

**The Trachtenberg School of Public Policy  
and Public Administration  
Fall 2023**

**Course Number:** PPPA 6016

**Course Title:** Public and Non-Profit Program Evaluation

**Course**

**Description:** This course is intended to give the student an appreciation of the contributions and limitations of public and non-profit program evaluation, as well as a familiarity with the basic skills needed to conduct evaluations. Emphasis will be given to coping with the conceptual, methodological, organizational, political, and ethical problems which face evaluators. The various tasks facing evaluators will be discussed, from developing the questions to presenting the data. The specific issues addressed in class sessions are noted on the attached class schedule.

**Prerequisites:** Preferably PPPA 6002 or an equivalent basic course on research design.

**Professor:** Dr. Kathryn Newcomer  
Cell Telephone: 301-706-9296  
E-mail: [newcomer@gwu.edu](mailto:newcomer@gwu.edu) (it is merged with [Kathryn.newcomer@gmail.com](mailto:Kathryn.newcomer@gmail.com) – so they are the same)  
Office Hours: I am available everyday, so please feel free to text or email me to tell me when you want to chat via zoom or in person.

### **Required Readings:**

Allan Kimmel, *Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research*, Sage 1988. (on Blackboard)

Kathryn Newcomer, Harry Hatry, and Joseph Wholey, *The Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, Jossey-Bass, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2015. (on Blackboard)

Michael Lewis, *Moneyball*. 2004. (or movie) (Note: this is **optional**)

AND, the Gertler, et. al. text, *Impact Evaluation in Practice* – the entire volume is on blackboard, GAO reports and other readings by a diverse set of authors are also provided by the instructor on blackboard. All readings except Lewis are on blackboard.

**Note** there is a great website with timely and free materials at **[betterevaluation.org](http://betterevaluation.org)**

### **Student Learning Objectives:**

Through course discussions, readings, and assignments, students will develop knowledge and skills to enable them to:

- 1) develop knowledge of and skills in culturally responsive evaluation;
- 2) develop theory of change and program logic models;
- 3) work with stakeholders to frame utilization-oriented evaluation questions;
- 4) design clear and useful data collection instruments for use in evaluation work;
- 5) identify pertinent professional standards and ethical principles affecting specific dilemmas confronting evaluators in the field;
- 6) design implementation, outcome, and impact evaluations;
- 7) develop useful performance measures and design performance measurement systems for public and non-profit programs;
- 8) design user-oriented reports to convey evaluation findings; and
- 9) develop useful and feasible recommendations based on evaluation findings.

### **Method of Instruction:**

The tasks and constraints facing professionals involved in the design and implementation of program evaluations are explored by class participation in both in-class and written exercises. Questions and problems facing both evaluators and managers of programs being evaluated are examined.

### **Classroom Expectations:**

Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process and works best when all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity. We value civility because that is the kind of community we want, and we care for it because civility permits intellectual exploration and growth.

### **Respect for Diversity:**

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I strive to create an inclusive classroom and present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, and political affiliation. **Your suggestions on how to help me succeed with this are encouraged and appreciated.**

### **Acknowledging Historical Realities about GW:**

#### GW and Slavery:

“Although additional work remains to be done, initial research into Columbian College [GW’s predecessor] clearly shows that the practice of slavery influenced the school from the president down to enslaved servants. The college was located in a slave-owning city, financed and led by slave owners and men who profited from the slave economy, educated pro-slavery students, and depended on the labor of enslaved people” ([library.gwu.edu/slavery-columbian-college](http://library.gwu.edu/slavery-columbian-college)).

#### GW & Native American Lands

“George Washington University's Foggy Bottom Campus in downtown Washington, D.C. ... resides on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Piscataway and Anacostan peoples. ... The District borders the confluence of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, a historic center of trade and cultural exchange between several tribal nations. For generations, the Piscataway and Anacostian Peoples have resided in this region and served as stewards of the local land and waterways” ([cipp.cps.gwu.edu/land-acknowledgement](http://cipp.cps.gwu.edu/land-acknowledgement)).

### **Assigned**

**Readings:**

Assigned readings are selected to give students a representative sample of the professional evaluation literature, as well as to expose them to the sorts of issues which arise in the context of real life evaluations.

**Assignments:**

**Please bring all written assignments to class the day due, thank you!!**

**1. Class Participation:** Attendance is required for successful completion of this course, and class may run a little past 1pm on occasion. Students are expected to have completed required readings prior to the class meeting for which they are listed. Class discussion on the required readings will affect course grades, especially in borderline cases.

