Course Meets:
Tuesdays, 5:00 – 7:45 PM
Location: King Center 201

Instructor Contact Information:
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Course Catalog Description
Describes the theory and methodology for the design of social research and demonstration projects and the application of analytic and statistical methods for evaluating public program. Focus is on the application of evaluation methods and techniques of data interpretation. Report preparation is emphasized. Prereq: PUAD 5003 or PUAD 7003 or PUAD 7005. Cross listed with PUAD 7350. Semester Hours: 3 Credits

I. Introduction: Program Evaluation and its Use in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors

Accurate assessment of how well programs function in practice is an essential component of public and nonprofit organizational management. It may seem obvious to note, but effective decision-making is generally based on solid empirical evidence coupled with a sound underlying causal rationale. Hence, appropriately executed research assessment of programs in the public sector is a central feature of effective public management. For a person earning a MPA degree (or related), being able to understand the process of conducting research on public and nonprofit sector organizational activities and programs is a professional norm. More importantly, being able to actually initiate an evaluation project is an invaluable skill to possess – a skill that will serve one well in a variety of settings and therefore facilitate professional advancement.

The preceding paragraph provides a rationale for the importance and functional utility of program evaluation, but we have yet to define the term. Maxfield and Babbie (2008, 357) note that program evaluation “refers to a research purpose rather than a specific research method.” While noting that evaluation is an “elastic” term that refers to judgments of all different sorts, used in a wide range of context, Weiss defines evaluation as “the systematic assessment of the operation and/or outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy” (1998, 4). Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey (2003, 4) offer a similar definition: “Program evaluation is the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs. More specifically, evaluation researchers (evaluators) use social research methods to study, appraise, and help improve social programs in all the important aspects, including the diagnosis of the social problems they address, their conceptualization and design, their implementation and
administration, their outcomes, and their efficiency.” These efforts at defining program evaluation direct us to two key points: program evaluation uses basic systematic social science research methodology and its substantive focus areas are what distinguish it from other types of research. How evaluations are performed is the subject of this course.

II. Course Goals, Learning Objectives and Assessment of Student Learning

A. Overview of Course Goals and Course Learning Objectives
The overall goal of this course is to develop knowledge and expertise in the practice of evaluating public or nonprofit sector programs, policies and other agency actions. The course will do so specifically by developing students’ knowledge and skill in identifying appropriate research designs for particular evaluation problems, knowledge, skill and ability in focusing evaluation reports based on project objectives, refinement of skill and ability in empirical analysis, and in the development of skill and ability in appropriately characterizing and presenting empirical those data gathered for an assessment project. In sum, this course should be understood as an opportunity to learn more about conducting evaluative research in a way that is relevant to solving public and nonprofit sector management challenges.

The course is motivated by addressing several key questions:

1. What are the key concepts that define the field of program evaluation?
2. What basic ethical issues present themselves when program evaluations are conducted?
3. How are evaluations designed and executed in practice?
4. How does program evaluation research influence public management practices; i.e., does evaluation contribute to evidence based management?

By the conclusion of this course students should have developed their substantive knowledge, skill and ability such that they are able to:

- Understand critical ethical issues in conducting evaluation research
- Recognize and understand key concepts associated with research design and measurement as used in program evaluations
- Identify appropriate empirical approaches for addressing various data analytic challenges
- Understand techniques for managing data files
- Recognize and perform accepted techniques for presenting evaluation results appropriately
- Recognize and perform accepted techniques for reporting evaluation findings appropriately

Students should be aware that assignments and exams in this course are used to test whether these learning objectives have been met; if a student is able to identify appropriate techniques for assessing various evaluation questions and interpret and report results appropriately, then they has accomplished the fundamental purpose of this course. Our ultimate purpose in this course, then, is to help students develop some basic skills in program evaluation in order to facilitate empirically-based decision making that improve public management practices. (Please note, the course grading scheme is described below, in Section III, part E.)

