Course Description and Objectives
Program evaluation is an important means for policy makers, managers, and other stakeholders to learn about program effectiveness and to make judgments and decisions regarding those programs and policies. While evaluation evolved from the social sciences and uses many of the same research methodologies to inform users, the different purposes of evaluation mean that the planning and implementation of evaluations require perspectives and techniques different from those used in traditional research.

Upon completion of this course, students should have the following:

- A broad understanding of the leading theories of and approaches to program evaluation and the ways in which the application of a particular approach can make a difference to the evaluation outcome
- Practical skills in designing and implementing program evaluations
- An understanding of the ethical issues involved in program evaluation
- Improved critical thinking skills developed and applied through class discussions and course assignments
- Improved oral and written communication skills

Required Readings

There is one required text for the class, available at the Auraria Campus bookstore:

In addition, there are a number of required readings that are available online and/or through the class Blackboard website. These include:

**Book chapters**


**Journal articles**


**Case studies**


**Published evaluations**


**Other evaluation resources/materials**


The instructor reserves the right to change reading assignments based on the needs of the class.

**Course Expectations**

Please review the “Criteria for Graduate level coursework” attached at the end of this syllabus. This will outline the requirements of graduate-level performance for this class. This section outlines the class participation, homework, and project assignments that will contribute to your final grade in this class.

**Reading Assignments and Class Participation (30 points)**

Plan to complete the readings for each unit prior to coming to class for that unit. If you do not come prepared, the classes will not help you meet the course objectives (and will also be deathly boring due to lack of lively discussion).

For each class, you are expected to participate in the class discussion. Regular class participation will be graded based on content, depth of understanding, and ability to critically analyze the material (see below).

We will be discussing blog posts from professional evaluators on the American Evaluation Association’s daily blog, AEA365, at http://aea365.org/blog/. Please sign up to receive the daily blog posts so that you will be prepared to discuss the posts in class. We will probably spend 5-10 minutes each class discussing the blog.

In addition, from Class 3 through Class 9, small groups of students will be responsible for leading 15-20 minutes of class discussion on the nature and quality of assigned published evaluations. Groups will be assigned and evaluations provided in advance.

Criteria for assessing class participation:

Content assessment skills:

- Is present and paying attention in class. Shows evidence of understanding key concepts; is able to show basic level of support for opinions.

Depth of understanding and analysis skills:
• Demonstrates excellence in grasping the key concepts; critiques work of others based on application of knowledge from resources (not just personal opinion); offers new interpretations of discussion materials.

Discussion leadership skills:
• For those discussions in which the student is asked to take leadership responsibility, shows knowledge of material and team ability to facilitate the critical thinking and learning of other students.

Mid-Term Examination (20 points)

We will have an in-class mid-term examination to test your understanding of basic concepts introduced in the class to date. My usual format for in-class examinations is short answers and essays.

Evaluation Plan (30 points)

You are also required to submit a theory-based, utilization-focused evaluation plan on a current program or organization. You may choose any program or organization you would like, although I recommend that you be familiar with the program or organization and that you have a means by which you can find out additional information about the program or organization as needed. This can be a program or organization with which you volunteer, or where you have worked in the past. The best evaluation plans are those with details that have been informed by “real-life” information. If you will be conducting an evaluation for your capstone client, please do not use your capstone client as the program/organization for the evaluation plan in this class.

The evaluation plan will consist of a description of:

- Context of the evaluation
- Primary intended users
- Logic model/theory of change
- Evaluation question(s) to be answered and why
- Information required to answer the question (variables on which information will be collected)
- Evaluation design (what approach/es will the evaluation use and why)
- Sources of information
- Methods for collecting the information
- Information collection arrangements including: sampling procedures (if any), collection procedures (who collects information and under what conditions), schedule for collection
- Analysis procedures
- Interpretation procedures
- Reporting procedures: Audience for report, content, format, schedule and context
- Proposed budget and budget justification

The plan should be no more than 20 pages in length. The project will be due in class at the beginning of the last class period.

The course is organized so that you will be turning in components of your evaluation plan throughout the quarter:
By Class 4, you will have selected the program/organization and have identified the primary intended users for the evaluation plan.

