

PA 8320: Public Policy Evaluation
School of Public Administration
University of Nebraska Omaha
Tuesdays, 5:30-8:10pm | CPACS 122A
Fall 2017

Course Syllabus

Instructor

Jodi Benenson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Public Administration
College of Public Affairs and Community Service, 111L
Phone: 402-554-2396
Email: jbenenson@unomaha.edu
Office hours: By appointment

Course Description and Objectives

Evaluation is a core activity of public administration in both the public and nonprofit sectors. This graduate course is designed to provide students with a working knowledge of applied public policy evaluation methods. The course is intended to prepare students to become fluent in the basic application of policy and program evaluation tools, and to be informed and critical consumers of policy evaluation research.

This course will introduce you to the framework of evaluation, the development of plans for evaluations, and the data collection tools for implementing evaluation. Students will receive training in a variety of research methods used by researchers and policy analysts to assess whether public and nonprofit programs and policies are having the intended effects. We will also discuss the structure and presentation of policy analyses for a variety of audiences, and how to appropriately frame and build persuasive policy recommendations.

Student learning will also be facilitated through a semester-long service-learning project. Service-learning is a teaching and learning in which students use academic knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs. The service learning activities in this class will focus on developing an evaluation plan for a local nonprofit organization. Students will be assessed on the basis of their contributions made to the organization you work with and your reflections about the activity before, during, and after the service-learning experience.

By the end of this class you will:

- Understand the purposes and logic of policy evaluation
- Apply the principles of research design to evaluation questions and an evaluation plan
- Explore data collection methods for evaluation
- Understand how to prepare and present an evaluation to a variety of audiences
- Provide an evaluation plan and program/policy recommendations to a local nonprofit organization

Required Readings

Required textbook:

Kathryn E. Newcomer, Harry P. Hatry, Joseph S. Wholey. (2015). *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*. Fourth Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (referred to as “Textbook” in this syllabus). The textbook is available at the UNO Bookstore (to purchase or rent) and online. I will also make the textbook available on reserve at the UNO Criss Library.

Required articles and book chapters:

Additional required weekly readings will be available on Canvas <https://canvas.unomaha.edu>. See the course schedule for specific weekly reading assignments.

Community Partners

In Week 2, students will have an opportunity to hear from the community partners we will be working with this fall. Students will then have an opportunity to rank the five organizations based on order of interest, and will be put in groups accordingly. Students will then prepare final presentations to the organizations on November 28 or December 5.

Family Housing Advisory Services

Contact: Deborah Dancer, Deborah@fhasinc.org
<http://www.fhasinc.org>

Hunger Free Heartland

Contact: Rachel Olive, rolive@hungerfreeheartland.org
<http://hungerfreeheartland.org>

Intercultural Senior Center

Contact: Sarah Gilbert, sgilbert@interculturalseniorcenter.org
<http://www.interculturalseniorcenter.org>

The Union for Contemporary Art

Contact: Paige Reitz, paige@u-ca.org
<http://www.u-ca.org>

Assignments

The course grade will be based on five components. The specific details and grading rubric for each assignment will be made available on Canvas.

| Assignment (all due on Canvas) | Due Date | Grade % |
|---|---|---------|
| Assignment 1: Evaluation Critique | September 12 | 10% |
| Assignment 2: Evaluation Theory, Purpose, and Questions | October 10 | 15% |
| Assignment 3: Data Collection Plan and Instrument | November 7 | 20% |
| Assignment 4: Final Evaluation Plan and Presentation | Presentations on November 28 or December 5 and Final Plan due December 12 | 35% |
| Assignment 5: Reflections | Reflections due September 5, | 15% |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----|
| | October 24, and December 5 | |
| Assignment 6: Class Participation | Ongoing | 5% |

Assignment 1: Evaluation Critique (10%)

The purpose of this first assignment is to get us thinking about the logic of evaluation and the totality of an evaluation project. Find a completed policy or program evaluation via the Internet, an academic journal, or from an organization/agency you are familiar with and write a 2-3 page (single-spaced) memo to describe and assess the evaluation. This assignment is due **September 12**.

