

## PPD 542: POLICY AND PROGRAM EVALUATION

Fall 2010

University of Southern California  
School of Policy, Planning, and Development

Mondays: 6:00 - 9:20 PM RGL 209

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Program evaluation is the systematic investigation of social programs, regulations, or policies. The aim of program evaluation is to provide valid findings in order to determine whether a particular program or policy is achieving its objectives. Evaluations are used for various reasons, most commonly to aid in decisions concerning whether programs should be continued, improved, expanded, or curtailed. This course will introduce students to a variety of research designs and related methodological tools useful for evaluating the impact of public policies and programs. Students will learn methods of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating information used in evaluation reports. Furthermore, evaluations facilitate decision-making for both public managers and policymakers; therefore, students will learn how to be critical and effective users of evaluations. In this course we will examine a broad range of social policy areas including health, criminal justice, education, welfare and poverty, and development.

Prerequisite: PPD 404x.

### READING MATERIAL

Each class is organized around assigned readings. Students are expected to read the assigned pages prior to the class in which they will be discussed, both to increase understanding of the lecture and to facilitate class discussion. Because most evaluation work is conducted by teams, having the opportunity to discuss and design evaluation approaches jointly is essential to the learning process.

The required text for this course is available at the Trojan Bookstore.

Wholey, Joseph S., Hatry, H. P., and K.E. Newcomer. 2004. *Handbook of Practical Evaluation*, 2nd, Edition. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

In addition, a number of article-length readings are assigned and posted on Blackboard.  
<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>

A helpful web resource is the Research Methods Knowledge Base:  
<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/desintro.htm>

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The course grade will be based on five components: in-class exercises, homework assignments, a midterm, a team presentation, and team evaluation proposal.

1. In-Class Exercises. The class format will consist of lectures, group discussion, and in-class exercises. These exercises will account for 10% of the course grade and are meant teach program evaluation through application. Since they are done in-class they cannot be made up, therefore weekly attendance is required. Most of the exercises will be done in teams (sometimes in the student's evaluation proposal team and sometimes in random impromptu teams).

2. Homework Assignments. There will be weekly homework assignments that will account for 25% of the course grade. The assignments will be posted on Blackboard one week prior to the due date. Diminished credit will given to assignments that are up to one week late; however, after that date, no credit will be given to assignments without prior approval.

3. Midterm. There will be a take-home midterm exam due March 2nd. The midterm will be worth 25% of the course grade.

4. Team Presentation. Students will be placed in groups of 3-4 students and asked to submit a research proposal to evaluate a public program or policy. Each team will present an oral version of their proposal during the last two class sessions. The presentations will allow feedback from classmates and help teams develop the final, written product. The presentation will account for 10% of the course grade.

5. Team Evaluation Proposal. Each team will be required to submit an evaluation proposal, equivalent in length and detail to a term paper. The evaluation proposal will be due May 2nd and will account for 30% of the course grade. The proposal will be modeled after a client-focused evaluation and will allow students to apply what she has learned throughout the course. More details will be given in class.

\*Doctoral students will complete their work individually rather than in teams. Please see me for more details on course requirements for doctoral students.

Submission of Material on Blackboard. All homework assignments, midterms, and evaluation proposals will be submitted online on Blackboard under "Assignments." All files must be named according to this convention: "student last name – assignment". If I turned in assignment 3, I would name it "esparza – A3.doc". The midterm would be "esparza – midterm.doc". Students who do not use these conventions are much more likely to have their assignments lost or have grading delayed.

Most coursework will be graded by the professor and a grader. However, grading for team presentations and proposals will be based in part on peer assessments.

To summarize, the course grade is assigned as follows:

In-class exercises	40	10%
Homework assignments		25%
Assignment 1	5	
Assignment 2	30	
Assignment 3	15	
Assignment 4	10	
Assignment 5	15	
Assignment 6	15	
Assignment 7	10	
Midterm	100	25%
Team presentation	40	10%
Team evaluation proposal	120	30%
<b>Total points</b>	<b>400pts</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

General principles of academic integrity include and incorporate the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

#### STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES:

The university will provide reasonable accommodation of academically qualified students with disabilities, so those students can participate fully in the university's educational programs and activities. Although USC is not required by law to change the "fundamental nature of essential curricular components of its programs in order to accommodate the needs of disabled students," the university will provide reasonable academic accommodation. Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open early 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776."

