

COURSE SYLLABUS
PSPA 604
PUBLIC PROGRAM EVALUATION METHODS
Spring, 2009

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Class Location: DuSable 459
Dates/Time: Thursdays 6:30 – 9:10 p.m.
Blackboard Site: <https://webcourses.niu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>
Office Hours: Thursdays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. and by appointment

Course Description

Modern public administration has the opportunity to continuously learn and adapt. This course provides students with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in this environment. As public managers are facing increasing pressures to do more with less, they are also being challenged to become increasingly responsive to changing public needs and shifting environmental conditions. The ability to evaluate public programs is a critical component of enhancing the capacity to learn, adapt, and serve citizens better.

Students will become better producers and consumers of program evaluation research and reports. To become intelligent producers, students must learn the concepts and practices related to designing, implementing, and communicating evaluation studies. Main topics include approaches and processes of evaluation, research design, data collection and analysis, and performance measurement.

The knowledge and skills of evaluation research give students the critical perspective necessary for becoming better research consumers. Moreover, this course broadens the student's perspectives by introducing the program context in which evaluation is initiated and directed. As a result, students are in a better position to manage evaluation projects and maximize their effectiveness.

This course capitalizes on the best of both the professional and academic worlds—it incorporates assigned readings and assignments, engaged in-class dialogue and exercises, and a service-oriented program evaluation design. The emphasis is on both research-based knowledge and best practices—the two inform one another. In-class discussions seek the integration of professional experience with quality research to generate additional insights.

Course Objectives

This course builds student knowledge and skills in program evaluation. Upon the completion of this course students will:

- gain the skills to design, implement, and communicate evaluation of public programs.
- be able to critically assess the quality of evaluation reports.
- be able to better understand the role of program evaluation in democratic governance and related ethical issues.

Course Learning Resources

Required Textbooks

Posavac, Emil J. and Raymond G. Carey. (2006). *Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies* (7th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. ISBN: 0-13-040966-9.

Bingham, Richard and Claire Felbinger. (2002). *Evaluation in Practice: A Methodological Approach* (2nd Edition). New York, NY: Seven Bridges Press. ISBN: 1-889119-57-1.

Miller, Thomas I. and Michelle Miller Kobayashi (2000). *Citizen Surveys: How to Do Them, How to Use Them, What They Mean* (2nd Edition, Paperback). Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association. ISBN: 0873261720

Other Required Readings

Most of the required readings are chapters from the assigned textbooks. Other required readings will be available in the *Blackboard* environment. You are responsible for finishing ALL readings before coming to class.

Additional Resources Online

You can access additional readings and resources online from our *Blackboard* course site. This is a living and growing site. I will make additional resources available for the entire class to share as the class progresses.

Assignments, Due Dates, and Grading

Table 1. Summary Table for Assignments, Due Date and Time, and Grade Points

Due Date and Time	Assignment	Grade Points (Percentage)
Always	Active Participation	100 pts (10%)
Feb. 5 (Thur. by 6:30 p.m.)	Logic Model Exercise	150 pts (15%)
Mar. 5 (Thur. by 6:30 p.m.)	Research Design Critique	200 pts (20%)
Mar. 27 (<i>Fri. by midnight due in Blackboard</i>)	Preliminary Research Design	150 pts (15%)
April 16 (Thur. by 6:30 p.m.)	Survey Design	150 pts (15%)
May 7 (<i>Thur. by 6:30 p.m. in Blackboard</i>)	Final Research Design Report and Presentations	250 pts (25%)

Assignments

Course assignments aim to simulate real-life scenarios to help develop the student's problem-solving capabilities. Assignments include postings, one logic model exercise, one evaluation memo on threats to validity, preliminary research design, survey, and the final evaluation design. ***They are all due prior to the class meeting. An electronic copy of the assignment needs to be submitted to the blackboard assignment page. A printed copy is also required for in-class submission at the beginning of the class.***

The assignments for this course form an integral whole. The final research design assignment is the integration of the knowledge and components of the logic model, research design critique, preliminary research design, and survey assignments. You can select your own program to evaluate and work on one module at a time as the semester progresses. Logic model provides the change theory and scope for the program. Research design critique offers you the knowledge to critically review even your own research design. Preliminary research design provides a focus and rigorous approach to answering the program evaluation questions. This evaluation then uses survey as an instrument to collect information to answer these questions. Below is a brief description of each assignment. More details will be forthcoming in the *Blackboard* course environment.