By Class 6, you will have created a logic model for the program/organization that follows the guidelines in the Kellogg Foundation’s Logic Model Development Guide.

By Class 7, you will have drafted initial evaluation questions for comment by the class, and by Class 8 you will turn in the finalized evaluation questions.

By Class 10, you will have created an initial evaluation design for your evaluation.

The grading criteria for this project will follow the “Criteria of Graduate Excellence” attached at the end of this syllabus as well as the specific requirements of the project listed above.

**Evaluator Interview (15 points)**

I would like you to interview a professional evaluator to learn more about the profession and/or the skills needed to be a professional evaluator. You can write up your results of this interview in any format you would like as long as it is clear, easy to understand, well-organized, and under ten pages. You may also choose the questions for the interview based on ideas you want to explore further in this class (just make sure you tell me what questions you asked). For example, you may be more interested in how evaluation results are used, so you can spend your time asking the evaluator questions in that vein. Or, you may be interested in research methods of evaluation, so you can ask questions regarding methods. This is an assignment where you take charge of your own learning and dig deeper into areas that interest you.

To find professional evaluators to interview: ask around, ask SPA professors or BIG staff, ask program managers whose programs have been evaluated, or do an Internet search for “Program Evaluation Organizations,”

**GRADING**

Grades will be based on the following:

**Possible Points**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator interview</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation plan</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**100 points**

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6
### COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 21</td>
<td>Introduction and overview of class</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 1</td>
<td>What is evaluation?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 24</td>
<td>Purposes of evaluation</td>
<td>Patton ch. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>Standards for evaluation – what makes a “good” evaluation?</td>
<td>AEA Program Evaluation Standards</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stufflebeam Checklist</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Case study: Evaluation of the Fighting Back Initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 28</td>
<td>Utilization-focused evaluation</td>
<td>Patton chs. 2, 15</td>
<td>Group 1: lead discussion of Lincoln’s Birthplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Christie article</td>
<td>evaluation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln Birthplace evaluation report</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 31</td>
<td>Evaluation approaches I: overview</td>
<td>Patton ch. 4</td>
<td>Group 2: lead discussion of Bark Park Place evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chelimsky article</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Skim Bark Park Place evaluation report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 4</td>
<td>Evaluation approaches II: focus on theory-based approaches</td>
<td>Patton ch. 10</td>
<td>Description of program/org and intended user due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bledsoe article</td>
<td>Group 2: lead discussion of Bark Park Place evaluation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>Planning an evaluation I: intended users, evaluator’s context and role,</td>
<td>Patton ch. 3, 6</td>
<td>Logic model due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6</td>
<td>understanding the environment</td>
<td>Skim CeaseFire evaluation report</td>
<td>Group 3: lead discussion of CeaseFire evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 11</td>
<td>Planning an evaluation II: evaluation</td>
<td>Patton ch. 7-9</td>
<td>Bring draft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Grading Scale
- **C+**: 77-79 points
- **C**: 73-76 points
- **C-**: 70-72 points
- **D+**: 67-69 points
- **D**: 63-66 points
- **D-**: 60-62 points
- **F**: Under 60 points
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 7</td>
<td>questions and criteria</td>
<td>Skim Colorado Trust evaluation report</td>
<td>evaluation questions to class Group 4: lead discussion of CO Trust evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 14</td>
<td>Planning an evaluation III: evaluation design</td>
<td>Patton chs. 11-12 FSW ch. 14</td>
<td>Final evaluation questions due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 8</td>
<td>Data collection and interpretation</td>
<td>FSW ch. 15 Case study: Evaluating Home Visitation Skim evaluation management checklists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 18</td>
<td>“Nuts and bolts” of evaluation project management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 9</td>
<td>Data collection and interpretation</td>
<td>FSW ch. 15 Case study: Evaluating Home Visitation Skim evaluation management checklists</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 21</td>
<td>Reporting and using evaluations</td>
<td>Patton ch. 13 Weiss article Skim Green Light evaluation report</td>
<td>Initial design due Group 5: lead discussion of Green Light evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 10</td>
<td>Mid-term review</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 25</td>
<td>Mid-term examination</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>In-class mid-term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 11</td>
<td>Mid-term examination</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 28</td>
<td>Developmental evaluation and process</td>
<td>Patton chs. 5, 8 EiA ch. 11 Case study: Evaluation of the Central Valley Partnership</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 12</td>
<td>uses of evaluation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>Performance measurement and organizational</td>
<td>FSW ch. 20 EiA ch. 7</td>
<td>Evaluator interview due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 13</td>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Evaluating government</td>
<td>Light article Nicholson-Crotty article Skim Tourism Office audit</td>
<td>Group 6: lead discussion of Tourism Office audit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>Cultural competence</td>
<td>EiA ch. 13 Coghlan evaluation report</td>
<td>Group 7: lead Coghlan evaluation discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>Ethics in evaluation</td>
<td>Patton ch. 14 AEA Guiding Principles</td>
<td>Final evaluation plan due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 16</td>
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</table>
Other Course Policies

