: EDITS Publ.

(4) 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:**

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

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 (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  
Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapters 4, 12

## **October 30 Approaches to Model Development**

Program Logic Model

Readings: Rush and Ogborne (1991)  
Porteus et al., (2002)  
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)

## **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

Readings: Posavac & Carey (2003) Chapter 11  
Clyne & Edwards (2002)  
Beck (2000)

**Evaluation in the Real 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**