B. Assessment of Student Performance
Assessment of student performance in this course is based on indications that the course learning objectives stated above have been achieved. There are several different areas of measurement that will be used to produce a final student performance rating. These areas of performance assessment include the following:

- Completed written assignments are measured and assessed based on the quality of analytic content,
evaluative efficacy, and overall written communication skill demonstrated
• Knowledge of key concepts associated with the field of program evaluation and ability to communicate that
  knowledge is assessed through performance on course exams and other written work
• Ability to synthesize classroom material in both open discussions and in written work is measured and
  assessed based on the quality of written content (via assignments and exams) and discussion content (via the
  quality of insight, productivity in contributions, and quality of formal presentation efforts)
• Overall student engagement in the course is measured and assessed through the overall quality of
  assignment responses, discussion contributions, and general participatory activities

III. Course Instructional Approach and Expectations of Students

A. Focus and Format
The course is geared toward providing insights into program evaluation as performed in practice. This course is not a
discussion seminar per se, but will involve significant active participation on the part of the students. Given the central
focus on techniques associated with program evaluation, some portions of class meetings will be conducted in a
traditional lecture format. However, too much passive learning is generally ineffectual, and as such, active student
involvement in discussion and occasional presentations will be a major point of emphasis.

B. Preparation, Participation & Written Work
As a graduate-level course, a basic expectation is that students attend every class fully prepared; this means that all
assigned materials have been read prior to class and that any assigned course work is delivered to the instructor by the
assigned deadline. Failure to regularly attend class meetings and failure to study assigned materials prior to class will
adversely affect a student’s course grade.

C. Professional Conduct in the Classroom:
Students should endeavor to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Adherence to the following will help
maintain a positive and professional learning environment: 1) Professional expectations mandate that class
members be punctual; late entrance disrupts classes, is unfair to fellow students and instructors, and disrupts the
logical presentation of material. 2) Professional conduct appropriate to classrooms and managerial roles should be
maintained. Cell phones and/or similar devices should be turned off; incoming or outgoing calls or text messaging is
strictly prohibited. 3) Attention should be given to a person who is asking a question or offering feedback or making
a formal presentation. While preserving an informal and interactive classroom, there should not be interruptions and
side conversations. There should be mutual respect, listening to each other, and non-judgmental professional
interaction. 4) Instructors should be properly notified if attendance or punctuality may be a problem for a particular
class. 5) Students who are absent from classes for any reason are responsible for all missed work and for contacting
their instructors promptly, unless the instructors’ policies require otherwise. 6) Standards of honesty and integrity
should be followed.

D. Student Performance: Expectations for Student Success
Students enrolled in this course will be assessed on their demonstrated competency in understanding, producing and
communicating results of any analyses or assessment in their assigned work. To receive and outstanding course grade
(using the grading scheme described below and the performance assessment approach noted above) this means all
assigned work should completed on time with careful attention to meeting all assignment details. Students should take
stated expectations regarding preparation, conduct and academic honesty seriously in order to receive a grade
reflective of outstanding performance. Merely attending class on a regular basis and completing assigned work in no
way guarantees an outstanding grade in the course. Assigned work and the quality of active participation in the regular
discussions that are a critical part of the course learning strategy are the tools the instructors will use to measure comprehension and skill; the student’s course grade is a direct reflection of demonstrated performance.

E. Course Grading System:
Your grade will be based on your performance in the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written Assignments</th>
<th>50%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Presentations</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Letter grades comport with a traditional set of intervals (90 – 100% = A, 80 – 89% = B, 70 – 79% = C, etc.), with pluses or minuses to those letter grades being assigned as scores approach either the upper or lower bound of each class interval.

Clearly and professionally communicating your ideas is critical to your success in this course and beyond. Papers and assignments will be held to standards of college writing, including organization and presentation, and will be graded for both content and form. As you make a case for key points in your papers, you will be expected to support your premise via readings and lectures. The following guidelines should be observed when submitting written assignments:

- Read the assignment carefully and follow instructions,
- Use APA citation format for written work (when assignments required external citations),
- Proofread your work. Points will be subtracted for errors in form (spelling, punctuation, grammar, format, and neatness),
- Assignments must be submitted at the assigned time and date provided. Please keep an electronic copy for your records; the instructor may request an electronic copy to accompany a printed copy.

F. Academic Integrity
Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Colorado Denver’s Student Conduct Code, which can be found at: [http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/studentlife/studentlife/discipline.html](http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/studentlife/studentlife/discipline.html). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. You must use proper citations when quoting or drawing from published work.