**NOTE: ALL written assignments must be submitted via paper copy or in electronic copy to my [newcomer@gwu.edu](mailto:newcomer@gwu.edu) email address on or before the due date. Due dates are firm for all written assignments - except the final applied project, where the due date will be negotiated with each team. Late papers will be penalized by lower grades.**

**2. One Critique:** Students will review critically an evaluation that may be selected by the student. (20% of grade). **Due March 8.**

**NOTE: The evaluation report to be critiqued must present results about an impact or outcome evaluation of an existing program, not an article about how to conduct surveys or research, nor a formative evaluation.**

**Please send me a link to the evaluation you select so I can approve it before you write the critique.**

The approximately five page single-spaced critique of the evaluation should be prepared in the following format:

- 1) a brief introduction;
- 2) a description of the focus and findings;
- 2) identification of the key evaluation questions addressed **or your take** on what they must have been if not specified by the author;
- 3) a brief summary of the research design and data collection methods used;

4) a **table** that contains a systematic list of threats to the: measurement validity, measurement reliability, internal validity, external validity, and statistical conclusion validity. Note that the threats should be clearly presented, for example do not simply state “Hawthorne Effect,” but clarify how/why that threat occurred; AND

**5) the threats should be labeled as: those the authors acknowledged and addressed; threats the authors acknowledged but did not address; and those the authors did not acknowledge or address.**

**Please see a good example on Blackboard to emulate.**

**3. In-Class Exercises and Debates:** In-Class exercises will be held throughout the semester. Class debates over ethical issues in program evaluation also will be held throughout the semester and require an oral presentation. Students will be graded on their performance in the exercises and debates (accounting for 15% of course grade).

**4. Exam:** A take home essay exam covering the readings and content of the course will contribute 30% to the course grade. The exam will consist of three focused, brief memoranda that are spaced out across the semester. Guidance on writing clear memoranda can be found on Blackboard. **Students will be given the topics and intended audiences for each memorandum at least two weeks before each is due. The memoranda will be due on Oct. 4, Nov. 8 and Dec. 6.**

**5. Applied Evaluation Project:** **Members of the class will be expected to participate in a program evaluation project with one other student during the semester.** Students choosing to participate in an evaluation project for a client identified by the instructor are typically asked to prepare an evaluation design for an actual program or analyze data and report findings. **The report is due no later than May 10th unless a prior agreement on a later due date is negotiated with the instructor.** The project contributes 35% to the course grade.

**Note:** there are great examples of projects from previous semesters on Blackboard.

**PLEASE DO NOT GIVE YOUR REPORT NOR ANY DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS YOU DRAFT TO THE CLIENT UNTIL THE INSTRUCTOR HAS REVIEWED IT.**

### **APPLIED PROJECT**

Student groups (of 2 or 3 students) are asked to respond to a request from a nonprofit organization or public agency anxious to receive evaluation technical support. Some of the requests will entail a specific project such as a one-shot client survey, but many could result in development of a design, in which case, the students should design data collection instruments and pre-test them.

Scoping out the evaluation entails collecting information on the program through interviews with key contacts (decision-makers, staff, etc.) on current information needs, and conducting a synthesis of past related research and evaluation studies. With the focus of the evaluation identified, the project will then involve laying out an evaluation design, data collection plan, analysis plan, and briefing and presentation plan. Students are expected to prepare a theory of change model with the client, and design data collection tools and pre-test them, e.g. surveys or interview schedules. The design should be developed with clear awareness of the political aspects of the situation and tailored to the needs of the agency leadership. Students are expected to research evaluations undertaken on similar sorts of programs to offer a comparative perspective. Strategies for encouraging the use of the resulting evaluation findings also should be discussed.

The instructor will provide the list of requests during the first week of the semester and will facilitate initial contacts. Once a student group decides to work with a nonprofit, they should submit a brief **statement of the work** (2 pages) to be reviewed first by the instructor, and then, upon securing her approval, shared with the management of the nonprofit organization. This does not really constitute a contract and does not need to be signed formally.

The **Statement of the Work** should include:

- 1) a concise description of the evaluation questions that the primary stakeholders have identified;
- 2) a description of the methodology to be employed by the students to address the evaluation questions including about how many interviews or focus groups will be conducted – if applicable;
- 3) identification of specific tasks to be accomplished;

- 4) identification of the expectations of information that the agency will provide to the students, along with expected dates when they will provide the information, e.g., contact information for clients or other data required ;
- 5) a time line depicting deadlines for the tasks identified in #3.

