HEINZ COLLEGE, CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM EVALUATION (90-823 SECTION W)
FALL SEMESTER: 2016 (12 UNITS)

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION:

Professor: Christopher Spera, Ph.D.
Office Hours: by appointment
Class Time: Wednesday, 6pm-850pm
E-mail: cspera@andrew.cmu.edu;
cspera30@gmail.com
Teaching Assistant: Julie Williams
Office Hours: by appointment
E-mail: jwilliams1101@gmail.com

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

*Program evaluation* provides an objective basis for decision making regarding program outcomes; it is the systematic application of social science methods to assess needs for a program along with the program's design, implementation, and outcomes. It results in (1) information regarding the program’s merit, worth, or significance and (2) an accounting of the objective strengths and weaknesses of this information.

Program evaluations are a critical component of determining program value. Social programs may carry them out internally, or an external organization may carry out the evaluations. Evaluations and their results may be highly politically charged or of interest only to direct stakeholders. There are excellent program evaluations that have had tremendous impacts on programs and their target populations. There are also poor or flawed program evaluations that provide weaker information than could have been obtained, provide incorrect information, or are misleading.

The program evaluation course is designed to:

- Provide the student with the theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and statistical tools of program evaluation.
- Teach the student how to conduct basic and complex program evaluations, as well as how to critique and monitor comprehensive program evaluations.
- Successful completion of this course will prepare students to be a contributing member of teams that design and carry out program evaluations or that commission program evaluations and make decisions based upon their results.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the completion of this course, the graduate student will:

- Understand the purpose of program evaluation, the various types of program evaluation methodologies, and how to use program evaluation methods to answer research questions relevant to policy, practice, and programing.
• Develop a logic model to express a theory of change, and specify strategies to implement this theory of change for systems transformation.

• Describe interventions in measurable terms that articulate a theory of change and specify underlying assumptions that guide service delivery strategies designed to produce change and/or outcomes.

• Learn about performance measurement and systematic tracking of outputs and outcomes.

• Understand quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques used in program evaluation, as well as state-of-the-art techniques for data analysis and deducing study conclusions.

• Master common pitfalls to program evaluation studies and communication of findings, including threats to internal and external validity.

• Evaluate the applicability of evaluation findings to policy-makers, practitioners, and program managers in public service, as well as how to translate evaluation findings into policy and program recommendations.

III. COURSE TEXT:

The textbook is available at the bookstore or via Amazon.com


IV. REQUIRED ADDITIONAL READINGS:

The additional required readings will be posted via blackboard.


• Haskins, R., & Baron, J. (2011). Building the connection between policy and evidence. The Obama evidenced-based initiatives. NESTA.


V. PREREQUISITES

Students should complete the first year of the MS DC core curriculum before enrolling in this class.

VI. YOUR ROLE:

• We are partners in this learning experience. I EXPECT YOU TO:

  ✓ Attend class and constructively participate in it
  ✓ Read materials for each week
  ✓ Contribute to and take responsibility for assignments
  ✓ Prepare for exams
✓ Conduct your learning with academic integrity
✓ Be aware of and be proactive about your own learning style and time management

VII. ATTENDANCE POLICY:

- Class participation is graded (it is worth 10% of the total course grade – see grading section of syllabus). Students are expected to attend all classes. However, there can be unforeseen circumstances and emergencies that arise. Students may be granted one excused absence for the course which could include an illness or personal emergency (you need to contact me within 1-2 days of missing class if not sooner in order to be excused) or an apprenticeship-related travel/opportunity that is worked out with me in advance of the missed class. After the one excused absence, or for any unexcused absences, the student can choose to submit a make-up paper (due within two weeks of the missed class) OR receive a “0” for their participation grade for each missed class which will factor into the student’s final grade for the course. The student should contact me to work out the topic for the paper. Please note that even if a student misses a class (whether excused or unexcused), assignments due for that day must still be completed and handed in. Under certain circumstances, such as illness of the student, the instructor may grant extensions to due dates.

VIII. COURSE POLICIES:

- Referencing is expected whenever quoting or otherwise using others’ work (such as paraphrasing or employing key ideas). Standard APA style will be used for in-text citations and for references. Given the availability of information on the Web, it is often difficult to evaluate the quality of online sources. It is expected that students will pay attention to the domain, sponsor, author’s background, and date of information on websites used and will cite all information obtained from websites (see APA Manual 5th edition, for how to reference sources from electronic media). In general, on-line sources should be from refereed journals unless you find an exceptionally well documented website related to your topic/research.

