COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to give you an introduction to evaluation research. Very few programs these days are funded without requiring an evaluation component, often conducted by an independent researcher such as a professor. For those of you interested in practitioner jobs, agency personnel also need to be familiar with evaluation procedures because they must participate in the process and be smart about what to ask of their evaluators. Policymakers who face limited resources want to know if programs work and if they should re-fund programs or fund additional ones in other communities. Not just “any Ph.D.” can conduct program evaluations—or at least conduct them well. Successful program evaluators have specific skills, some learned and some not. This class is designed to give you both the book knowledge and some practical experience in the details of program evaluation. Consequently, it includes lecture, readings, and experience in the field with real programs. Specifically, you will work with one local agency to develop an evaluation plan for one of their programs.

BOOKS AND OTHER READINGS

There is one book and multiple readings assigned for this course. They will be posted on the elearning site. The book is available for purchase at all local college bookstores (and on the web, of course). The textbook is:

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

(1) PROGRAM EVALUATION PLAN FOR LOCAL AGENCY (40%)

Your biggest assignment in this course is to work with a local agency to develop a program evaluation plan that specifically addresses their program, mission, objectives, needs, etc. This project requires consistent contact with the agency (at least weekly) and consistent work over the semester. At the end, you will give me and your agency a copy of this program evaluation plan. If your plan is a good one and well-thought out, this document/project may even serve as a precursor to a solid research project for you with the agency. In some cases, graduate students who do these evaluation plans actually conduct the evaluation for their thesis or dissertation. I will give you guidance and examples throughout the course.

**PLEASE TURN IN TWO COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT** (ONE FOR ME TO KEEP AND ONE FOR ME TO RETURN WITH COMMENTS). I will request confirmation that you have given a copy to your agency also (from the agency). You may give them the original or revise it after my comments/grade.

(2) WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS (25%)

Most weeks you will have a specific assignment to do for this class (see attached list). Each assignment helps you build rapport with your agency’s staff and get the information necessary to write your final project—the program evaluation plan for your agency. You will turn in the assignment to me the week it is due, and in most cases you will share the information with your agency’s staff to make sure you have correctly represented their program. We will discuss the details of completing each assignment in class and you will share your assignment and concerns with the remainder of the class each week. Part of the class is designed to allow discussion, so you and the other students can think through concerns that you have in developing your evaluation plans.

(3) PRESENTATION OF YOUR EVALUATION PLAN—FOR CLASS AND INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK (10%)

This assignment gives you the opportunity to talk through your evaluation plan with the class and with me before you write it up. You should present the details of your evaluation plan (e.g., in a PowerPoint presentation) and bring a written list of questions that you would like the class to give you feedback on (issues you are struggling with). In addition, you should bring copies of the presentation and any instruments you have drafted for me and for the rest of the students in the class as well as the expected table of contents for the evaluation plan, so they can write up feedback for you. Presentation of the plan itself should take about fifteen minutes, but discussion will follow.

(4) CRITIQUE OF AN ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLE ABOUT AN OUTCOME EVALUATION (10%)

For this assignment, you are to find an academic journal article reporting the results of an outcome evaluation in criminology or criminal justice (or your own field, if you are not a
criminology student) (not one that is assigned). You must attach a copy of the article itself to your paper. For this paper you will, IN YOUR OWN WORDS (not the author’s):

1. Identify the program being evaluated
2. Identify the funding agency and its evaluation requirements
3. Identify the major research questions
4. Identify the theoretical orientation of the article
5. Explicitly identify the main hypothesis or hypotheses
6. Identify the dependent variable(s) and indicate how it/they are operationalized
7. Identify the independent variables and indicate how they are operationalized
8. Indicate the method of data collection and sample size.
9. Indicate the primary findings
10. Indicate the policy implications derived by the authors
11. Indicate your reaction and critique the methods and results detailed above, based on what you’ve learned in this class.

Question 11 is the most critical part of this assignment. Once you’ve identified the information above, you should carefully evaluate the article based on course material. Answer questions such as:

a. Was the program evaluated appropriate based on what you learned in the course?
b. Did the evaluators meet the funding agency’s requirements?
c. Were there general problems with the design?
d. Were the research questions appropriate and valid?
e. Did the theory match the program?
f. Was the operationalization of the variables appropriate? Do you see issues with how they measured aspects of the program?
g. Did the method of data collection match their research questions?
h. Was their analysis appropriate?
i. Do their findings make sense?
j. Do their conclusions and policy implications follow from their data and findings?

Make sure you elaborate on and explain your answers—why did you come to the conclusion you did? It will be helpful to refer to class material such as readings and lecture to answer these questions.

You may answer most of the questions above by using the question as a heading, and writing your answer below the question. Some of these answers may be one sentence. But, you must answer the question completely.

**You will also share your article with the class, describe it’s content, and discuss your reaction to this article.**
(5) ATTENDANCE AND VERBAL AND WRITTEN PARTICIPATION (15%)

In graduate courses, attendance is critical, because the class interaction stimulates ideas. In addition, in a methods class, each class period builds on the ones before it. I expect you to attend every class meeting, including those we reschedule. You may miss one class without penalty, but only for legitimate reasons (e.g., conferences, medical issue).

I also expect you to be prepared and participate in discussion. We will discuss the readings in class each week.