The written product will be submitted first to the instructor for suggestions, and then to the nonprofit agency requestor. **The report should have all of the components identified in the list below or the subset that is negotiated with Prof. Newcomer.**

### **Required Elements of the Report for the Applied Project**

The suggested contents and order of presentation for the report are as follows:

- I. **Executive Summary:** Guidance and examples will be provided in class on formatting the Executive Summary.
- II. **Introduction and Background:** An introduction to the project, including the names of the team and how/why they became involved, should be given along with a description of the scoping activities, including a brief description of the program, and a synthesis of relevant past research and evaluation findings. Also, cite relevant literature on the program. Here also include an introduction to the rest of the report, as well.
- III. **Evaluation Questions:** The issues that have been identified and the specific questions that were addressed, or should be addressed if the project is an evaluation plan, should be provided.
- IV. **Evaluation Design:** A brief summary of the design(s) undertaken, or to be undertaken, including the concepts and variables, the theory underlying the policy/program, etc. should be provided. A **theory of change model** of the program/policy must be developed with clients and presented in the body of the report with an appropriate introduction, i.e., stating what it is, how it was developed and how it may be used by the client.
- V. **Data Collection:** The sources of data available, measures used to address the research questions, data collection methods, and sampling procedures should be discussed. Also, there should be a list of **potential limitations** to each type of validity and reliability, as well as actions undertaken to reduce the impact of the limitations identified. Use of a **design matrix** to cover all of these issues is strongly recommended and required if an evaluation plan only is provided.

- VI. Data Analysis:** Appropriate tables and figures should be constructed in accordance with guidance given in class for projects that are completed. If the project is an evaluation plan, proposed analytic strategies should be discussed.
- VII. Conclusion:** A brief conclusion should be provided.
- VIII. Appendices:** 1) Biographical Sketches of the Evaluation Team, and 2) all surveys or interview protocols used **or** provided for future use.

### **Class Schedule and Assignments**

#### **Session 1 (Aug. 30)**

##### **Introduction to the Course and Overview of the Field of Program Evaluation**

Readings:

Chapter 1 in Newcomer, et. al. *Handbook* text on BB  
Patton article on BB

Questions:

- What is program evaluation? What types of studies and analytical support fall under this concept?
- How does program evaluation differ from other forms of analysis?
- What are the different approaches to evaluation?
- How did the field of evaluation evolve?
- Where does evaluation take place and who conducts evaluations?
- What are some of the more critical issues that face the evaluation profession?
- Who are “professional evaluators?”
- What is the status of program evaluation in other nations, e.g performance auditing?
- What role does program evaluation play for international funders, e.g. the World Bank?
- How do current performance measurement efforts relate to program evaluation?
- How does organizational culture shape evaluation capacity?

#### **Session 2 (Sept. 6)**

##### **Scoping Evaluations: Establishing Objectives for Evaluation Work**

Readings:

Newcomer and Hart Chapter 3 on BB  
American Evaluation Association Evaluation Guiding Principles



## Parsons on Complexity Theory

### Questions:

- What is the guidance provided to evaluators by the AEA professional Standards?
- What role should staff and external stakeholders play in evaluation?
- What role can the evaluator play in program development and design?
- What pre-design steps are desirable for the evaluator to take?
- What is the program theory? How can it be developed and refined?
- What is logic modeling?
- How might theories of change (ToC) models guide evaluation?
- How does a ToC differ from a traditional logic model?
- What are complex, adaptive systems? And what are the key concepts relevant to program evaluation from systems thinking?
- What should be contained in a Statement of Work (SOW)?

### **Session 3 (Sept. 13)**

#### **Strategies for Engaging Stakeholders**

### Readings:

Bryson and Patton Chapter 2 in Newcomer, et. al. text  
Design Thinking article  
Preskill and Catsambas article

### Questions:

- What role do stakeholders play in evaluation?
- How might stakeholders be most fruitfully engaged?
- What is appreciative inquiry, and when is it helpful and when is it not as applicable?
- How do nonprofits measure outcomes?