- Academic conduct. Students are subject to Carnegie Mellon University’s policies on academic integrity (http://www.cmu.edu/academic-integrity/plagiarism/index.html). Plagiarism is a serious offense that will result in the student failing the course. Note that all academic integrity violations will be reported to the Associate Dean. Additional penalties may be imposed. Plagiarism includes:
  - Presenting another writer’s work as your own;
  - Cutting and pasting content verbatim without using quotation marks to indicate a direct quote;
  - Inserting a direct quote or paraphrasing content without citing the source in-text using footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations with a corresponding Works Cited, References, or Notes page – in a manner consistent with an APA, MLA, or Chicago style guide;
  - Providing incomplete or incorrect information about the source cited;
  - Over-relying on templates or other writers’ phrasing.

Also, submitting work written for another course is not acceptable; consequently, a failing grade will be issued for that assignment.
IX. Grading Scale:

The grading scale will be:

- A+ 100-98
- B+ 89-87
- A  97-94
- B  86-83
- A- 93-90
- B- 80-82
- C  70-79
- F  <70

X. Assignments and Exams:

A. Homework Assignments. There will be 3-4 short homework assignments given in class (due the following week). The homework assignments will be spread across the semester as we cover specific topics.

Due: Various/TBD (15% of grade)

B. Quiz. The quiz covers materials to date in course (Section 1 of course).

Due: September 27 (15% of grade)

C. Concept Paper: Policy and Evidence. Select option #1 or #2 or #3 below.

Option #1. Develop a paper of approximately 15-20 pages in length. Based on the Haskins and Baron (2011) paper, please:

- 1 – Select one of the six evidence-based initiatives
  - Present a literature review on the initiative.
    - What evidence is there for the interventions being proposed within the initiative?
    - Why did you pick this one? Why does it speak to you?
    - In your opinion, is this initiative a good candidate for federal funding?
    - How will this initiative influence policy and practice?
- 2 – Gather literature and information on this initiative through online search
  - What do you like about the initiative? What do you dislike? What is the status of it?
  - What are the challenges?
- 3 – Develop a short presentation to present to the class that explains the evidenced-based initiative.

Option #2. Develop a paper of approximately 15-20 pages in length based on your research on pay for success and social impact bonds.

- 1 – Present a literature review on the initiative.
  - Discuss the history and evolution of pay for success and social impact bonds.
  - Select one pay for success or social impact bond experiment and discuss it in depth.
- 2 – Discuss the merits and challenges of the initiative and framework.
  - What are the challenges? Opportunities?
- 3 – Discuss the long-term implications of the initiative and its potential to impact public policy.
  - What longevity do you expect for this initiative?
How will it impact (or not impact) public policy in the long-term?


- 1 – Discuss the policy problem and research/evaluation design used.
  - Discuss the literature on this topic
- 2 – Identify the strengths of the way(s) in which the researchers tackled the policy challenge
  - Discuss why they were strengths
- 3 – Identify improvements to the way(s) in which the researchers tackled the policy challenge
  - Describe the ways you would improve upon their work. Be specific.

In a 10-minute presentation, share with the class your concept paper based on the evidenced-based concept paper developed in Assignment C above.

DUE: November 1 (20% of grade)

D. Develop Evaluation Prospectus (Final Paper). Write a 15-25 page program evaluation prospectus based on a specific request for proposal (RFP), which will be provided by Dr. Spera. This can be done individual or pairs of two students together. Include your proposed research questions, specific aims, population/setting/agency, general methodological plan, and anticipated implications for research/programming/policy/practice. Aspects of your proposal you may want to address include:

- The purpose of the evaluation including the setting, auspices and sponsorship.
- Assessment of agency background, strengths, and challenges impacting evaluation.
- The defined roles of key agency staff, outside consultation (if applicable) and your role in the evaluation design and implementation.
- Reflection on informed consent and human subjects protection
- The major evaluation questions and specific study aims.
- Literature supporting your evaluation design, methods, and theory.
- The program theory used and its applicability to the setting.
- Development of a program logic model depicting the role of this evaluation within the overall agency structure.
- Design and methodology for the evaluation, including sampling, recruitment, and data collection methods. Also discuss design limitations and weaknesses.
- The data analysis plan (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods)
- Outline a budget and timeline appropriate to carrying out the proposed design
- Clearly articulate the “next steps” in this evaluation design that will be taken by the agency and/or the evaluator in order to implement the evaluation. Discuss what the agency and, if applicable, you as the evaluator would need to do to disseminate the findings (audience, format, content).