Assignments 2: Evaluation Theory, Purpose, and Questions (15%)

Because we do not have time this semester to conduct an entire evaluation, you will complete an evaluation plan in groups of 2-3. This is the first assignment that will lead you to your final project. For this assignment, write a 4-5 page (single-spaced) memo describing the program theory and goals of the evaluation. About half of this first memo should describe the purpose of the program, the targeted clients, and the framework describing how the program works. You must include a theory of change diagram and/or logic model. The other half of the memo should lay out the purposes of your proposed evaluation of the project and the key questions that the evaluation will address. This assignment is due **October 10**.

Assignment 3: Data Collection Plan and Instrument (20%)

For this assignment, you will continue with your evaluation project from Assignment 2. Here, you will write a 4-5 page (single-spaced) memo describing a plan for collecting data to answer your evaluation questions. You should describe the research design and identify outcomes and indicators for your evaluation. Include a chart showing which data will address each of your evaluation questions. Your data collection plan should include strategies for each mode of data collection and at least one of your collection instruments. This assignment is due **November 7**.

Assignment 4: Final Evaluation Plan (25%) and Presentation (10%)

Your final project will be a 12-15 page (single-spaced) evaluation plan which includes: program theory, discussion of the evaluation goals and questions, a detailed and complete data collection plan, a plan for working and communicating with stakeholders, and all data collection instruments. Each piece should be revised and integrated with new components to create a complete and stand-alone evaluation plan. The final evaluation plan is due on **December 12** and presentations will take place on either **November 28** or **December 5**.

Assignment 5: Reflections (15%)

Reflection is the intentional consideration of an experience surrounding the learning objectives of the course and is a key component of service learning. Students will be required to write three reflection assignments this semester: one before (due **September 5**), during (due **October 24**), and after the service-learning project is completed (due **December 5**). We will also participate in reflection exercises during class.

Assignment 6: Class Participation (5%)

In addition to in-class activities and assignments, students are expected to come each week ready to engage and discuss the material. My role as the instructor is to provide you with a framework to facilitate your learning, and the exercises and discussions in this class are intended to provide you with an opportunity to test your knowledge, formulate ideas and strategies, respond to evaluation dilemmas, provide feedback and reflections from your experience working with each organization, and receive feedback from peers. Therefore, weekly class attendance is necessary, but is not sufficient for an excellent participation grade.

Grading

Final grades will be calculated as follows. Each element will be weighted out of a total of 100 points.

| Letter Grade | Percent |
|--------------|-----------|
| A+ | 97-100% |
| A | 93-96% |
| A- | 90-92% |
| B+ | 87-89% |
| B | 83-86% |
| B- | 80-82% |
| C+ | 77-79% |
| C | 73-87% |
| C- | 70-72% |
| D+ | 67-69% |
| D | 63-66% |
| D- | 60-62% |
| F | Below 60% |

Course Policies and Expectations

Graduate-Level Coursework:

As graduate students, you are expected to actively engage with the material and use sound reasoning and evidence to analyze and discuss course material. This means you should be working at levels beyond knowledge and comprehension to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. If you choose to take this course and get as much as you can out of it, you should plan to take an active part in the class each week. This means you will likely need to spend 6-9 hours each week on coursework, much of which will involve reading. Reading at the graduate level may be different than what you have encountered in the past, and will involve reading in a style that should focus on understanding the “bigger picture” and thinking about how it applies in various settings rather than reading for memorization. For tips and graduate school strategies, see: <http://gradschool.about.com/od/survivinggraduateschool/u/student.htm>.

Attendance:

You should only take this course if you are willing to attend each class, and the instructor will take attendance each week. I expect that students abide by professional norms and standards by alerting me in advance of class if they are unable to attend, and that students arrive to class at 5:30pm each week. An absence is excused if the student emails the instructor in advance of the class meeting and only in the case of illness, documented emergencies, and unavoidable conflict due to official university obligations or a weather emergency. Absences reported after missing the class are unexcused unless documentation is provided. A percentage point will be deducted from the class participation grade for each unexcused absence. Students who are unable to attend class are expected to obtain class materials and notes from classmates. Missing class is not an excuse for turning in late assignments.

