Course Description:
In all parts of the world, from the local to the global level, governments, funding agencies, organizations, and individuals are involved in activities meant to improve some aspect of people’s lives – disaster relief in Haiti, human rights work in Sierra Leone, increasing school attendance in Detroit or improving outcomes for IV drug users in Barcelona, the list is long and ever changing. The needs addressed by these programs are often compelling and the programs themselves can be innovative, practical, and inspired. From those running and funding social programs to those whose needs are meant to be addressed by these programs a central question arises:

Does this social program work?

In this course you will learn how to gather and synthesize evidence to address this question. Program evaluation is the systematic application of social science methods to assess each aspect of a program: the need for the program, the program's design and implementation, and ultimately the program’s impact on relevant outcomes. A completed program evaluation results in (1) information regarding the program’s merit, worth, or significance, (2) an accounting of the objective strengths and limitations of this information and (3) the implications of both (1) and (2) for decision making.

Program evaluations differ as much as the social programs they evaluate. Social programs may carry them out internally, or an external organization may be brought in. An evaluation may be highly quantitative or entirely qualitative; it may focus exclusively on needs assessment or assessing program implementation. 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 positive 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.

This course is designed to familiarize the student with the central concepts and methods of program evaluation. Students will be taught how to conduct basic program evaluations as well as how to critique and monitor more comprehensive program evaluations. Successful completion of this course will prepare students to be contributing members of teams that design and carry out program evaluations or that commission program evaluations and make decisions based upon their results.

Course Text:

Other Recommended Texts:
Your Role:
We are partners in this learning experience. I EXPECT YOU TO:

- Conduct your learning with **Academic Integrity** ([http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html](http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html))
- Attend **class** and constructively participate in it
- Contribute to and take responsibility for **team projects**
- Do **individual assignments**
- Prepare for **exams**
- Be aware of and proactive about your own learning style and time management
- **Pursue your own understanding:** What is your understanding? Does it fit with what else you know? What is solid, missing, or vague? What can you do to make what is missing or vague more solid: attend office hours, participate in Blackboard Discussions, create a Study Group, review reading, review Homework solutions, make an appointment with the Instructor or TA...

Course Requirements:

Assignments

Individual:
- Readings & Brief Reaction Papers (1.5 - 2 pages; drop lowest one)
- Other Homework assignments (drop lowest one)
  - You may work with others on these but must write up your own response and note on your Homework the names of those with whom you worked
- Midterm & Final Exams

Team:
- Project 1: Propose and justify a program evaluation design in response to an actual RFP
- Project 2: Critique completed program evaluations, make and defend program funding consequences – with one other student

*Assignments will be due at the start of class; please hand them in electronically via Blackboard before that time. There will be zero credit for late assignments.*

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, successful students will be able to...

- Be a valuable member of an evaluation team, able to contribute to both planning and execution, while having a solid foundation on which to build.
- Be an informed consumer of program evaluations, and assist governments, agencies or funding organizations in making decisions based on evaluations.
- Differentiate between strengths, limitations, and weaknesses of an evaluation and of a program, and communicate those distinctions clearly.
- Understand the methods and concepts introduced in the course, AND be able to explain them clearly, in plain language, to diverse stakeholders with diverse backgrounds.
- Identify when each method for evidence gathering and analysis would be appropriate or inappropriate, and defend those assessments.
- Explain to a newly elected official how to best think about assessing government programs.
Course Grading:
- Class participation: 5%
- Reaction Papers, Problem Sets, & Presentation: 21%
- Team Project #1: 24%
- Team Project #2: 6%
- Midterm exam: 20%
- Final exam: 24%

Participation in Classroom Discussions: The ability to engage in informed, productive conversations about program evaluation with multiple stakeholders is essential to success as a funder, consumer, or conductor of evaluations. Students will have numerous opportunities to practice engaging in such conversations, to reflect on their contributions, and to improve their performance. (5%)

Midterm and Final Examinations: The midterm exam will cover all course material prior to the exam. The final exam is cumulative and will cover all course material with a focus on the material covered in the second half of the semester. On both exams students will be allowed to use one sheet (both sides) of notes and will need a calculator. (44% total)

Team Projects: Students will be assigned to a team with 4-5 members for the first project and you may select a partner for the 2nd project: (30% total)

Team Project #1: Propose and Justify a Program Evaluation Design in response to an RFP (24%)

- The goal of this group project is to have your team put the concepts, vocabulary, and methodologies of program evaluation into practice by designing a program evaluation and justifying your design choices.

- The product of this group project will be a substantial written report that clearly describes the proposed design, gives justification for the design choices and demonstrates how the design is responsive to/appropriate for the RFP, the program being evaluated, and the target population. What your team hands in is expected to be a polished and professional document.

Team Project #2: Using Program Evaluations as a Decision Tool (6%)

- The goal of this team project is to have your team put the concepts, vocabulary, and methodologies of program evaluation you have learned into practice by (a) critiquing the strengths and weaknesses of completed program evaluations, (b) proposing actions your team’s funding agency should take based upon the evaluations, and (c) identifying lessons learned for future program evaluations your agency may commission.