DUE: Dec 13 (20% of grade)

E. Final Exam. The final exam covers all materials in the course.

DUE: Dec 13 (20% of grade)
F. Class Participation.

**DUE: N/A (10% of grade)**

**XI. COURSE OUTLINE:**

Please find below the course outline. It is expected that you read each assignment prior to coming to class. Throughout the course, we will use a mix of lecture, in-class group work, and discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DISCUSSION TOPIC</th>
<th>READINGS, ACTIVITIES &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Section #1: PROGRAM EVALUATION: OVERVIEW &amp; PLANNING</strong></td>
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| 1 Aug 30 | - Introductions to course  
- Syllabus  
- Overview of program evaluation | - Course Textbook, Chapter 1, Planning and designing useful evaluations (Newcomer, Hatry, Wholey, 2010)  
- Program evaluation, alternative approaches and practical guidelines, Chapter 1, Evaluation’s basic purpose, use, and conceptual distinctions (Worthen, Sanders, Fitzpatrick, 1997) |
| 2 Sept 6 | - Overview of program eval. (cont.)  
- Stakeholder engagement  
- Implementation research  
- Types of program evaluation studies (e.g., formative, summative) | - Course Textbook, Chapter 2, Analyzing and engaging stakeholders (Bryson, Quinn Patton, 2010)  
- A guide to implementation research, Chapter 1, an introduction to implementation research (Werner, 2004) |
| 3 Sept 13 | - Theory of Change  
- Logic models  
- Outputs vs. Outcomes | - Course Textbook, Chapter 3, Using logic models (McLaughlin, Jordan, 2010)  
| 4 Sept 20 | - Performance measurement  
- Difference between performance measurement and evaluation | - Course Textbook, Chapter 5, Performance Measurement: Monitoring program outcomes (Poister, 2010) |
|      | **Section #2: PROGRAM EVALUATION: TYPES OF METHODOLOGICAL DESIGNS** | Assignment #B Due: QUIZ [Covers Section 1 of Course] |
| 5 Sept 27 | - RCT designs (causal designs)  
- Baseline equivalency |  
- Course Textbook, Chapter 7, Randomized Controlled Trials and Nonrandomized Designs (Torgerson, Torgerson, & Taylor, 2010)  
- Course Textbook, Chapter 6, Comparison group designs (Henry, 2010) |
| 6 Oct 4 | - Quasi-experimental designs  
- Propensity score matching  
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tr>
<td>8 Oct 18</td>
<td>Multisite evaluations, Rapid cycle evaluations, Predictive analytics</td>
<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 10, Designing, managing, and analyzing multisite evaluations (Rog, 2010)</td>
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<td>9 Oct 25</td>
<td>Tiered-evidence programs, Pay for success, Evidenced based programming</td>
<td>Building the connection between policy and evidence. The Obama evidenced-based initiatives. NESTA.</td>
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<td>10 Nov 1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Assignment #C Due: Concept Paper on Evidence and Class Presentations</td>
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<td>11 Nov 8</td>
<td>Study recruitment and retention, Incentives, Survey methods</td>
<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 9, Recruitment and retention of study participants (Cook, Godiwalla, Brooks, Powers, &amp; John, 2010)</td>
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<td>12 Nov 15</td>
<td>Data sources (agency records), Field data collection, Qualitative techniques, Focus groups, Interviews, Stories/anecdotes</td>
<td>Course Textbook Chapter 11, Using agency records (Hatry, 2010)</td>
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<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 14, Collecting Data in the Field (Nightingale, Rossman, 2010)</td>
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<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 17, Focus group interviewing (Krueger, Casey, 2010)</td>
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<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 16, Conducting semi-structured interviews (Adams, 2010)</td>
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<td>No Class  Nov 22</td>
<td>No Class – Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td>No Class – Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<td>13 Nov 29</td>
<td>Content analysis/coding, Inferential statistics (t-test, ANOVA, regression, etc.), Using statistics in evaluation</td>
<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 19, qualitative analysis (Newcomer, Conger, 2010)</td>
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<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 20, Using statistics in evaluation (Newcomer, Conger, 2010)</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Additional Information</td>
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<td>Dec 6</td>
<td>Developing and bidding on an RFP for evaluation services, Evaluation firms, Careers in evaluation, Evaluation pitfalls, Course Review</td>
<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 26, Contracting for evaluation products and services (Bell, 2010)</td>
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<td>Course Textbook, Chapter 23, Pitfalls in evaluation (Hatry, Newcomer, 2010)</td>
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<td>Dec 14</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Assignment #D Due: Evaluation Prospectus</td>
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<td>Assignment #E Due: Final Exam</td>
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