### **Session 4 (Sept 20)**

#### **An Overview of Evaluation in the Non-profit Sector and International Development: Conducting Evaluations in Non-profit Agencies and Expectations of Foundations and Other Funders**

### Readings:

*Dealing with Complexity in Development Evaluation*, Chapter 1 and 2 on BB  
“Randomistas” set of two articles on BB

### Questions:

- What/who drives evaluation in the nonprofit sector? Who funds it?
- How do funders approach the evaluation process?
- What information is sought?
- What do stakeholders do with the findings?
- What are the challenges of applying evaluation in the sector?
- In what ways can evaluation be useful to nonprofits?
- What are the various models or approaches used in the sector?
- Who conducts evaluation in the nonprofit sector?
- What is the state of practice of evaluation in international development?
- What are the arguments, pro and con, of the use of RCTs in the international context?
- What are expectations of funders of capacity building in developing countries? And how realistic are they?
- What are challenges facing nonprofit agencies in developing countries to using monitoring and evaluation?

### **Session 5 (Sept. 27)**

**Evaluating Implementation and Process, and Anticipating Pitfalls in Evaluation Work (PLUS Please remember we will go over the McMahan article as if you were critiquing it to help prepare you for the critique due )**

Readings:

Holcomb and Nightingale article  
 Wholey Chapter 4 in Newcomer, et. al. text  
**and**  
 Newcomer and Hart Chapter 2 on Evidence  
 Sample Article – McMahan, et al.

Questions:

- How should formative evaluations be designed?
- How do you measure program implementation?
- How should feedback be incorporated in an implementation study?
- How should an implementation study be linked with an outcome study?
- What is evaluability assessment? What are the steps? How can it be used to guide evaluation? How can it be used as a management tool?
- What are the most common threats to measurement validity and measurement reliability, and to internal, external, and statistical conclusion validity?

### **Session 6 (Oct. 4)**

**Outcome and Impact Evaluation**

**NOTE: First memo due.**

Readings:

Henry Chapter 6 in Newcomer, et. al. text  
Cartright article  
Skim Gertler, et al. Chapter 4, 5, and 6

Questions:

- What are the commonly used designs to measure program outcomes?
- What are the considerations in selecting a design to evaluate program impact?
- How do the evaluators weigh the tradeoffs in various designs?
- What strategies are available for controlling or ruling out various rival explanations?
- What is propensity scoring, and how do you implement the technique?
- What designs are applicable for longitudinal data?

**Session 7 (Oct. 18)**

**How is Cultural Responsiveness and an Equity Focus built into Design, Data Collection and Measurement?**

Readings:

Hood, Hopson, and Kirkhart Chapter in Newcomer, et. al. text  
AEA Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation  
Toldson Chapters (on BB)  
Jordan and Hall (on BB)

Questions:

- What is involved in culturally responsive evaluation planning, data collection and analysis?
- What is entailed in equity-focused evaluation?
- What procedures can enhance multicultural validity and reliability in measurement?
- How do we ensure more cultural competency in our evaluation work?
- What is entailed in framing anti-colonialism in evaluation and decolonizing our methods?

**Session 8 (Oct. 25)**

**Data Collection Instrument Design and Qualitative Data Analysis**

**NOTE: Critique of an evaluation due.**

Readings:

Newcomer and Triplett Chapter 14 in Newcomer, et. al. text  
Krueger and Casey Chapter 20 in Newcomer, et. al. text  
Goodrick and Rogers Chapter 22 in Newcomer, et. al. text

Questions:

- What are the relative advantages of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods?
- What design characteristics bolster the validity of survey instruments?
- How are program participants most effectively surveyed?
- When are focus groups most helpful?
- How should focus groups be designed and implemented?
- What are useful strategies for analyzing “qualitative” data?
- What is entailed in mixed methods evaluation?

**Session 9 (Nov. 1)**

**Performance Measurement and Performance Management**

Readings:

Poister Chapter in Newcomer, et. al. text  
Behn Paper on “PerformanceStat”  
and  
highly recommended: *Moneyball* by Michel Lewis

Questions:

- What is performance measurement?
- What is program monitoring?
- What are the challenges to measuring performance?
- What is meant by performance management?
- What is outcome monitoring?
- How might performance measurement and program evaluation be effectively coordinated?
- What are challenges to “PerformanceStat”-like processes in government?
- What are challenges to performance-based contracting?
- What is the “balanced score card?”

- Drawing upon the Lewis book, why is selecting (or changing) what to measure about performance difficult in any organizational culture that has been shaped over many years?