In addition to traveling together, you are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy.

Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.
IV. Course Organization, Requirements and Operations

A. Organization
This course is organized into four units. Each unit and assigned materials are described in the schedule outline presented in the next section of this syllabus.

B. Reading Requirements: Assigned Materials & Supplemental Recommendations
This course will use three required textbooks, which have been ordered through the campus bookstore. All supplemental reading materials will be provided to the class by the instructor as needed. The textbooks are:

Title: Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation
Author: Joseph S. Wholey, Harry P. Hatry, Kathryn E. Newcomer
Year & Edition: 2010, 3rd Edition
Publisher: Jossey-Bass

Title: Public Administration Research Methods: Tools for Evaluation and Evidence-Based Practice
Authors: Warren S. Eller, Brian J. Gerber and Scott E. Robinson
Year & Edition: 2013
Publisher: Routledge

C. Exams
The course will use only a midterm exam; the exam will be executed about two thirds of the way through semester. The exam will either be held “in-class” or administered in a “take-home” format.

D. Assignments: Grading and Acceptance of Late Assignments
A series of homework assignments will be distributed during the semester term; every assignment will be given a specific completion date. A tentative schedule for distribution of assignments is included at the end of this syllabus. However, students should be aware that this is explicitly tentative in order to permit some flexibility in assignment scheduling and due dates based on progress in covering specific course material on particular dates.

All assignments must be turned in to the instructor at the start of class on that date. Late work will only be accepted if the student has requested the explicit consent of the instructor before the assignment’s completion date; grade reduction for late work will be applied at the discretion of the instructor.

E. Course Communications:
The course is supported on the university’s Canvas platform; as such, electronic course materials will be supported through that course site. Lecture files, assignments and other course communications will be transmitted via Canvas and/or through the class email list.

F. Disabilities; Classroom Learning Environment:
Students should be fully aware that the University of Colorado Denver is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who wish to seek academic accommodations must register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS), North Classroom 2514, phone: 303 556-3450, TTY: 303 556-4766. DRS is responsible for reviewing the documentation of the student’s request; once that review has taken place, DRS will provide the student with a letter indicating which academic accommodations have been approved. Please be prepared to provide the instructor a copy of that DRS
letter and all necessary accommodations will be provided.

V. Schedule

Instructor schedule discretion:
Finally, be aware that the schedule outlined below is a tentative schedule and may change slightly. The instructor reserves the right to make alterations to the schedule as listed, as well as some adjustments with readings and assignments. However, any schedule adjustments and adjustments with assigned work (both dates and quantity of assignments) will be announced in advance.

Planned Course Schedule: Meeting Topics and Assigned Readings

UNIT ONE: Basic Concepts of Program Evaluation Foundations for Empirical Analysis

Unit One will present students with foundational concepts needed to begin knowledge, skill and ability development in performing evaluation research. In this unit, students will be presented with material on different types of evaluations and an overview of research methods used to conduct evaluations. Individual objectives for each class meeting in this unit will be presented at the start of each lecture.

Jan 20 (1) Course Introduction and Statement of Learning Objectives; Overview of the Program Evaluation Field

Reading assigned for 1/20:
Eller, Gerber & Robinson, Chapters 1 – 2

Jan 27 (2) Program Evaluation Types; Evaluation Research and Evidence-Based Management

Reading assigned for 1/27:
Eller, Gerber & Robinson, Chapters 3 – 4
Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapters 1, 2 & 4

Feb 3 (3) Research Design; Measurement; Sampling; Logic Models

Reading assigned for 2/3:
Eller, Gerber & Robinson, Chapters 5 – 7
Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapters 3, 6 & 7

Feb 10 (4) Case Studies & Qualitative Research; Conducting Interviews; Logic Models (revisited)

Reading assigned for 2/10:
Eller, Gerber & Robinson, Chapters 8 – 9
Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapters 3, 16 & 17
UNIT TWO: Designing Evaluation Research

Unit Two will present students with instruction material on how basic concepts of general research design are translated into evaluation research. The unit will cover several basic types of research design approaches and their applicability to conducting program evaluation. Individual objectives for each class meeting in this unit will be presented at the start of each lecture.

