UEP 256/CD 247: PROGRAM EVALUATION
SPRING, 2016
INITIAL VERSION

Tuesdays, 6:00-9:00 pm, Anderson Hall, Room 210

Instructor: Laurie Goldman, Ph.D.
laurie.goldman@tufts.edu (617) 627-5053
Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, Tufts University
72 Professors Row, 2nd Floor
Office Hours: By appointment and strongly encouraged

Course Description: Program evaluation is the systematic use of empirical information to assess and improve the efficacy of public or nonprofit programs and policies. Evaluation is increasingly required by funders and policy makers concerned with accountability and efficient use of public or philanthropic resources. In addition, many organizations are adopting evaluation practices to inform ongoing operations, strategic planning, and the dissemination of their models.

This course provides an introduction to program evaluation from a utilization-focused perspective, with an emphasis on guiding decision making and learning by the intended users of the evaluations. We study the design and implementation of evaluations, emphasizing the need to match the needs, interests, and capacities of programs to particular evaluation models. Attention is given both to the evaluation of community-based and large-scale, federal demonstration programs.

Course Objectives: The key learning objectives are to:
- Understand the purposes and logic of program evaluation
- Apply principles and practices of research design to evaluation questions
- Assess whether an evaluation is rigorous and useful
- Learn how to interpret and communicate findings to relevant audiences
- Consider the evaluator’s role in program development and relationships with stakeholders
- Develop awareness of ethical, cultural, and other contextual concerns influencing program evaluation

Format and Expectations: The class employs several, inter-related modes of learning. Readings, brief lectures, and class discussions will introduce and examine concepts, theories, and examples of program evaluations. We will critique program evaluation reports. Over the course of the semester, students will design an evaluation of a program of interest to them. Regular attendance, engaged and constructive participation in class discussions, and timely submission of assignments are required.

Readings: There is one required textbook for this course:


Additional required readings can be found on the Trunk site for the course. These readings are likely to change in response to students’ interests and themes that emerge in our class discussions.
Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the core concepts and themes for each class session. To facilitate purposeful reading and constructive class discussion, students will post brief (no more than 250 words) weekly reflections to the course Trunk site before the class meeting time – by no later than 5pm. You can post a thought or a question about the applicability of one of the week’s topics to your projects: your critical review or evaluation design. You may also raise a question for clarification about the readings or express skepticism or curiosity about the ideas presented in the readings or the feasibility of translating the guidance into practice. **Do not summarize the readings.** Each student will also read and comment briefly on one other student’s reflection prior to the class session.

**Assignments:** (Detailed guidelines for each of these assignments will be distributed and explained in class and posted to the Trunk site.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critique of a Program Evaluation Report</td>
<td>3/4 (Friday, by 5pm)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design of a Program Evaluation (or Needs Assessment):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program description and explication of its theory of change</td>
<td>2/19 (Friday, by 5pm)</td>
<td>feedback only</td>
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<td>Initial project outline</td>
<td>3/18 (Friday, by 5pm)</td>
<td>feedback only</td>
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<td>Preliminary literature review</td>
<td>3/18 (Friday, by 5pm)</td>
<td>feedback only</td>
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<td>Draft data collection instrument</td>
<td>4/1 (Friday, by 5pm)</td>
<td>feedback only</td>
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<td>Research planning grid</td>
<td>4/20 (in class)</td>
<td>feedback only</td>
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<td>CITI Certification approval</td>
<td>4/22 (Friday, by 5pm)</td>
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<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>4/27 class session and/or additional session T.B.D.</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Program Evaluation Design</td>
<td>5/6 (Friday, by 3pm: Upload to Trunk and hard copy in Laurie’s 97 Talbot Ave box)</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Reflections</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation: contributing your insights and engaging classmates</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
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All assignments may be submitted electronically with the exception of the final Evaluation Design assignment which is to be submitted both in hard copy to Laurie’s mail box at 97 Talbot Ave and uploaded to Trunk.
# Schedule of Class Sessions, Readings, and Discussion Topics

(Subject to modification to respond to students’ interests.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th><strong>Introduction to the Course and the Field of Program Evaluation</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 27</td>
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<td>Session overview; the value of evaluation; introduction to evaluation concepts and terminology; debates in the field.</td>
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<th>Session 2</th>
<th><strong>The Purposes of Evaluation</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 3</td>
<td>Feb 3</td>
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<td>Identifying problems, target populations</td>
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<td>Needs/demand assessments</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Weiss: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-19) and 2 (pp. 20-45).</td>
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<td>Both of the following short articles in J.W. Altschuld (Eds.), <em>Needs assessment: Trends and view toward the future. New Directions for Evaluation,</em> 144.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jacobs and Kapuscik: Chapter 6 (pp. 147-162) (<em>Skim to familiarize yourself with the idea of the “five tiers” with particular attention to the first tier of needs assessment. We’ll return to these ideas later in the term.</em>)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Evaluation Critique Assignment Preparation:</strong> Begin search for program evaluations in your area of interest for your evaluation <em>critique</em> (while thinking about the program for which you will <em>design</em> an evaluation).</td>
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<th>Session 3</th>
<th><strong>Understanding the Program: Goals, elements, and theory of change as the basis for evaluation design</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Weiss: Chapter 3 (pp. 46-71)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kellogg Foundation (Logic Model Development Guide), focus on Chapter 1 (pp. 1-15).</td>
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<td><strong>Evaluation Critique Assignment Preparation:</strong> Think about how the program evaluation you are critiquing describes the program element and explains the program’s theory of change. (<em>Compare and contrast this theory of the program with that of the program for which you are designing your evaluation.</em>)</td>
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Session 4  
Feb 17  