Instructional Methods:

The instructor will employ several learning techniques in this course. Since this is a graduate course, lectures will consist of summaries and material not included in assigned readings. The instructor will use Canvas as a way to communicate to students and provide supplemental course materials. It is recommended that you check the Canvas course site every day for new announcements and course materials.

Academic Integrity:

UNO takes every possible measure to make sure you have the tools and resources you need to achieve academically. You are responsible for learning and understanding the rules on academic integrity and plagiarism as established by UNO. If you are in doubt about the completion of any assignment, please ask for clarification. The tenets of the UNO Code of Conduct will be strictly enforced in this course:

<http://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/student-conduct-and-community-standards/docs/Code-of-Conduct-2015-with-appendix.pdf>. For more information about academic integrity at UNO, see: <http://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/student-conduct-and-community-standards/policies/academic-integrity.php>.

Special Needs and Accommodations:

If you are a student with a documented disability at UNO, please let me know so that we can make appropriate accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are provided for students who are registered with the Accessibility Service Center and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact the Accessibility Services Center at 402-544-2872 or go to the website:

<http://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/inclusion/disability-services/index.php>. Additionally, if you have any religious observances that conflict with class attendance or assignment-date completions, please let me know at the start of the semester so appropriate arrangements can be made.

Guidelines for Written Assignments:

Papers submitted should meet graduate student standards and the standard for writing in this course is that of the professional workplace. This means writing should be easy to read, logically constructed, error- and jargon-free, and professional in tone. In terms of formatting and citing resources, the APA (American Psychological Association) style will be required for all assignments. For guidance on the APA style, please see: <http://www.apastyle.org>. In addition, all assignments must be submitted in Microsoft Word using Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins. If you need additional support for your writing assignments, please visit the UNO Writing Center for writing help and resources:

<http://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/writing-center/index.php>.

Assignment Deadlines:

Assigned work is expected to be completed on time and with each student's best effort. Readings assigned on a particular date in the course must be completed before class meetings. Assignments not received by the deadline will be considered late and receive no credit, with exceptions made for medical or family emergencies only. You may request an extension for an assignment only in cases of illness or family emergency, and such extension requests must be made via email before the assignment due date. Assignments should be posted on Canvas by 11:59pm Central Time on the due date. Please upload your assignments on Canvas following the format: LastName(s)_AssignmentNumber. For Assignment 2, my file name would be Benenson_Assignment2.

Disclaimer:

This syllabus is subject to change and may be amended throughout the course to reflect any changes deemed necessary by the instructor.

