

WWS 515c: Program Evaluation
Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, Spring 2009

Instructors:

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The team of instructors brings nearly 40 years of experience designing and implementing both domestic and international evaluations of a broad range of health, labor, education, nutrition, and welfare policies at Mathematica Policy Research.

- **Dr. Debbie Peikes** (Ph.D. and M.P.A. Public Policy, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University). A Senior Researcher, Debbie has evaluated employment promotion policies for people with disabilities, disease management programs for Medicare beneficiaries, primary care initiatives, health insurance expansion for low-income children, and foundation programs. Debbie will lead the first third of the course, covering how to frame an evaluation, develop the logic model and evaluation questions, measure implementation, and monitor performance.
- **Dr. Chris Trenholm** (Ph.D. economics, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill). A Senior Economist, Chris has conducted major impact evaluations on a diverse range of program areas, from abstinence education and children's health insurance to Medicare home health care. Chris's portion of the course will cover experimental and quasi-experimental methods for evaluating program impacts.
- **Dr. Anu Rangarajan** (Ph.D. economics, Brown University). Associate Director of Research and Senior Economist. Anu has evaluated a wide range of programs including employment and welfare programs, disability programs, programs targeted to youth, and evaluations in developing countries. Anu will lead the final third of the course which will cover two broad topics: (1) discussion of quasi-experimental methods (2) assessing program costs and benefits.
- **Dr. Dan Player** (Ph.D. economics, University of Washington). As an Economist, Dan has designed and conducted experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations related to education and teacher quality. Dan will lead the data analysis component of the course for the C-track students.

TEXTS

1. Social Experiments: Evaluating Public Programs with Experimental Methods. 1999. Larry Orr. Sage Publications. An excellent book on random assignment evaluations. **Required text, but you can read the relevant chapters on reserve.**
2. Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation. 2nd Edition, 2004. Edited by Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer. An excellent reference book with well-written chapters addressing many evaluation areas—such as developing surveys, running focus groups, etc.
3. Evaluation, 7th 2004 Ed. By Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman, Sage Publications, 2004.
4. Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs by Shadish, Cook and Campbell (2002). An excellent reference for those that want a more technical, statistically oriented book.
5. Learning more from Social Experiments. 2005. Edited by Howard Bloom. Russell Sage Foundation. ISBN 0-87154-127-0

All readings can be found on the Princeton University Library Electronic Reserves. The five texts are on reserve in the library. All readings should be completed prior to the class in which they will be discussed.

OBJECTIVES

1. To learn tools to determine whether programs and policies are achieving their objectives
2. To develop expertise in framing evaluation questions and designing an evaluation plan
3. To develop the technical expertise to conduct high-quality impact analyses using experimental and quasi-experimental methods, and to critically assess the work of others
4. To gain skills in using program evaluation as a management tool
5. To design and describe an evaluation plan that would be suitable for a grant proposal
6. To gain hands-on experience analyzing real data from large scale impact evaluations (for C-track students)
7. To learn how to assess the costs and benefits of a policy or program

TEACHING APPROACH

We will use several different approaches to learning: lectures, class discussion of assigned articles, cases, small group exercises, student presentations, and a final exam. The use of these different formats reflects the fact that learning how to conduct and critique evaluation research draws on a combination of theory and rolling up your sleeves and applying the theory to real-world programs and policies. Because most evaluation work is conducted by teams, having the opportunity to discuss and design evaluation approaches jointly is essential to the learning process.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Grade (%)
Classroom Participation	See syllabus	10
Implementation Design Paper	See syllabus	25

STATA Problem Sets	See syllabus	15
Final Exam	May 14	50

LECTURES AND READINGS

1. February 5. Tailoring Evaluations—The Art of Evaluation, and Defining and Prioritizing the Questions (Peikes)

Readings:

Innovation Network, Inc. Logic Model Workbook

http://www.innonet.org/client_docs/File/LM_workbook.pdf

Optional: W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide December 2001, pp. 35-48 <http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf>