**Focusing the Evaluation: Evaluation Goals, Questions, and Roles**

**Readings:**
- Weiss: Chapter 4 (pp. 72-96) and Chapter 5 (pp. 97-113)
- Jacobs and Kapuscik: Chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 37-100)

**Case Preparation for Class:** Designing a UEP Assessment (Materials to be posted on Trunk).

**Evaluation Critique Assignment Preparation:** Consider the goals, questions, and roles in the program evaluation you are critiquing. How did they justify their focus? What alternative approaches might the evaluators have taken? (Consider these goals, questions, and roles in relation to the focus of the evaluation design you are preparing.)

**Evaluation Design Assignment Due:** Program/policy/problem description due Friday, February 19th by 5pm. Upload to Trunk.

**Schedule meeting with Laurie.**

Session 5  
Feb 24

**Introduction to Research Design: selecting and developing measures; data collection strategies**

**Readings:**
- Weiss: Chapter 6 (pp. 114-151); Chapter 7 (pp. 152-80)

Begin to review the materials in the folder on various data collection strategies.

**Case Preparation for Class:** Designing a UEP Assessment – part 2 (Materials to be posted on Trunk).

**Evaluation Critique Assignment Preparation:** What concepts did the evaluators choose to focus on and how did they measure them? How well do these measures meet Weiss’ criteria (pp. 144-50)? How did they collect the data and what was their rationale for that approach?

**Evaluation Design Assignment:** Meet with Laurie to discuss your evaluation design project.
Session 6 March 2  
**Developing an Evaluation Plan; Considering The Cultural Context**
Readings:  
Weiss: Chapter 8 (pp. 180-214)  
**Evaluation Critique Assignment Preparation:** Consider the extent to which the evaluation you are reviewing exhibits cultural competence.

**Evaluation Critique Assignment Due:** Upload the completed assignment to Trunk by 3pm, Friday March 4th.

Session 7 March 9  
**Instrument Development and Evaluation Ethics**
Readings:  
Weiss: Chapter 11  
Review materials in the folder for the type/s of instruments you have selected.  
**Assignment for class session:** Instructions for in-class workshop on instrument development to be provided. (Aim to have completed a draft of your project outline before class.)

Session 8 March 16  
**Process Evaluation: Monitoring and accountability assessments, quality reviews**
Readings:  
Jacobs and Kapuscik: Chapters 7 and 8 (pp. 163-253)  
*Case Study:* Jobs Plus Demonstration Program – Focus on implementation.  

**Two Evaluation Design Assignments Due:** Post preliminary literature review and initial project outline to Trunk by 5pm, Friday March 18th.

Spring Break — No Class on March, 23rd
**Session 9**  
**March 30**  

**Outcome Evaluations: Determining Program Effects**

**Readings:**
- Weiss: Chapter 9
- Jacobs and Kapuscik: Chapter 9 (pp. 253-332)

**Case Study:** Jobs Plus Demonstration Program – Focus on outcomes.

**Evaluation Design Assignment Due:** Post draft data collection instrument to Trunk by 5pm, Friday April 1st.

**Session 10**  
**April 4**  

**Impact Evaluations: Measuring Efficiency and Impact**

- Weiss: Chapter 10

**Case Studies (choose one of the following):**
- Massachusetts Area Planning Council (2012/14): Healthy T for a Healthy Region report.

**Session 11**  
**April 13**  

**Data Analysis Strategies and Reporting Findings**

- Weiss: Chapter 12 (pp. 271-93) and Chapter 13 (pp. 294-319)

**Assignment for class session:** Instructions for an exercise related to your project will be distributed in advance of the class session.
Session 12  
April 20  
**Influential evaluations and the political, social, and cultural context of evaluation**

**Readings:**
Weiss: Chapter 14


**Supplementary readings:**

**Evaluation Design Assignments due:** Research planning grid due in class.

Submit CITI certification (i.e., the e-mail confirmation) to Trunk by Friday, April 22nd.

Session 13  
April 27  
(Extended session or additional meeting, date to be decided)

**Student presentations.**

**Evaluation Design Assignments due:**
Upload presentation slides to Trunk by 5 pm and practice presentation.

Final Program Evaluation Design due by 3 pm., Friday, May 6th. Please upload them on the Trunk site AND put a hard copy in Laurie’s mailbox in the 97 Talbot Ave. UEP office. (If you arrive when the office is closed, put the paper in the mailbox to the left of the front door with clear marking that it is for Laurie.)