Logic Model Exercise

This exercise focuses on conceptualizing the map for the evaluation of a public program. It aims to clearly define the input, activities, output, and outcomes that are associated with a program. This exercise serves as a foundation for a better understanding of the operation of a program and the basis for thoughtful research design.

Research Design Critique

This assignment is a critical assessment of an evaluation study: “team read.” In this critique you will have the opportunity to apply your knowledge of threats to validity. This critique will help you cultivate a critical perspective that can be applied to assessing program evaluation research designs, whether they be your own or those of others.

Preliminary Program Evaluation Research Design

This exercise is preliminary to the final research design. This program evaluation should target a real-world program. The goal for this assignment is to become familiarized with the process and components of developing a research design for evaluating a public program. This assignment gives the students opportunities to get feedback on initial ideas in preparation for the final research design.

Survey Design

This exercise aims at providing students with skills for survey development. This assignment will address the issues addressed in the “Citizen Surveys” reading. Most importantly, this assignment is an opportunity to master the art and science of developing surveys that seek to learn about the quality of public services and ways to improve them.

Final Program Evaluation Research Design

The final research design for a program evaluation is the opportunity for you to apply everything you learned from this course to a specific public program. This design will cover the main components such as research (evaluation) questions, research design, program description, measures, data collection methods, and data analysis strategies. The deliverables include both a program evaluation research design as well as the presentation of it.

Grading

The instructions for each assignment will feature a section on grading criteria. Students are expected to finish the required readings for the week PRIOR to class as part of active participation. The goal is to have a productive and engaging in-class session to maximize learning outcomes. Students also need to actively participate in classroom discussions and activities. Students are also expected to participate online in discussion and providing feedback when asked. Class attendance is required.

Your final grade is based on your performance in various activities.

Active Participation	100 pts
Logic Model Exercise	150 pts
Research Design Critique	200 pts
Preliminary Evaluation Design	150 pts
Survey	150 pts
<u>Evaluation Design and Presentation</u>	<u>250 pts</u>
Total	1000 pts

Course Policies and Other Information:

Communication Requirements

Students are required to check their e-mails and *Blackboard* course Web site for announcements and resources at least once before each class meeting and once during another time of the week.

Blackboard is the primary vehicle for announcements, distributing readings, submission of assignments, and online discussions and postings. E-mail will also be used for timely communication.

Active Participation

Active participation includes active involvement in class activities, effective classroom discussion, and information exchange both in the classroom and online in the blackboard course environment. Class attendance is expected and is a necessary component of class participation.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will ONLY be accepted within 24 hrs of the specified due date and time, with a 10 percent grade deduction. Exceptions are only made for those who have a DOCUMENTED and EXTRAORDINARY EMERGENCY.

Incomplete

It is the policy of the Division of Public Administration NOT to give an incomplete except for extraordinary circumstances.

Course Fee

Course fee for this course helps support MPA lab and course instructional materials.

Disability Accommodation

Students with disabilities that may have an impact on their coursework must register with the Center for Access-Ability Resources (CAAR). It is located on the fourth floor of the Health Services Building (753-1303). CAAR will assist students in making appropriate instructional and/or examination accommodations with course instructors. It is important that CAAR and instructors be informed of any disability-related needs during the *first two weeks* of the semester.

Course Schedule, Topics, and Readings

Date Topics/Readings

PART I Introduction to Program Evaluation: Approaches, Processes, and Measurement

Jan. 15 Course Overview and Introduction

Overview of Program Evaluation

- Posavac and Carey, Ch. 1

Jan. 22 Process and Planning of Program Evaluation

- Posavac and Carey, Ch. 2 (Figure 2.1)
- Bingham and Felbinger, Ch. 1, Ch.2 (pp.15-18)

Logic Model

- Frechtling, 2007, *Logic Modeling Methods in Program Evaluation*, Chs. 3&4

Jan. 29 Evaluation Criteria, Standards, and Measures

- Posavac and Carey, Chs. 3 & 4
- Bingham and Felbinger, Ch. 3

Surveys and Citizen Surveys

- Miller and Kobayashi, *Citizen Surveys*, Chs. 1-2

PART II Evaluation Research Designs

- Feb. 5** Basic Models of Outcome Evaluations
- Bingham and Felbinger, Ch. 2, (pp. 18-20; pp. 26-30)
- Threats to Validity (Internal & External Validity)
- Bingham and Felbinger, Ch. 2, (pp. 20-26)
 - Posavac and Carey, Ch. 9 (pp. 180-187)
- Single-Group, Non-experimental Outcome Evaluation
- Posavac and Carey, Ch. 9 (all)
- Feb. 12** Reflexive Design and a Case Study
- Bingham and Felbinger, “Part IV: Reflexive Design”, pp. 151-153
 - Bingham and Felbinger, Ch. 11
- Quasi-Experimental Approaches: Pre-Post Comparison Group Design
- Bingham and Felbinger, “Part III: Quasi-Experimental Designs”, pp. 107-109
 - Posavac and Carey, Ch. 10 (pp. 201-209)
 - Case Study: Bingham and Felbinger, Ch. 8
- Feb. 19** Quasi-Experimental Approaches (II): Time Series
- Posavac and Carey, Ch. 10 (all)
 - Bingham and Felbinger, Ch. 9
- Feb. 26** Experimental Designs
- Bingham and Felbinger, Part II: Experimental Designs (pp.55-57).
 - Posavac and Carey, Ch. 11
 - Case Studies: Bingham and Felbinger, Chs. 5 & 7
- Mar. 5** Patched Designs, Meta-Analysis and Meta-Evaluation
- Bingham and Felbinger, Chs. 15&16
- Review of Methods I: Hypothesis testing, effect size, type I & II
- Use subject index to find these concepts in Posavac and Carey’s as well as Bingham and Felbinger’s books
- Mar. 12** *Spring break*
- Mar. 19** *ASPA Conference* (time for preliminary evaluation research design)
- Mar. 26** Needs Assessment and Program Monitoring as Program Evaluation
- Posavac and Carey, Chs. 6 & 7
- Mixed Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative
- Posavac and Carey, Ch. 8 (pp. 153-155; pp. 166-168)
- Review of Methods II: Sampling, Validity, and Reliability
- Miller and Kobayashi, Citizen Surveys, Ch. 3
 - Use subject index to review these concepts in Posavac and Carey’s as

well as Bingham and Felbinger's books

PART III Evaluation Data Collection, Analysis, and Management Issues

April 2 Data Collection: Utilization of Existing Information, Survey, and Use of Program Information

- Posavac and Carey, Ch. 7 (Revisit) & 8
- Fowler, F. *Survey Research Methods*. Ch. 5 (in Blackboard)
- Miller and Kobayashi, *Citizen Surveys*, Ch. 4

April 9 Analysis: Cost/Benefit Analysis, Cost-effectiveness Evaluation, and Survey Data Analysis

- Posavac and Carey, Ch. 12, Ch. 8 (pp. 166-169, revisit, in-depth reading)
- Bingham and Felbinger, Chs. 13 & 14
- Krutilla, 2005, KH Cost-Benefit Analysis (handout in Blackboard)
- Miller and Kobayashi, Chs. 5-6

April 16 Ethical Issues: Integrity of the Evaluation and Protection of Human Subjects

- Posavac and Carey, Ch. 5
- Resources available in NIU's Compliance office
<http://www.grad.niu.edu/orc/irb.htm>

Communication and Utilization of Evaluation Results

- Posavac and Carey, Chs. 13 & 14
- Miller and Kobayashi, Chs. 7-8

PART IV Performance Management: Concepts and Applications

Apr. 23 Performance Measurement: Basic Concepts and Process

- Poister, (1993), *Measuring Performance in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, Ch. 1 (in blackboard)
- Process of Performance Measurement (in blackboard)
- Bingham and Felbinger, Ch. 4

Apr. 30 Performance Measurement: Applications

- Citizen-initiated Performance Measurement: the case of Iowa
<http://www.iowacipa.org/>
- Ho, Shih-Jen and Yee-Ching Chan. (2002), "Performance Measurement and the Implementation of Balanced Scorecards in Municipal Governments", *Journal of Governmental Financial Management*, 51(4): 8-19.

PART V Concluding Remarks, Presentations, and Discussions

May 7 Presentations and Discussions of Evaluation Projects