Course Grades:

For overall course grades, I follow section 7.1 of SPA’s MPA Handbook:

Grades offered in GSPA courses (except internship and thesis) are based on an A to F scale, with each letter grade representing the following standard narrative description:

A. Work beyond the level of a typical graduate student; exemplary work. (An A equals 4 grade points, an A- equals 3.6 points.)

B. Work typical of a graduate student; indicates student has attained the knowledge and skills intended for the course. (A B+ equals 3.3, a B equals 3.0, and a B- equals 2.7 points.)

C. Performance is below graduate-level expectations. (A C+ earns 2.3 grade points, a C yields 2.0).

D. Substandard performance in all aspects of the work of the course; inadequate comprehension of assigned reading material. (D equals 1.0 grade points).

F. Level of performance demonstrably below that expected of a graduate student; little or no indication that the student can succeed in a graduate program.

Please note that this grading policy requires exceptional performance for a grade of “A,” and that a “B” reflects typical performance expected of a graduate-level student. I do not grade on a curve, so it is possible for everyone in the course to earn an A or everyone to earn a C, based on how their performance compares to the work expected of a typical graduate student.

Missed Classes and/or Assignments:

As discussed above, please contact me in advance for any classes that you must miss so that we can make arrangements for you to turn in any assignments that are due. If you miss the deadline for an assignment due to unexpected circumstances, contact me to discuss it. If you need an extension, contact me to discuss it. In general, you will be well-served by contacting me to discuss any absences or missing assignments. If I feel students are abusing this policy, I reserve the right to impose stricter policies.

Requests for an Incomplete grade will be handled pursuant to Section 7.1.1 of the MPA Handbook. In general, an Incomplete grade is considered only when the student is unable to complete course requirements due to circumstances beyond the student’s control.

If I need to cancel or move our class, I will e-mail you and post it on the class BlackBoard site.

Student Assistance:
If you feel you may need additional assistance with the quality of your writing or any other aspects of your academic work, please contact the Center for Learning Assistance in NC 2006.

If you have a disability that needs to be accommodated, please let me know and we will work out arrangements. For academic accommodations, first register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 177 Arts Building, 303-556-3450, TTY 303-556-4766, and then provide me with a copy of your DRS letter.

Student Conduct Code:

Students are responsible for being aware of and in compliance with campus policies about academic honesty, as stated in the University’s Student Conduct Code.

In particular, please be aware that plagiarism, or the use of another person’s words or ideas without crediting that person, is not allowed. Plagiarism may lead to failure on an assignment, in the class, and/or dismissal from the program. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me.

Some Strategies for Success in This Class

- Show me that you are actively engaged in your own learning. Ask questions, critique the readings, “try on” your own conclusions, apply your own experiences to what you are learning, have an open yet questioning view towards the opinions of others (including your instructor).
- Show me that you are taking attendance and class assignments seriously. Do the readings before class. Show up and turn your work in.
- Use a variety of sources to learn about the topic selected for your final project. Consider the viewpoints of these different sources in your final project. If you only rely on one source, your analysis is likely to lack depth.
- Proofread your written work or have someone else proofread it for you. Sloppy writing is distracting. I am fine with having someone else proof your work before you turn it in, as long as the content of the final product is yours.
- If you have any questions about course policies and requirements, please do not hesitate to talk to me before or after class, or contact me via email or telephone. I consider it part of my responsibility as your instructor to be available to answer your questions.