- The product of this project will be a short written report that clearly describes the strengths and limitations of the completed program evaluations, the resulting proposed actions for the funding agency, and lessons learned. What your team hands in is expected to be a polished and substantive document.
Attendance and Late Assignment Policies:
Students are expected to attend class. Participation is graded. On occasion, students may need to miss class – please inform Dr. Haviland in advance. Students are responsible for all assignments and for all material discussed during class, whether present or absent. As indicated above, two individual assignments (one of each type) will be dropped from final grade calculations – ideally this allows students to try out the concepts covered in class by putting full effort into each assignment which may naturally result in different levels of initial success across assignments, and then to pursue mastery of any material receiving a low score without untoward grade penalty (assuming mastery of concepts is achieved and demonstrated through group projects and exams). At your own risk, you also may choose to not hand in assignments you intend to drop – as this option is available to you, we will not accept or grade any late assignments and no extensions will be granted. Please plan accordingly.

Cheating & Plagiarism
Students are expected to honor the letter and the spirit of the Carnegie Mellon University Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism. All activities cited in that policy will be treated as cheating in this course. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with this policy. Students are also encouraged to review the Carnegie Mellon University Academic Disciplinary Actions Overview for Graduate Students, which details penalties and sanctions, as well as students’ rights. I will take a zero-tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism and will consult with Departmental leadership on appropriate action for all instances of cheating and plagiarism. As the aforementioned policies indicate, penalties can include course failure, suspension, and dismissal from the program.
*Carnegie Mellon University Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism*
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html
*Carnegie Mellon University Academic Disciplinary Actions Overview for Graduate Students*
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/GradDisc.html

Personal Accommodations
Students with disabilities: If you wish to request an accommodation due to a documented disability, please inform me and contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. They can be reached at access@andrew.cmu.edu or (412) 268-2013.

Final Remark
• Use of electronic devices during class: As research on learning shows, unexpected noises and movement automatically divert and capture people's attention, which means you are affecting everyone’s learning experience if your cell phone, pager, laptop, tablet, etc. makes noise or is visually distracting during class. For this reason, I ask you to turn off your mobile devices, and use your laptop/tablet only to take notes and/or to access assigned reading materials.
I. **Program Evaluation: Stages and Methods**
   a. What is Program Evaluation? Stage 0: Context of Program Evaluation, Identifying Relevant Questions
      i. **Rossi:** Chapters 1, 2, & 3
      ii. **Methods Focus (What):** Uncovering and questioning assumptions
   b. **Stage 1: Needs Assessment**
      i. **Rossi:** Chapter 4; Case Study; Henry: Chapters 1-3; 6a;
      ii. **Methods Focus (How):** Probability Sampling I; Random Selection; Capture-Recapture
   c. **Stage 2: Program Theory Evaluation**
      i. **Rossi:** Chapter 5; Case Study
      ii. **Methods Focus (What):** Logic Models
      iii. **Methods Focus (How):** Focus Groups, Individual Interviews, and Document Review
   d. **Stage 3: Process Evaluation**
      i. **Rossi:** Chapter 6; Case Study
      ii. **Methods Focus (What):** Utilization Coverage & ‘Bias’
      iii. **Methods Focus (How):** Direct Observation and Document Review
   e. **Stage 4: Outcome Evaluation – Identifying and Measuring Outcomes**
      i. **Rossi:** Chapter 7; Fowler: Chapters 4, 5 & 6;
      ii. **Methods Focus (How):** Designing Survey Questions; Reliability and Validity
      iii. **Methods Focus (How):** Selecting a Survey Mode
   f. **Stage 4 continued: Outcome Evaluation – Assessing Program Impact I**
      i. **Rossi:** Chapter 8; Case Study
      ii. **Methods Focus (What):** Causal Inference, missing counterfactuals
      iii. **Methods Focus (How):** Random Assignment vs. Randomized experiments
   g. **Stage 4 continued: Outcome Evaluation – Assessing Program Impact II**
      i. **Rossi:** Chapter 9; Case Study
      ii. **Methods Focus (How):** Non-randomized outcome designs
      iii. **Methods Focus (How):** Estimating counterfactuals in observational studies; Sources of bias

II. **Beyond the Basics & Putting it into Practice**
   a. Probability Sampling II
      i. Henry: Chapters 6b & 7a; Fowler: Chapters 2a & 3
      ii. **Methods Focus:** Stratification, Clustering, Calculating Sample Sizes
   b. Better than an Observational Study, Not as Good as an Experiment
      i. **Rossi:** Chapter 9
      ii. **Methods Focus:** Regression Discontinuity; Quasi-Experiments; Instrumental Variables
   c. Interpreting and Presenting Program Evaluation Evidence
      i. **Rossi:** Chapter 10
      ii. **Methods Focus:** Over- and Under- Stating Evidence; Moderators and Mediators
      iii. **Methods Focus:** Multiple Testing problems and fixes (Bonferroni)
Important Dates:

Midterm Exam: Thursday, February 18th

Team Project #1 Due Date: Thursday, March 31st

Team Project #2 Due Date: Tuesday, April 26th

Final Exam: Week of May 2-6th (specific day & time to be determined)