Course Schedule and Weekly Reading

| Week/Date | Topic, Readings, Assignments |
|---|---|
| Part 1: The Basics of Evaluation | |
| Week 1 August 22 | <p>Course Overview and Introduction</p> <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators (2004). • Emerson, J. (2009). <i>But does it work? How to best assess program performance</i>. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Stanford, CA. • The Urban Institute (2008). <i>The Case for Evidence-Based Policy</i>. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <p>Additional readings/general evaluation resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McGarvey, C. (2007). <i>Participatory action research: Involving “all the players” in evaluation and change</i>. New York, NY: GrantCraft. • American Evaluation Association (AEA): http://www.eval.org • Online Evaluation Resource Library: http://oerl.sri.com |
| Week 2 August 29 | <p>Planning for Evaluation and Engaging Stakeholders</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1: Planning and Designing Useful Evaluations • Chapter 2: Analyzing and Engaging Stakeholders <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bingham, R.D., & Felbinger, C.L. (2002). <i>Evaluation in Practice: A methodological approach</i>. New York, NY: Seven Bridges Press. Chapter 1. <p>Additional resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bryson, J. M. (2003). What to Do When Stakeholders Matter: A Guide to Stakeholder Identification and Analysis Techniques. <p>Guest Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deborah Dancer, Family Housing Advisory Services • Sarah Gilbert, Intercultural Senior Center • Rachel Olive, Hunger Free Heartland • Paige Reitz, Union for Contemporary Art |
| Week 3 September 5 | <p>Logic Models and Theories of Change</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3: Using Logic Models <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi, P.H., Lipsey, M.W., & Freeman, H.E. (1999). <i>Evaluation: A systematic approach. 6th edition</i>. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapter 5. • W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2004). <i>Logic Model Development</i>. Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Chapter 4. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>Additional resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shakman, K., & Rodriguez, S. M. (2015). <i>Logic models for program design, implementation, and evaluation: Workshop toolkit</i> (REL 2015–057). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands. • McCawley, P.F. (1999). <i>The Logic Model for Program Planning and Evaluation</i>. Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Extension. <p>REFLECTION 1 DUE (Submit on Canvas by 5:30pm.)</p> |
| <p>Week 4 September 12</p> | <p>Exploratory Evaluation and Performance Measurement</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4: Exploratory Evaluation • Chapter 5: Performance Measurement: Monitoring Program Outcomes <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnow, B.S. (2000). Exploring the relationship between performance management and program impact: A case study of the Job Training Partnership Act. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 19(1), 118-141. <p>ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE (Submit on Canvas by 11:59pm.)</p> |
| <p>Part 2: Designs for Evaluation Research and Measuring Impacts</p> | |
| <p>Week 5 September 19</p> | <p>Experimental vs. Nonexperimental Design</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 7: Randomized Controlled Trials and Nonrandomized Designs <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bingham, R.D., & Felbinger, C.L. (2002). <i>Evaluation in Practice: A methodological approach</i>. New York, NY: Seven Bridges Press. Chapter 2. <p>Read at least one of the following experimental evaluations (on Canvas):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glazerman, S., Mayer, D., & Decker, P. (2006). Alternate routes to teaching: The impacts of Teach for America on student achievement and other outcomes. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 25(1), 75-96. • Leventhal, T., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Moving to opportunity: An experimental study of neighborhood effects on mental health. <i>American Journal of Public Health</i>, 93(9), 1576-1582. • Trenholm, C., Devaney, B., Fortson, K., Clark, M., Bridgespan, L.Q., & Wheeler, J. (2008). Impacts of abstinence education on teen sexual activity, risk of pregnancy, and risk of sexually transmitted diseases. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 27(2), 255-276. <p>Additional readings/resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pirog, M.A. (Ed.). (2009). The role of random assignment in social policy research. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 28(1), 164-181. |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nathan, R.P., & Hollister, R.G. (2008). Point/Counterpoint: The role of random assignment in social policy research. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 27(2) 2008, 401-415. Research methods knowledge base: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/desintro.htm |
| Week 6 September 26 | <p>Quasi-Experimental Design</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 6: Comparison Group Designs <p>Read at least one of the following quasi-experimental evaluations (on Canvas):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bitler, M. P., & Currie, J. (2005). Does WIC work? The effects of WIC on pregnancy and birth outcomes. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 24(1), 73-91. Ennett, S.T., Rosenbaum, D.P., Flewelling, R.L., Bieler, G.S., Ringwalt, R.L., Bailey, S.L. (1994). Long-term evaluation of drug abuse resistance education. <i>Addictive Behaviors</i>, 19(2), 113-125. Klawitter, M.M., & Flatt, V. (1998). The effects of state and local antidiscrimination policies on earnings for gays and lesbians. <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i>, 17(4), 658-686. |
| Week 7 October 3 | <p>Community Change and Culturally Responsive Design</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 11: Evaluating Community Change Programs Chapter 12: Culturally Responsive Evaluation <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Evaluation Association Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation (2011). Public Policy Associates, Inc. (2015). <i>Considerations for conducting evaluation using a culturally responsive and racial equity lens</i>. Lansing, MI: Public Policy Associates. Kelly J., T. (2010). Five simple rules for evaluating complex community initiatives. <i>Community Investments</i>, 22(1). Love, A., & Muggah, B. (2005). Using democratic evaluation principles to foster citizen engagement and strengthen neighborhoods. <i>The Evaluation Exchange</i>, 11(3). <p>Additional readings/resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Racial Equity Tools for Evaluations: https://www.racialequitytools.org/evaluate Benenson, J., & Kiesa, A. (2016). Research and evaluation in the nonprofit sector: Implications for equity, diversity, and inclusion. https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2016/10/19/research-evaluation-nonprofit-sector-implications-equity-diversity-inclusion |
| Part 3: Data Collection and Analysis for Policy Evaluation | |
| Week 8 October 10 | <p>Case Studies</p> <p>Textbook:</p> |