### **Session 10 (Nov. 8)**

#### **"Evidence-based Decision-making": Assessing Evidence, Meta-Evaluation and Systematic Reviews**      **NOTE: Second memo due.**

#### Readings:

Boruch and Petrosino Chapter 25 in Newcomer, et. al. text  
Newcomer et al. article on BB

AND

Please visit and assess **one** of the following websites for its usefulness and accessibility, and be ready to discuss your impression of it:

1. IES What Works Clearinghouse (education) <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>
2. The Campbell Collaboration <http://campbellcollaboration.org/>
3. The Collaboration for Environmental Evidence at <http://www.environmentalevidence.org/>
4. ACF <https://www.pathwaystowork.acf.hhs.gov/>

#### Questions:

- What is meta-evaluation and how is it best conducted?
- What are systematic reviews?
- What is “evidence-based” policy/management/practice?
- When are findings from evaluations sufficient to constitute such “Evidence?”
- Why is it difficult to transfer evaluation and research findings into practice?
- What is practice-based evidence?

### **Session 11 (Nov. 15)**

#### **The Institutional Context for Evaluation and Evaluation Capacity Building**

#### Readings:

American Evaluation Association Roadmap  
Johnson and Newcomer Chapters 4 and 6 (On BB)  
Skim GAO Report, “Program Evaluation: An Evaluation Culture and Collaborative Partnerships Help Build Agency Capacity” (GAO-03-454).

Skim Newcomer chapter on International Overview of Evaluation

Questions:

- What does the American Evaluation Association recommend in terms of institutionalizing evaluation?
- What is evaluation capacity-building?
- What difference does the source of evaluation expertise make in terms of approach, methods and use?
- How do auditors (Inspector General offices) approach evaluation?
- What skills are required for effective evaluation practice and for oversight of contracted evaluation work?

### **Session 12 (Nov. 29)**

#### **Ethical and Legal Dilemmas and Advocacy in Evaluation Practice**

Readings:

Podems article  
Stake article

Questions:

- What protections should be given to participants in an evaluation?
- What procedures are possible in ensuring confidentiality?
- What procedures can be developed for maintaining the credibility and fairness of the evaluation?
- What are the essential elements and desired format for informed consent agreements?
- What are Institutional Review Boards and why are they important?
- What is the ethical role of evaluator as policy advocate?
- What is feminist evaluation?

### **Session 13 (Dec. 6)**

**Analyzing and Reporting Data NOTE: A draft Theory of Change Model (from the applied project) is due today to be shared with the Class! NOTE: Third memo due.**

Readings:

Both of Grob chapters 27 and 28 in Newcomer, et. al. text

Questions:

- What are characteristics of effective data presentation?
- What are rigorous procedures for analyzing qualitative data?
- How should results be displayed?
- How are “null results” most appropriately reported?
- What do useful recommendations look like?

### **Session 14 (Dec. 13)**

#### **Enhancing Utilization of Evaluation and Building Evaluation Capacity, and Class Overview**

Readings:

Hatry, Wholey, and Newcomer last chapter in Newcomer, et. al. text  
Newcomer and Hart Chapters 4 and 7

Questions:

- What factors influence utilization of evaluation results?
- What are the various types of utilization? How can they be measured?
- What can be done during evaluation design and implementation to enhance utilization?
- How can you help to build an evaluation and performance-friendly culture?
- What are emerging and continuing significant issues in the evaluation profession?

**AND No Later Than Dec. 20 (Unless Client Delays): Applied Evaluation Project due – to Professor Newcomer by 5pm on Dec. 20 or on a date that has been negotiated with Instructor if there were client delays.**

### **Policies in The Trachtenberg School Courses:**

1. Incompletes: A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of I (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director. Please consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook or visit our website for the complete CCAS policy on incompletes.
2. Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom: It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.
3. Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work: All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.
4. Academic Honesty: Please consult the “policies” section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Note especially the definition of plagiarism: “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information.” All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. See the GW Academic Integrity Code (<http://www.gwu.edu/~integrity>).
5. Changing Grades After Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.



6.Syllabus: This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires some flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, change content and requirements during the semester but only to give students more, not less, time. Excused absences will be given for absences due to religious holidays as per the university schedule, but please advise the instructor ahead of time.

---

## **University Policies**

### **University Policy on Religious Holidays**

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

### **Support for Students Outside the Classroom**

#### **Disability Support Services (DSS)**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: [gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/)

#### **Mental Health Services 202-994-5300**

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential

assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals.  
[counselingcenter.gwu.edu/](http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/)

### **Academic Integrity Code**

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: [studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity](http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity)

### **Out of Class Learning**

Average minimum amount of independent, out-of- class, learning expected per week: In a 15 week semester, including exam week, students are expected to spend a minimum of 100 minutes of out-of- class work for every 50 minutes of direct instruction, for a **minimum** total of 2.5 hours a week.