Feb 17 (5) True Experimental Designs; Conducting Field Research; Using Survey Data

Reading assigned for 2/17:
Eller, Gerber & Robinson, Chapters 10 – 11
Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapters 12 & 14

Feb 24 (6) Quasi-Experimental Designs; Nonexperiments; Descriptive Statistics

Reading assigned for 2/24:
Eller, Gerber & Robinson, Chapters 12 – 14
Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapters 11 & 16

Mar 3 (7) Linking Evaluation Design to Empirical Analysis & Presentation; Mixed Methods

Reading assigned for 3/3:
Eller, Gerber & Robinson, Chapters 15 – 16 & 19
Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapters 3, 19 & 20

UNIT THREE: Applications: Program Evaluation in Practice

Unit Three will present students with foundational concepts needed to begin knowledge, skill and ability development in performing evaluation research. In this unit, students will be presented with material on different types of evaluations and an overview of research methods used to conduct evaluations. Individual objectives for each class meeting in this unit will be presented at the start of each lecture.

Mar 10 (8) Needs Assessment & Theory Assessment

Reading assigned for 3/10:
Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapter 18
Additional reading selection(s) provided

Mar 17 (9) Assessing Cost: Efficiency and Effectiveness Evaluations

Reading assigned for 3/24:
Wholey, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapter 21
Additional reading selection(s) provided

Mar 24 SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS MEETING OR ASSIGNED READING
UNIT FOUR: Evaluation and Performance Measurement

The last part of this course, Unit Four, will focus on the specific evaluation area of performance measurement. Key concepts and evaluation practices used to assess organization performance are examined. Individual objectives for each class meeting in this unit will be presented at the start of each lecture.

Apr 21 (13) Performance Measurement Systems
Reading assigned for 4/21:
Whooley, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapter 5
Additional reading selection(s) provided

Apr 28 (14) Performance Measurement as a Management Tool
Reading assigned for 4/28:
Whooley, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapter 25
Additional reading selection(s) provided

May 5 (15) Wrap Up: Evaluation Impacts, Ethics, Politics; Student presentations (first group)
Reading assigned for 5/5:
Whooley, Hatry & Newcomer, Chapters 27 & 28

May 12 – 17 Final exams week
Conclude course with remaining student presentations
Course Assignments: Planned Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule of assignments; please be aware dates and substance may be changed slightly during the course of the semester. The instructor reserves this right. That said, any schedule adjustments and adjustments with assigned work (both dates and quantity of assignments) will be announced in advance – and there should not be major deviations from the outline presented below. Likewise, there will be several in-class student presentations that will contribute to the 10% of your performance assessment on the “formal presentations” element. Finally, this is of course simply an assignment outline; each assignment will be accompanied by more detailed guidance and instruction for completion.

Assignment 1: Logic Model Description
Assignment will ask students to select either a program or a policy administered by a public agency or nonprofit organization and provide a logic model description.
Assignment Distributed: 2/3
Assignment Due: 2/17

Assignment 2: Logic Model Memo
Assignment will ask students to write a briefing memo on the merits and/or weaknesses of the program or policy covered in assignment #1.
Assignment Distributed: 2/17
Assignment Due: 3/3

Assignment 3: Writing Quantitative Results
Assignment will give students and opportunity to make a formal presentation of a simple quantitative analysis problem, as covered in Unit Two of the course.
Practice Assignment Distributed: 3/3
Practice Assignment Due: 3/17

Assignment 4: Project Evaluation Design
Assignment will ask students to develop a specific research design and measurement strategy for conducting an original program evaluation. NOTE: this may correspond to the program/policy covered in Assignment #1.
Assignment Distributed: 3/17
Assignment Due: 3/31

Assignment 5: Project Management Plan
Assignment will ask students to create a detailed project management plan to implement the evaluation proposed in Assignment #3.
Assignment Distributed: 4/14
Assignment Due: 4/28

Assignment 6: Evaluation Project Presentation
Students will create an original presentation that explicates the work proposed and explained in Assignments # 3 & 4; that is, the presentation will identify an evaluation project and explain its logic and implementation.
Assignment Distributed: 4/14
Assignment Due: presentations made on 5/5 and 5/12
Citations in the syllabus:

