Fundamentals of Program and Policy Evaluation (API 206)
Course Syllabus - Spring 2017

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Weekly Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lecture (Weil Town Hall)</th>
<th>Section (L-130)</th>
<th>Office Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>1:15pm – 2:30pm</td>
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<td>3:30 - 4:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>10:30am - noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>1:15pm – 2:30pm</td>
<td>1:15pm – 2:30pm</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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REQUIRED FRIDAY CLASS

NOTE: This course includes mandatory attendance from 1:15pm to 2:30pm on Friday, February 10 (focus group discussion exercise) and Friday, April 21 (quantitative exam). DO NOT take this course if you cannot commit to attend on February 10 and April 21 from 1:15pm to 2:30pm.

Overview

This course provides the basic evaluation tools and understanding necessary for students to become critical consumers and effective users of evaluations, thereby building higher quality programs and policies. Topics covered include reasons for and uses of evaluations, evaluation design, comparisons of qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches, practical challenges in data collection and analysis, estimation of program impacts, selection and management of researchers and research agencies, dissemination of findings, and integration of findings into policy and organizational strategy. Students will analyze the evaluations of a variety of programs and policy instruments through exercises and case studies.

The course is divided into four sections
• Introduction to evaluation – 2 days
• Qualitative approaches and methods – 5 days
• Quantitative approaches and methods – 12 days
• Evaluation design, management, dissemination and integration into strategy – 8 days

Types of questions we will be interested in exploring:
• How do we estimate the impact (causal effect) of a program? What are the advantages and disadvantages of different quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods? How do we assess the validity of an impact evaluation?
• How do we determine what sample size is needed to evaluate the impact of a program?
• Under what circumstances are evaluations likely to affect policy decisions? How can one help evaluations feed into organizational strategy?

Target audience
People interested in becoming critical consumers and commissioners of program evaluations. You may be interested in taking this course if you plan to work for, or be involved with, an agency that implements social programs, either domestically or internationally, and is interested in evaluating how well its programs are performing. You may also be interested in the course if you want to learn about how research methods (both quantitative and qualitative) are used in the real world to help inform social policy.

Prerequisite
Familiarity with the basic concepts of statistical inference at the level of API-205, API-201 or similar.

Books
Books marked with * will be useful to you in your future professional work

Required textbooks (available at the COOP):
  ▪ *Robert Yin. 2011. Qualitative Research from Start to Finish. Guilford Press. [The course’s key resource for qualitative approaches and methods. Very practical and with good examples. The first edition is better and less expensive, but the second edition is also fine.]

Recommended books (available at the COOP):
There will be some readings from these books. These may be purchased at the COOP. However, you are not required to purchase these books, as any readings from these books will be available either through OCM or HKS library reserves.
  ▪ Richard A. Berk and Peter H. Rossi. 1999. Thinking about Program Evaluation. Sage. [A short book which does an excellent job of framing evaluation, why we do it and what the key questions are. We will read all four short chapters of this book over the course of the class. There are 2 HKS reserves copies. But you may want to buy your own copy or plan to share a copy with a fellow student(s). This reading material will NOT be on OCM.]

Other books:
These are related texts, often on specialty topics. Required readings from these will be rare and will be available either through OCM or HKS library reserves. You are welcome to glance through my copies anytime.

- Michael Bamberger, Jim Rugh and Linda Mabry. 2012. Real World Evaluation: Working under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints. 2nd edition. Sage. [This book focuses on the nitty gritty of real-world evaluation, with many practical suggestions. The authors sometimes give up too easily on more rigorous methods, but this is a great practical resource.]
- *Peter Kennedy. A Guide to Econometrics. Any edition (eg. 2008 6th edition). [A great resource for the basic econometrics behind the quantitative methods and analysis we will study, especially for students with little or no econometrics.]
- John Creswell. 2013. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. 3rd edition. Sage. [An excellent resource on qualitative approaches. Similar to the required textbook by Yin. The Yin text has more practical suggestions, but this book is better at describing the social science frameworks underlying qualitative research.]
- Michael Quinn Patton. 2003. Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. 3rd edition. Sage. [This is the ultimate qualitative methods reference by the granddaddy of qualitative research. More advanced than this course requires. But a fantastic resource for those interested in qualitative methods.]

Handouts
Handouts will be distributed throughout the course. Handouts will contain blank spaces for students to fill in, facilitating the process of taking notes so that students can fully engage in class. Handouts are not meant to substitute for class attendance or for studying the assigned reading material.

Grading: The class grade will be based on the following criteria:
10% - Class participation and engagement
30% - Five short assignments (#1, 3, 4, 6 and 7)
35% - Final exercise – Assignments 2, 5, and 8, and final paper
25% - Exam on Quantitative Material

Class participation and engagement
Student participation substantially enriches the learning experience for both the students and the instructor. In this spirit, class participation is strongly encouraged. Effective class participation requires that you read the required readings before coming to class. I will strive to lead stimulating discussions and will ask questions to highlight concepts and assess class comprehension. You are encouraged to ask questions and to share with the class any relevant insights you may have from your work
experience or from previous exposure to these topics. I only ask that the questions and comments be related to the topic at hand and be as concise as possible.

Assignments Overview
There will be five short assignments during the course (#1, 3, 4, 6 and 7) in addition to intermediate assignments associated with the final exercise (#2, 5 and 8). Assignments not received before the deadline will be considered late and receive no credit, with exceptions made for medical or family emergencies only. Under the Kennedy School Academic Code, the assignments for this course are “Type II” assignments. Students may work on the assignment with one to three other students, but each student should write up and hand in his or her own solutions to the problems. You must indicate on the top right corner of the first page the names of any students you worked with.

ASSIGNMENTS: Fraction of total course grade in parenthesis. Assignments tied to the final exercise are marked with (*):
Assignment 1 (4%): Participation in the construction of a course-wide “evaluation toolkit,” which will be a resource for you in the future. During the first week of class, each student will sign up for a topic (1 class-worth of material) during the coming semester. Some topics may have two students. For your assigned topic, you will add between 1 and 3 pages to the toolkit, including key concepts, references, and links to important tools related to that topic. A course assistant will give you one round of feedback before your material is added to the toolkit. You may use two prior years’ toolkits (provided) as a reference but the toolkit should reflect insights from this year’s course and you must indicate if and why you use prior toolkit material.

*Assignment 2 (0%): Final exercise – Policy/program area
Assignment 3 (5%): Brief analysis of Focus Group Discussion exercise
Assignment 4 (7%): Qualitative Interview exercise and analysis

*Assignment 5 (10%): Final exercise – Policy/program theory and logic and evaluation questions
Assignments 6 and 7 (7% each): Problem Sets on quantitative topics. They will use Excel and not Stata

*Assignment 8 (5%): Final exercise – Outline of evaluation design

*Final paper (20%): Final exercise – 10-page paper with program theory and evaluation design
Final exercise

The final exercise will pull together many of the tools learned in class. In this exercise, you will design a complete evaluation system for a program or public policy issue which you care about. Your analysis may include: the role of the evaluation within the organization or network, a dissemination plan, an analysis of the program theory and logic, the major evaluation questions, suggested methods, a sample Request for Proposals, and an approximate budget. You will be asked to do this exercise in stages and submit your interim work throughout the semester as Assignments 2, 5 and 8 (topic: policy/program theory and logic, and evaluation questions; outline of evaluation design). Your final paper will include work from these three assignments. With instructor permission, students may choose an alternate final exercise in which they evaluate existing evidence for a policy or program of interest. Students may choose to work independently or in groups of two students for either topic.

Exam on Quantitative Material

The exam covers the quantitative material from the middle of the semester (Feb 13 to Apr 3). It occurs quite late in the semester, after this material has been covered. The exam counts for 25% of your final grade.

Assignments and Final Exercise Due Dates:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Various dates</td>
<td>Assignment 1 - Toolkit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, February 6</td>
<td>Assignment 2 - Final exercise – Policy/program area</td>
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<td>Wednesday, February 15</td>
<td>Assignment 3 - Brief analysis of Focus Group Discussion exercise</td>
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<td>Wednesday, February 22</td>
<td>Assignment 4 - Qualitative Interview exercise and analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, March 6</td>
<td>Assignment 5 - Final exercise - Policy/program theory; evaluation questions</td>
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<td>Wednesday, March 22</td>
<td>Assignment 6 - Problem Set</td>
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<td>Monday, April 3</td>
<td>Assignment 7 - Problem Set</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, April 12</td>
<td>Assignment 8 - Final exercise – Outline of evaluation design</td>
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<td>Friday, April 21</td>
<td>Exam On Quantitative Material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, May 8</td>
<td>Final exercise - 10-page paper with program theory and evaluation design</td>
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Academic Integrity

Across this course, you are expected to abide by the University policies on academic honesty and integrity as given in the Student Handbook. The Harvard Kennedy School's academic code is located here. Violations of these policies will not be tolerated and are subject to severe sanctions up to and including expulsion from the university.
Detailed Schedule and Readings

[R] indicates a required reading. **ALL STUDENTS** are expected to complete this reading **PRIOR** to class.  
[A] indicates an optional, advanced or supplemental reading. Students are not required to complete this reading prior to class but may find it to be a useful additional resource.

“RLF” is Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004). Other textbook references are listed under “Books” above.

**INTRODUCTION TO EVALUATION**

Monday, January 23: Evaluation overview (evaluation types, goals and steps; intro to dissemination and strategy)


[R] RLF, Chapters 1-2

[A] Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, Chapter 23 [An entertaining chapter on pitfalls in evaluations, especially if you have some experience with evaluations.]

Wednesday, January 25: Program theory

[R] RLF, Chapters 3 and 5

[A] Berk and Rossi, Chapter 3 [Another way to think about evaluation questions to be answered. Very practical. Including the crucial YOGA question – can Your Ordinary Government Agency carry the program out?]  

**QUALITATIVE APPROACHES AND METHODS**

Monday, January 30: Qualitative frameworks, planning and sampling

[R] Yin, Chapter 1, Chapter 2 (pg 26-43 only in 2011 edition; pg 26-46 only in 2016 edition), Chapter 4 (pg 82-92 only in 2011 edition; pg 91-98 only in 2016 edition)

[R] Creswell, Table 4.1 (pg 104-106)

[A] Creswell, Chapter 3 [More on designing a qualitative study. Excellent section on ethics.]

[A] Creswell, Chapters 2 and 4 [More on the philosophy behind qualitative research in Chapter 2 and on five different qualitative frameworks in Chapter 4]
Wednesday, February 1: Qualitative interview methods

[R] Yin, Chapters 6-7

Monday, February 6: Focus group discussion methods I

[R] Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer. Chapter 17 (pg 378-396 only)

Wednesday, February 8: Additional qualitative methods; Qualitative analysis

[R] Yin, Chapter 3 (pg 61-65 only in 2011 edition; pg 71-75 only in 2016 edition), Chapter 5
[R] Yin, Chapters 8-9

**Mandatory Class Friday, February 10: Focus group discussion methods II**

No readings.

**QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES AND METHODS**

Monday, February 13: Evaluation frameworks and overview

[R] Berk and Rossi, Chapter 2 [An in-depth discussion of “validity” of various forms.]

[R] Come to class with 1-2 examples of a popular press article in which correlation and causation are confused. Prepare a 3 sentence description of the article to share with a neighbor (oral or written is fine).