In addition, your feedback to your fellow students will help them with their final projects. You will serve as a “reviewer” of the plan for your fellow students. During class presentations of their projects, you should take notes on the presentation and write up a short set of comments for your fellow student regarding specific questions and comments to improve their plan (based on class material). These comments should be given to the student by Monday of the following week and emailed to me as well. They will count as part of your participation grade.

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| 6    | 9/27  | Assessing Program Process          | 1. Rossi: Chapter 6
3. Lane & Lanza-Kaduce (2007)
4. Lane & Turner (1999)
5. Lane, Turner, & Flores (2004)
6. Matthews et al. (2001) |
| 7    | 10/4  | Measuring program outcomes         | 1. Rossi: Chapter 7
2. FBCDTI forms
3. RAND evaluation forms
| 8    | 10/11 | Assessing program impact: Randomized Designs **GET ARTICLE APPROVED** | 1. Rossi: Chapter 8
2. Petersilia & Turner (1992)
5. Lane et al. (2005)
6. Gottfredson et al. (2005)
7. Wexler et al. (1999) |
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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READINGS</th>
<th>PRESENTATION SCHEDULE</th>
<th>MUNCHIES</th>
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</table>
4. Braga et al. (2001)  
6. Andrews et al. (1990)  
7. Lipsey (1992) | **ARTICLE EVALUATION DUE** | |
2. Cohen  
<p>| 11   | 11/1 | PRESENTATIONS OF PROGRAM PLANS | | | |
| 12   | 11/8 | PRESENTATIONS OF PROGRAM PLANS | NONE | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
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<th>PRESENTATION SCHEDULE</th>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>NO CLASS—ASC WEEK</td>
<td>NONE</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>11/22</td>
<td>CLASS DISCUSSION OF AND PROBLEM SOLVING RE: PROGRAM PLANS</td>
<td>NONE</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>11/29</td>
<td>INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH DR. LANE (IF DESIRED)</td>
<td>NONE</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12/6</td>
<td><strong>FINAL PROGRAM PLAN DUE BY 2 PM IN MY MAILBOX/OFFICE</strong> (2 COPIES)</td>
<td>NONE</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>8/30</td>
<td>1. Select agency for program evaluation plan assignment (Dr. Lane must approve) &lt;br&gt;2. Meet with primary contact at agency &lt;br&gt;3. Describe the course and your assignment, including what you’ll need from them. &lt;br&gt;4. Set up weekly meeting time with this person (or other key person)</td>
<td>• Signed sheet</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>1. Gather background information on agency (e.g., newspaper articles, pamphlets, yearly reports, invitations to events, meetings agendas and minutes)</td>
<td>• Copies of materials</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>1. Determine agency mission &lt;br&gt;2. Determine goals &amp; objectives of program &lt;br&gt;3. Determine agency’s operationalization of these goals/objectives</td>
<td>• Mission, goals, operationalization table (see example) &lt;br&gt;• TWO COPIES!</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9/20</td>
<td>1. Independently gather and compile in a table background on social conditions related to and client population/targets for the program (e.g., county statistics such as arrest data, population numbers—maybe poverty, homelessness, etc.) &lt;br&gt;2. Determine agency’s perceptions of their target population and the needs their program addresses</td>
<td>• Table of background info &lt;br&gt;• Worksheet on target population/needs</td>
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| 6    | 9/27     | 1. Determine program’s impact theory, service utilization plan, and process theory  
                2. If possible, begin observing agency activities |  
                • Impact theory, utilization plan, and process theory  
                • **TWO COPIES!** |
| 7    | 10/4     | 1. Observe agency activities and meetings  
                2. Take notes relevant to process and your evaluation plan |  
                • Copies of observation notes |
| 8    | 10/11    | 1. Observe agency activities and meetings  
                2. Take notes relevant to process and your evaluation plan |  
                • Copies of new observation notes  
                • **Bring article for approval** |
| 9    | 10/18    | 1. Continue observing agency  
                2. Develop evaluation instruments in conjunction with agency personnel (e.g., surveys, observation checklists/notes, interviews) |  
                • Copies of new observation notes  
                • Draft instruments |
| 10   | 10/25    | 1. Continue observing agency  
                2. Develop evaluation instruments in conjunction with agency personnel |  
                • Copies of new observation notes  
                • Draft instruments  
                • **Article evaluation paper** |
| 11   | 11/1     | 1. Continue observing agency  
                2. Develop evaluation instruments |  
                • Copies of new observation notes  
                **All Students**  
                • Presentation slides  
                **Presenters:**  
                • Table of contents for evaluation plan |
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Week</th>
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<th>Weekly Assignment</th>
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</table>
| 12   | 11/8     | 1. Develop in-kind and actual budgets for evaluation  
2. Develop implementation timetable | All Students:  
• Budgets  
• Timetable  
Presenters:  
• Presentation slides  
• Table of contents for evaluation plan |
| 13   | 11/15    | A detailed draft of table of contents | All Students:  
• Your expected, detailed table of contents |
| 14   | 11/22    | WORKING ON PROGRAM PLANS | NOTHING |
| 15   | 11/29    | WORKING ON PROGRAM PLANS | NOTHING |
| 16   | 12/6     | PROGRAM PLANS DONE! | 2 COPIES OF BOUND PROGRAM PLAN DUE TUESDAY DECEMBER 6 BY 2 PM IN MY OFFICE |


*And accompanying instruments: risk assessment, contact forms, background instrument, 6 month and 18 month follow-up forms*