Rossi et al. Chap 3 pp. 70-97

Please bring copies of the Innovation Network and Kellogg readings to class

In-class exercise: Logic Model

2. February 12. Implementation Evaluation and Monitoring, Data Collection (Peikes)

Readings:

Scheirer in Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer (1994): Ch 3 Designing and Using Process Evaluation—focus on pp. 52-60

Optional: Wholey et al. (2004) Ch. 4 Performance Monitoring, pp. 98-125

Case: The Overcrowded Clinic (Please prepare the case before coming to class)

In-class exercise: The case

Hand out First Paper Assignment: *Implementation and Monitoring Design*
(Due by 4:30 pm on Thursday, March 5)

3. February 19. Data Collection continued (Peikes; Guest Lecture on Survey Design by Schwartz)

4. February 26. Experimental Design Evaluations (Trenholm)

Readings:

Orr Chapter 2, pp. 46-64

Orr Chapter 3, pp. 69-100

C-Track Lecture 1. March 3. Introduction to Impact Estimation (Player)

Readings:

Orr Chapter 2, pp. 42-64; Chapter 6, pp. 187-210

Schochet Appendix E

Hand out Stata Problem Set 1: *Evaluation of the Teen Parent Demonstration*
(Due at 5:00 pm via email, March 13)

5. March 5. Sample Size and Experimental Design Illustration (Trenholm)

Readings:

Orr, Chapter 4, pp.103-115, pp. 132-134

Trenholm et al. "Impacts of Title V Abstinence Education Programs" (exec summ)

6. March 12. Quasi-Experimental Design Program Evaluations (Trenholm)

Readings:

Wholey et. al, Ch 5 pp. 126-149.

BREAK WEEK (March 16-22)

C-Track Lecture 2. March 24. Sampling Weights (Player)

Readings:

Orr Chapter 6, pp. 213-220

Schochet Appendix D, pp. 57-72

Hand out Stata Problem Set 2: *Evaluation of the Teach for America Program*
(Due at 5:00 pm via email, April 3)

7. March 26. Pros and Cons of Quasi-Experiments: Illustrations (Trenholm)

Readings:

Lave et al. "Impact of a Children's Health Insurance Program on Newly Enrolled Children." JAMA, vol. 279, no. 22, 1998, pp. 1820–1825.

Trenholm and Orzol "Impact of the Children's Health Initiative of Santa Clara County on Medi-Cal and Health Families Enrollment"

8. April 2. Pros and Cons of Quasi-Experiments: Illustrations—Continued (Rangarajan)

In this class, we will discuss evaluations in developing countries that look to address different research questions using quasi-experimental methods. We will work through the appropriate methods for each study question.

C-Track Lecture 3. April 7. Strategies for Addressing Nonparticipation and Crossover (Player)

Readings:

Orr Chapter 2, pp. 62-64; Chapter 6, pp. 210-213

Bloom Chapter 3

Schochet Appendix C

Hand out Stata Problem Set 3: *Evaluation of the Job Corps Program*
(Due at 5:00 pm via email, April 17)

9. April 9. Cost-benefit analyses (Rangarajan)

Readings:

Orr, Chapter 6, pp. 220-229

Optional: Wholey et al., Ch 18 Cost-Effectiveness and Cost-Benefit Analysis

10. April 16. Cost-benefit analyses (continued) (Rangarajan)

Readings:

McConnell and Glazerman, “National Job Corps Study: The Benefits and Costs of Job Corps.” (Exec Summ)

C-Track Lecture 4. Apr. 21. Propensity Score Matching (Player)

Readings:

Bloom Chapter 5

Hand out Stata Problem Set 4: *Comparison of Experimental and Quasi-experimental Methods: An Evaluation of Dropout Prevention Programs*
(Due at 5:00 pm via email, May 1)

11. April 23. No Class

12. April 30. Cost-benefit analyses (continued) + TBD (Rangarajan)

First half of class will cover additional cost benefit exercises. Second half will focus on either (i) other types of evaluation (formative, participatory, technical assistance, etc); (ii) designing and managing an evaluation or (iii) experimental/quasi-experimental case study

Take-Home Final Exam: Likely will be Monday, May 11th. Details to be announced.