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

Week 1 Introduction and Objective of the Class

### **I. Evaluation Frameworks**

Week 2 Logic Models in Evaluation  
Assignment 1 due: Online survey.

Week 3 Labor Day--No Class

Week 4 Needs Assessments, Performance Monitoring, and Impact Assessments

### **II. Methodological Design**

Week 5 Experimental Design  
Assignment 2 due: Nebraska Needs Assessment.

Week 6 Quasi-experimental Design: Single Group  
Assignment 3 due: Experimental design problem set.

Week 7 Quasi-experimental Design: Comparison and Nonequivalent Groups  
Assignment 4 due: Quasi-experimental design problem set.

Week 8 Midterm due by midnight-- No Class

### **III. Data Collection & Analysis**

Week 9 Sample Design & Case Selection

Week 10 Data Collection: Focus Groups

Week 11 Data Collection: Interviews & Qualitative Analysis

Week 12 Data Collection: Survey  
Assignment 5 due (Team Project): Each team will write a 1-2 page summary of the program or policy your team plans to evaluate along with a rough sketch of your research design.

Week 13 Data Analysis: Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

#### **IV. Project Management and Finished Product**

Week 14      Project Management & Team Presentations I

Assignment 6: Interpreting descriptive and inferential statistics problem set.  
Due for those presenting in group II

Week 15      Team Presentations II

Assignment 6: Interpreting descriptive and inferential statistics problem set.  
Due for those presenting in group I

Dec. 8        Final Team Evaluation Proposal due by midnight

Assignment 7: Peer assessment online survey.

This 10 minute survey is due within 36 hours of submitting your evaluation proposal. (I need your peer assessments to determine final grades).

Week	Date	Readings	Assignments Due
1	8/23	(W) pp. xxxiii-xliv Rossi et al. "Programs, Policy, and Evaluation," pp. 20-34 Emerson. "But Does it Work"	
2	8/30	(W) Chapter 1 Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide, Chpt 4 Case: Team READ (A)	1
3	9/6	Labor Day--No Class	
4	9/13	(W) Chapter 4 Rossi et al. "Assessing the Need for a Program," pp. 119-135 Rossi et al. "Strategies for Impact Assessment," pp. 70-72, 235-254 Case: Progresa	
5	9/20	(W) Chapter 6 Evaluation of Head Start Evaluation of Move to Opportunity (MTO): Schools Evaluation of Move to Opportunity (MTO): Mental Health Evaluation of Abstinence Education	2
6	9/27	(W) Chapter 5 (pp. 126-133) Eckert. 2000. "Situational Enhancement of Design Validity" Evaluation of New Leaders Program Case: Review Team READ (A)	3
7	10/4	(W) Chapter 5 (pp. 133-146) Trochim. "The Regression-Discontinuity Design" Evaluation of New York's Drug Treatment & Rehabilitation Program	4
8	10/11	Midterm--No Class	Midterm due by midnight
9	10/18	(W) Chapter 13 (pp. 363-376) Fowler. 2009. "Sampling" in <i>Survey Research Methods</i>	
10	10/25	(W) Chapter 12 Mitra. 1994. "Use of Focus Groups in the Design" Stockdale. "Analyzing Focus Group Data with Spreadsheets"	
11	11/1	(W) Chapters 13 (pp. 377-395) & 15 Thomas. 2006. "A General Inductive Approach" Evaluation of MTO: Effects on Girls	
12	11/8	(W) Chapter 9 Fowler. 2009. <i>Survey Research Methods</i> , chpts 5 & 6	5
13	11/15	(W) Chapters 16 (pp. 468-475) & 17 Johnson. 2002. "Data Analysis for Description" Case: Welfare Reform in Washington State (A)	
14	11/22	(W) Chapter 20 & 21 Evaluation of Florida's Drug Control & System Improvement	Team Presentations I or 6
15	11/29	Last Class	Team Presentations II or 6
16	12/8	Final Team Evaluation Proposal	Proposal due by midnight
	12/9		7