

Western University, Department of Political Science Masters in Public Administration

PA 9915 Methods and Issues in Program and Policy Evaluation

Office Hours and Contact Information

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Class: *Fridays:* September 21, 3pm-7pm *Saturdays:* September 22, 9am-5pm
SSC 4255 October 26 October 27
November 23 November 24

Aims, Goals, Objectives, Outcomes:

The purpose of the course is to familiarize students with the major issues in the fields of program design and evaluation.

The course begins with an overview of the process through which programs are considered, developed, approved, implemented and evaluated. Evaluation can be expensive, difficult, rarely conclusive, and politically unpopular. Still evaluation is of increasing relevance in an era where economy, efficiency and effectiveness are integral to the delivery of public sector services. The new emphasis on results, coupled with a shift to contracting out, partnerships, and special operating agencies has increased the need for evaluation.

Course Description:

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.

The course begins with an overview of the process through which policies and programs are considered, developed, approved, implemented and evaluated. Evaluation research can be expensive, difficult, rarely conclusive, and politically unpopular. Still evaluation research is of increasing relevance in an era where economy, efficiency and effectiveness are integral to the delivery of public sector services. The new emphasis on results, coupled with a shift to

contracting out, partnerships, and special operating agencies has increased the need for evaluation.

The major types of evaluations will be considered, including: formative, process and summative evaluation, economic evaluation, and performance measurement. A major focus in the course will be evaluation design and delivery in a climate of evolving citizen and political expectations regarding public services.

The evaluation process does not, however, take place in a vacuum. Issues and externalities such as professional judgment, ethics and objectivity, public expectation, and political sensitivities can (and do) have profound impact on the process. Understanding of and strategies to cope with these issues will be a key part of this course.

Course Objectives:

1. To develop an understanding of the relative value and limitations of the different designs that can be applied to evaluation research.
2. Explore the evaluation process through examples from local government and/or community practice
3. To critically evaluate the range of evaluative practices and techniques to better understand their situational applicability.
4. To share practical resources that may be useful in future application of the principles of program evaluation
5. To understand the role of evaluation throughout the planning process, and
6. To understand management issues related to evaluation in local government and/or community settings.

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 Section 10 in the Faculty of Graduate Studies Academic Calendar at <http://www.uwo.ca/grad/calendar.htm>)

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.

Resource Materials:

Required Texts

Howlett, M., Ramesh, M. & Perl, A. (2009) *Studying public policy: Policy cycles & policy subcycles* (3rd ed.) Don Mills ON.: Oxford

Mc David, J., Huse, I. and Hawthorn, L. (2013) *Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement: an introduction to the practice* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage

Other (will be posted on the class site two weeks prior to each lecture)

Basic Guide to Program Evaluation by Carter McNamara
http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluation/fnl_eval.htm

Grasso, P. (2003). "What makes an evaluation useful? Reflections from experience in large organizations". *American Journal of Evaluation*. 24: 4, 507-514.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2004). *Logic Model Development Guide*. Battle Creek, MI: Kellogg Foundation
<http://www2.wkcf.org/DesktopModules/WKF.OO DMASupport/ViewDoc.aspx?fld=PDFFile&CI0=281&ListID=28&ItemID=2813669&Language1=0>

Perrin, B. (1998) "Effective use and misuse of performance measurement", *American Journal of Evaluation*. 19: 3, 367-379.

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/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12309§ion=text>

User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluation
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf97153/start.htm>

Case Studies

Additional readings and case studies will also be posted on the class website.

Report of the Auditor General of Canada (2002) *Costs of Implementing the Canadian Firearms Program*. Chapter Ten which can be accessed at:
http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/osh_20030224_e_23380.html

Supplemental references

Pal, L. (2010) *Beyond Policy Analysis: public issue management in turbulent times* (4th ed.). Chapters 1 – 4, Toronto: Nelson

Other downloadable references

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

Evaluation Standards for the Government of Canada – Appendix B

http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/dcgpubs/tbm_161/ep-pe1_e.asp

User-Friendly Handbook for Mixes Method Evaluation

<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf97153/start.htm>

Evaluation – A Beginners Guide

<http://web.amnesty.org/802568F7005C4453/0/2173DDD1E48C37BA802569A500545572?Open&Highlight=2,evaluation>

Evaluation:

Topic	Mark (%)
Program Logic Model – case study application	20
Review of an evaluation	30
Program evaluation proposal (Team project)	30
Program evaluation proposal presentation	10
Class participation	10
TOTAL	100

Program Logic Model – case study application. Each student will select/identify a program case study at end of class on Saturday September 22nd. Your assignment will be to evaluate the overall design and effectiveness of the evaluation using the techniques inherent in the Program Logic Model, due October 26th.

