

PA 804

Policy and Program Evaluation

J Term 12/28/20-1/22/21

Online

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Description

This asynchronous online course will teach students how to strategically evaluate public and nonprofit programs and policies. Topics covered include evaluation planning, program theory, research methods, data analysis, and the presentation of findings. Students will explore the art of conducting a rigorous evaluation through readings, recorded lectures, online discussion, case study assignments, and hands-on exercises.

Objectives

In this class, you will learn how to:

- Plan a useful program evaluation
- Describe a program and develop a logic model
- Engage stakeholders in the evaluation process
- Adhere to ethical standards when conducting evaluation research
- Perform basic qualitative and quantitative research and data analysis
- Interpret and present evaluation findings effectively

Required reading

Alkin, M. (2011). *Evaluation essentials from A to Z*. **First edition**. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Note that even though there is a newer version available we will be using the first edition of the Alkin book.

Emison, G. (2007). *Getting from ideas to outcomes. Practical program evaluations*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

These books are available in the UNH online bookstore and through other online retailers.

Other assigned readings will be posted to Canvas (also known as myCourses).

Class format and required materials

This class will take place in an online, asynchronous format. Beyond the required textbooks, additional materials (readings, assignments, recorded lectures, and PowerPoint slides) will be available on the course Canvas site.

Instructor correspondence

The best way to get in touch with me is through email. During the week (Monday-Friday), I will respond to emails within 24 hours (generally sooner). I am also available to talk via telephone or Zoom videoconference on weekdays during daytime or evening hours. Please email me if you would like to set up a phone call or videoconference.

Grading

Course elements count towards your final grade as follows:

Class discussions (12)	20%
Homework assignments (4)	30%
Professional memos (3)	30%
Final paper	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

Course elements

Class discussions

Class discussions will be used to explore program evaluation design and consider issues faced by evaluators in depth. I expect that you will be respectful and professional in your interactions with your classmates. Rude or disrespectful comments will not be tolerated and will not count towards your discussion grade.

You will be graded on your participation in each of the class discussion threads. The closing date for each discussion thread is listed in the course schedule. Comments posted after the closing date will not be counted towards your grade for that thread.

My criteria for grading each discussion thread is as follows:

Grade	Criteria
A range (9-10 points)	Participate 3+ times in the discussion. At least 3 posts are thoughtful, 80+ words in length, and reflect an understanding of the course topic matter under discussion. Posts appropriately reference assigned course materials (e.g., readings, lecture). Posts may encourage classmates to respond by asking in-depth question(s) that are relevant to the course material. <i>* Please note that while an A-range post will be 80+ words in length, I encourage you not to exceed 150 words per post. Focus on composing clear, concise, and to-the-point comments which make it easy for your classmates to read, process, and respond. *</i>
B range (8 points)	Participate 2+ times in the discussion. At least 2 posts are thoughtful but may be less than 80 words. At least one post appropriately references assigned course materials, however some posts may be more general (without specific references to assigned materials). Posts may encourage classmates to respond by asking in-depth question(s) that are relevant to the course material.
C range (7 points)	Participate 2+ times in the discussion. Some comments are relevant and make reference to assigned course materials, but posts generally lack specificity and depth. Posts may be less than 80 words. Posts do not pose relevant questions.
D range (6 points)	Participate 1-2+ times in the discussion. Comments are brief (less than 80 words), fail to reference course materials, are not well thought-out, and/or are vague. Posts do not pose relevant questions.
F (<6 points)	Participate 0-1+ times in the discussion. Posts are very brief and show very little effort (e.g., "that sounds good" or "I agree"). Posts may be rude or disrespectful.

Homework assignments

Homework assignments are designed to develop students' skills in planning an evaluation and developing an appropriate evaluation research design. Most assignments will focus on planning and design considerations as they relate to a realistic case study presented in the Alkin textbook.

Professional memos

Professional memo assignments are designed to enhance students' skills in evaluation research design, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of results.

Final assignment

The final assignment will ask students to summarize and critique the research design used in a real evaluation of a public program.

Student responsibilities when turning in assignments

- *You are responsible for proofreading and checking over your assignments, to make sure that your work is complete and that you are handing in all parts of the assignment.* I will not accept additional assignment components after the due date has passed. I will not proofread or review assignments before they are due.
- *You are responsible for ensuring that your assignments are submitted by the stated due date.* If you are worried that an assignment submission did not transmit properly through Canvas, send an additional copy of the assignment to my email address and I will confirm receipt of the email.

Final grade

Your final grade will be based on the summation of your scores on the above assignments. Grades will be based on the point scale below. ***Please note that final grades are rounded to the second decimal place (e.g., grades of 89.28, 89.64, and 89.96 would all equate to a B+).***

Grade	Points
A	94 – 100
A-	90 - 93.99
B+	87 - 89.99
B	84 - 86.99
B-	80 - 83.99
C+	77 - 79.99
C	74 - 76.99
C-	70 - 73.99
D+	67 - 69.99
D	64 - 66.99
D-	60-63.99
F	< 60

Policy on late work

This is a 3-week course, and it is going to go by quickly. In order to keep up with the class and complete the course on time, you are expected to turn in all assignments by the due date listed on

the syllabus. Work will not be accepted if turned in after the due date without an explanation. If you experience an emergency that prevents you from turning in an assignment on time, please contact me as soon as possible. We can discuss the possibility of turning in an assignment late. If permission is given to turn in an assignment late, a grade penalty may result.