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 8: Conducting Case Studies • Chapter 16: Using Trained Observer Ratings • Chapter 17: Collecting Data in the Field <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balbach, B. (1999). <i>Using case studies to do program evaluation</i>. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section. • Fein, D. (2016). <i>Scaling up to close the opportunity divide for low-income youth: A case study of the year up program</i>. OPRE Report #2016-155, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <p>Additional Canvas readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Science Foundation. (2002). <i>An overview of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods</i>. Washington, DC: National Science Foundation. • Yin, R.K. (1981). The case study as a serious research strategy. <i>Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization</i>, 3(1), 97-114. <p>Resources on ethics and human subjects (on Canvas):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Review Board at UNO • The Belmont Report (1979). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <p>ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE (Submit on Canvas by 11:59pm.)</p> |
| <p>Week 9 October 17</p> | <p>NO CLASS – SEMESTER BREAK</p> |
| <p>Week 10 October 24</p> | <p>Recruiting Participants and Focus Groups</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9: Recruitment and Retention of Study Participants • Chapter 20: Focus Group Interviewing <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitra, A. (1994). The use of focus groups in the design of recreation needs assessment questionnaires. <i>Evaluation and Program Planning</i>, 17(2), 133-140. • Peterson, S., & MartinRogers, N. (2015). <i>Focus groups with potential visitors from Latino and African American communities</i>. A study with the Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site and the Mille Lacs Indian Museum & Trading Post for the Minnesota Historical Society. St. Paul, MN: Wilder Research. <p>REFLECTION 2 DUE (Submit on Canvas by 5:30pm.)</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Week 11 October 31</p> | <p>Sampling and Surveys, Presenting Quantitative Results</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 14: Using Surveys • Chapter 23: Using Statistics in Evaluation <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fanning, E. (2005). Formatting a paper-based survey questionnaire: Best practices. <i>Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 10</i>(12). • Hall, T. (2014). <i>Cookie cart: An evaluation of a youth work experience and empowerment program in 2014</i>. St. Paul, MN: Wilder Research. • Thayer-Hart, N., Dykema, J., Elver, K., Schaeffer, N.C., & Stevenson, J. (2010). <i>Survey fundamentals</i>. Madison, WI: Office of Quality Improvement, University of Wisconsin. |
| <p>Week 12 November 7</p> | <p>Interviews and Stories, Presenting Qualitative Results</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 19: Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews • Chapter 21: Using Stories in Evaluation • Chapter 22: Qualitative Data Analysis <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popkin, S.J., Leventhal, T., & Weismann, G. (2008). <i>Girls in the 'hood: The importance of feeling safe</i>. Washington, DC: Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center. Brief No. 1. • Sewell, M. (1998). <i>The use of qualitative interviews in evaluation</i>. University of Arizona and Children, Youth, and Families Education Research Network. • Tobin, J., Fischman, G.E., G., & Sukop, S. (2013). <i>Storytelling approaches to program evaluation: An introductory guide</i>. Atlanta, GA: Healthcare Georgia Foundation, Publication #73. <p>ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE (Submit on Canvas by 11:59pm.)</p> |
| <p>Part 4: Policy Recommendations, Learning, and Change</p> | |
| <p>Week 13 November 14</p> | <p>Providing Policy Recommendations</p> <p>Textbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 26: Pitfalls in Evaluations (skim) • Chapter 27: Providing Recommendations, Suggestions, and Options for Improvement • Chapter 28: Writing for Impact <p>Canvas required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). <i>Evaluation reporting: A guide to help ensure use of evaluation findings</i>. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Week 14 November 21 | Evaluation's Role in Policy Learning and Change Textbook: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 30: Use of Evaluation in Government: The Politics of Evaluation • Chapter 31: Evaluation Challenges, Issues, and Trends |
| Week 15 November 28 | Class Presentations (Groups 1, 2, and 3) |
| Week 16 December 5 | Class Presentations (Groups 4 and 5) + Final Reflections REFLECTION 3 DUE (Submit on Canvas by 5:30pm.) |
| Week 17 December 12 | ASSIGNMENT 4 DUE (Submit on Canvas by 11:59pm.) |