Review of an evaluation. Each student will be provided with a published evaluation, or will select identify a case study for cost-benefit analysis (CBA), at the conclusion of class on Saturday, October 27th. Your assignment is to either critique the evaluation on the basis of design, validity threats, conclusions and recommendations, or to identify the assumption and underlying principles inherent in the CBA – depending on which assignment they chose to complete.

Program evaluation proposal. Each student team will develop a proposal to evaluate a program of a municipal partner. Due date will be in mid-December, to be determined at the first September class. This course has been structured in a problem-based learning format with a Community Service Learning (CEL) element. This means that students will work in project teams throughout the course to create a program evaluation plan for a local government

organization/body. Depending on the requirements of the organization and the project, each team will work at their own pace through the course material and rely on the resources provided by the instructor as well as external resources to meet their learning goals and the deliverables contracted to the community partner. The course requires active learning and that students come to each class prepared to engage in class and group discussion and work on tasks at hand. A final written Evaluation Plan is a major deliverable in the course, but the intention and focus throughout will be on learning the material and practicing the techniques; therefore, our attention will be on the process through which this takes place rather than the product per se.

Program evaluation proposal presentation. Each student Team will be allotted time during the November 24th class for a presentation of a summary of their program evaluation proposal in the form of a poster session. It is intended that the presentations provide an opportunity for feedback of their work in progress, including constructive criticism and peer input.

Class participation. At the graduate level the basic expectations in any course include attendance, completion in advance of all assigned readings, and participation in classroom discussions.

As a guide to grading the instructor uses the following measurement: Consistent Top Quality Contributions - 85 % or above; Good Level of Participation - 75 to 84 %; Spoke But Contributed Little - 65 to 74 %; Spoke Sporadically - 50 to 64 %; Rarely Participated - 0 to 49 %.

Class Schedule:

September 21-22

Readings:

- Howlett et al (2009), Chapters 1 – 3
- Mc David et al (2013), Chapters 1 – 3
- Pal (2010), Chapters 1 – 4 (selected readings, further instruction will be posted on the class site 2 weeks prior to the first class)
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide

Topics to be covered:

Introduction

- Course Outline
- What is evaluation research and how do we apply it to programs and policies?

Key Concepts and Issues in Program Evaluation

- Key Concepts
- Program Evaluation Process
- Policy Cycles

Program Logic Model

- Introduction to Logic models
- Design and Use
- Limitations

Research Designs for Program Evaluation

- What is Research Design?
- Validity
- Performance Measure
- Key issues in Evaluation

Other:

- The Canadian Firearms Program: a case study
- United Way of America, Outcome Measurement: a case study

October 26-27

Readings:

- Howlett et al., (2009), Chapters 4 & 6
- Mc David et al., (2013), Chapters 4 – 8
- Treasury Board of Canada, Secretariat (1998) *Program Evaluation Methods*
- Evaluation Standards for the Government of Canada – Appendix B

Topics to be covered:

Measurements in Program Evaluation

- Measurement: procedures, terminology, and validity
- Units of analysis & sources of data
- Survey & Research Design

Criteria, Standards and Measures

- Approaches to qualitative evaluation
- Connecting qualitative evaluation to performance method
- Benchmarking
- Needs assessments
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Economic Evaluation

- Types
- In Performance Measure
- Cost - Effectiveness, Utility, Benefit - Analysis

Performance Measures

- Introduction
- Growth of Performance Measure
- Comparison with performance evaluation

Other:

- Best Practices - Treatment and Rehabilitation for Driving While Impaired – Case Study
- Class discussion of assignment: *Review of an evaluation*. Guest Presenter, T.B.A., Topic: Cost-Benefit Analysis – a keystone to program and policy evaluation

November 23-24

Readings:

- Howlett et al., (2009) Chapters 7 – 9
- Mc David et al., (2013), Chapters 9 – 12
- Pal (2010) Chapters 8 & 9
- Evaluation Journal of Australasia – *The Politics of Program Logic*

Topics to be discussed:

Performance Measures – continued

- Design and implementation
- Intended vs. actual uses
- Problems and issues in implementation and sustaining

Joining Theory and Practice

- Cultures that Support Evaluation
- Ethics and evaluation practice
- Professional judgment
- The political factor
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Other:

- Program evaluation proposal presentations. The presentations will provide an opportunity for feedback, constructive criticism and peer input.