Tech support

If you are having trouble using Canvas, you can connect to Canvas guides and the UNH IT Knowledge Base, as well as chat with a Canvas support expert, by clicking on the (?) **Help** link in the bottom left corner of the course Canvas page. You must be logged in to Canvas to see this link. If you are having trouble logging in to Canvas, please contact the UNH Help Desk at (603) 862-4242 for assistance. For more information about the Help Desk, visit <http://www.unh.edu/it/help>.

Academic integrity

You are expected to follow the University's policies on academic honesty and to appropriately cite reference materials used when completing assignments. Submitting another person's ideas or written work as your own is unacceptable and will result in a failing (0) grade. The academic honesty policy may be viewed at <https://www.unh.edu/student-life/09-academic-honesty>. I encourage you to complete the University's plagiarism tutorial at <https://cola.unh.edu/academics/plagiarism-tutorial>. All student assignments submitted through Canvas will be scanned for originality using Turnitin software.

Accommodations

The University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities equal access to all university programs and facilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodations, you must register with Disability Services for Students (DSS). Contact DSS at (603) 862-2607 or disability.office@unh.edu. If you have received an Accommodation Letters for this course from DSS, please provide me with that information privately so that we can review those accommodations.

Schedule

Any changes to the schedule will be posted as an announcement and a revised syllabus will be posted to Canvas. All discussion threads and assignment due dates close at 11:59pm on a given close/ due date unless otherwise stated.

Dates	Course materials
Section 1 Monday 12/28 through Thursday 12/31	Topics - Overview of syllabus and course plan - Introduction to program evaluation - Major players and stakeholders Assigned reading - Alkin, sections A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and Time out: RUPAS - Emison, chapters 1 and 2 - Keohane, How facts backfire Lecture videos - 1a. Programs and evaluations - 1b. Why evaluate; phases of a program evaluation - 1c. Approaching the evaluation and understanding the program - 1d. The major players in program evaluation Discussion threads – close on 12/31 - Introductions - Thread 1a. Exploring evaluation practices used by public agencies - Thread 1b. How facts backfire and cognitive dissonance in program evaluation Assignment - Assignment 1 - Due 12/31
Section 2 <i>Happy new year!</i> Saturday 1/2 through Tuesday 1/5	Topics - Program theory and logic models - Developing research questions - Introduction to evaluation research methods Assigned reading - Alkin, sections H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, and X Lecture videos - 2a. Program theory and logic models - 2b. The research process and research questions - 2c. Quantitative research – questions, methods, and measures - 2d. Qualitative research – questions and methods - 2e. Data sources - 2f. Design considerations - 2g. Validity and reliability - 2h. Ethics in evaluation Discussion threads - close on 1/5 - Thread 2a. Evaluation considerations for the UNH MPA program - Thread 2b. Defining and measuring concepts Assignments - Assignment 2a - Due 1/5 - Assignment 2b - Due 1/5

Section 3 Wednesday 1/6 through Saturday 1/9	Topics - Quantitative evaluation research methods, part 1 - o Terminology and methods - o Research design Assigned reading - Alkin, section P - Emison, chapter 3 Lecture videos - 3a. Quantitative analysis: populations, samples, and sampling - 3b. The who and the what of data collection - 3c. Research designs to support causality: weak and stronger - 3d. True experimental design; design notation - 3e. Quasi-experimental design - 3f. Interrupted time series design Discussion threads - close on 1/9 - Thread 3a. Understanding your client - Thread 3b. Ethical responsibilities Assignment - Assignment 3 – Due 1/9
Section 4 Sunday 1/10 through Wednesday 1/13	Topics - Quantitative evaluation research methods, part 2 - o Describing variables - o Relationships between variables - o Inferential statistics overview Assigned reading - Alkin, section R - Emison, chapters 4 and 5 Lecture videos - 4a. Describing categorical variables - 4b. Examining relationships between categorical variables - 4c. Describing quantitative variables: measures of center - 4d. Describing quantitative variables: measures of spread - 4e. Describing quantitative variables: histograms - 4f. Examining relationships between quantitative variables - 4g. Examining relationships between one categorical and one quantitative variable Discussion threads - close on 1/13 - Thread 4a. Knowing the content - Thread 4b. Controlling the work Assignments - Professional memo 1 – Due 1/13

Section 5 Thursday 1/14 through Monday 1/18	Topics - Qualitative evaluation research methods - o Data sources - o Designing data collection tools - o Qualitative analysis techniques Assigned reading - Patton, The nature of qualitative inquiry - Patton, Appendix 7.1 and Appendix 7.2 - Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey, Participant observation field guide Assigned listening - Ishmael Beah, Unusual normality Lecture videos - 5a. Qualitative methods: overview and sampling techniques - 5b. Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative data sources - 5c. Data collection considerations - 5d. Data collection tools - 5e. Data analysis techniques - Additional video: NVivo qualitative data analysis software tutorial video Discussion threads - close on 1/18 - Thread 5a. Unusual normality and qualitative data collection considerations - Thread 5b. Observation assignment experiences Assignment - Professional memo 2 – Due 1/18
Section 6 Tuesday 1/19 through Friday 1/22	Topics - Formalizing the evaluation plan - Evaluation reports and the presentation of findings Assigned reading - Alkin, sections Q, S, T, U, V, and W - Emison, chapter 6 (required) and chapter 7 (recommended) Lecture videos - 6a. Formalizing the evaluation plan - 6b. Evaluation reports and the presentation of findings - Additional video: Sheena Iyengar, The art of choosing Discussion threads - close on 1/22 - Thread 6a. Communicating with clarity - Thread 6b. Choice and perception in program evaluation Assignments - Professional memo 3 - Due 1/22 - Final paper - Due 1/24