Wednesday, February 15: Reading Regression Tables; Comparison groups

[R] Gertler et al, Chapter 3 (pg 33-47; feel free to ignore any formulas if you like; feel free to ignore the paragraphs on TOT and ITT on pages 39-40)

Monday, February 20: President’s Day (no class)

Wednesday, February 22: Difference-in-difference

[R] Gertler et al, Chapter 6
Monday, February 27; Wednesday, March 1 and Monday, March 6: Social experiments (RCTs) – Parts I, II and III

[R] Gertler et al, Chapter 4 (pages 49-80)


Wednesday, March 8: Instrumental variables

[R] Glennerster and Takavarasha, Chapter 2 (pg 41-44 only)


Monday, March 13 and Wednesday, March 15: **Spring Break (no classes)**

Monday, March 20: First half: Regression discontinuity designs. Second half: NYC Teen ACTION Program: An Evaluation Gone Awry

[R] Pre-class work (video and short quiz)

[R] Gertler et al, Chapter 5 (pg 81-93)


[R] HKS Case Number 2027.0 - New York City’s Teen ACTION Program: An Evaluation Gone Awry

Wednesday, March 22: Matching and interrupted time series

[R] Gertler et al, Chapter 7 (pg 107-116)

[R] RLF, Chapter 9 (pg 289-297 only)

Monday, March 27: Statistical power and sample size calculations

[R] Glennerster and Takavarasha, Chapter 6, (Skip Module 6.3, pg 267-271. The section on statistical software tools, pg 284-289.)

[R] Gertler et al, Chapter 11 (pg 175-192 only)

Wednesday, March 29: Sampling design

[R] Gertler et al, Chapter 11 (pg 192-195 only)

Monday, April 3: Survey design and types of data collection

[R] Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, Chapter 12

[A] Ravallion, Martin. 2001. “The Mystery of the Vanishing Benefits: An Introduction to Impact Evaluation.” The World Bank Economic Review. 15(1): 115-140. [This is a great summary of all the quantitative techniques we have used. Feel free to ignore the math if need be. Note that qualitative methods even get a nod.]

EVALUATION DESIGN, MANAGEMENT, DISSEMINATION & INTEGRATION

Wednesday, April 5: Mixed methods and Moving to Opportunity Case

[R] Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry, Chapter 14


[A] Ellsberg, Mary and Lori Helse. In Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists. [This is very long, 259 pages. But it is a very useful document on conducting research on the subject of violence against women in an ethical manner, including many practical suggestions. I would not expect you to read even close to all of this but feel free to pick a section or two to read. It covers both quantitative and qualitative approaches.]

Monday, April 10: Process evaluation

[R] RLF, Chapter 6
Wednesday, April 12: Possible guest lecture by J-PAL staff on the use of evidence in policy design.


Monday, April 17: Case Study – Budgeting and Evaluation – New York City Center for Economic Opportunity

[R] Case 1971.0 - New York City Center for Economic Opportunity: An Evidence-Based Approach to Alleviate Poverty

Wednesday, April 19: Dissemination

[R] Pick TWO of the following three sources and read the article(s), watch the video(s) and/or poke through the website. In each case, do a critique of their dissemination: Write down 1-2 things you liked and 1-2 problems. Think about the audience in each case.


Option B: Watch these two videos: (http://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_2213735445&feature=iv&src_vid=_4bjtCWNl2I&v=6nG63l5StEk and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4bjtCWNl2I)

Option C: Look through the material on these webpages and the documents linked to these webpages: This is the main page (http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/methods-approaches/project-effectiveness-reviews?cid=rdt_effectiveness) and here is an example webpage for one program (http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/effectiveness-review-livestock-commercialisation-for-pastoralist-communities-in-262466).


[A] Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, Chapter 25

Friday, April 21: EXAM ON QUANTITATIVE MATERIAL
Monday, April 24: Integration of evaluation into organizational strategy; Evaluation management

[R] Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, Chapter 26


[A] Liebman, Jeffrey B. "Building on Recent Advances in Evidence-Based Policymaking." [This paper recommends how to bring more evidence into U.S. policy]

Wednesday, April 26: Case study: Designing Impact Evaluations: Assessing Jamaica’s PATH Program


Friday, April 28: (Optional lecture) Monitoring and indicator approaches