Program and Policy Evaluation

Program evaluation is the process by which we assess the effectiveness or impact of the work of government or non-profit agencies. The challenge in program evaluation is to isolate the impact of program activities from environmental factors so that you can determine the effectiveness of a program. There are a variety of strategies to try to best determine the impact of a program—from experiments to quasi-experiments to case studies.

Performance measurement is a relatively new addition to the set of tools used to evaluate programs. In developing performance measures, programs try to put in place ongoing indicators of program performance. These measures can be used to determine where resources should be allocated, how programs are meeting their mission, and, sometimes, whether they will get additional funding to continue to provide services.

Goals
In this course students will learn to:

- understand the role of evaluation in the policy process
- conduct and implement evaluations of public programs
- prepare and present evaluation reports to public officials and citizens
- develop and evaluate performance measures
- recognize the conflicts and limitations inherent in policy and program evaluations

Required Texts

The following three books are required for this course and are available from the book store:


A recommended book for the course is:

Other books that cover some of the same material are:

Edward Tufte, *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy.*
Susan Welch and John Comer. *Quantitative Methods for Public Administration.*

There are a number of articles that are required reading for the course. You can get them via the web at the web addresses provided, or through the UNCG Library on-line databases. I recommend using JournalFinder to locate the specific journal and then go to the assigned article.

**Course Requirements**

Grades for this course will be determined on the basis of the following course requirements: three “microtheme” response papers and presentations (15%); three small data analysis exercises (20%), a short paper on performance measurement (15%), a group project and report (25%), and an evaluation of programs to help students succeed at the beginning of their schooling (25%).

**Readings and Course Topics**

*Week 1. (Jan. 11) Introduction*

*Week 2. (Jan. 18) Overview of an Evaluation*
Posavac, Chapters 1-3
Haas and Springer, Chapters 1-3.


*Week 3. (Jan. 25) The Development of Measures and Ethics in Evaluation*
Posavac, Chapters 4, 5 & 12
Berman, Chapter 1 (Research Design and Measurement)


Week 4. (Feb. 1) Performance Measurement - Types of Measures
Hatry, Chapters 1-7
Primer on Performance Measurement (Handout)

Week 5. (Feb. 8) Overview of Quantitative Analysis in Program Evaluation
Berman, Chapter 2 (Univariate Analysis); Chapter 3 (Hypothesis Testing); Chapter 4 (Measures of Association); Chapter 6 and 7 (Regression and Assumptions)


Week 6. (Feb. 15) Approaches to Gathering Program Information
Posavac, Chapters 6 & 7
Haas and Springer, Chapter 10.*


Analysis #1

Week 7. (Feb. 22) Experiments and Quasi-Experiments
Posavac, Chapters 9, 10 & 11
Haas and Springer, Chapter 9.*


Week 8. (Mar 1) Experiments and Quasi-Experiments, continued
Posavac, Chapters 10 & 11


Haas and Springer, Chapter 6.*

** Analysis #2

_No class March 8, Spring Break_

*Week 9. (March 15) Performance Measurement--Use of Measures*
Hatry, Chapters 8-12


**Analysis #3

*Week 10. (March 22) Performance Measurement--Summary*
Hatry, Chapters 13-16


*Week 11. (March 29) Qualitative Evaluations and Presentations*
Posavac, Chapter 8 and 13

Haas and Springer, Chapter 7 and 12.*

**Performance Measurement Paper Due

*Week 12. (April 5) Case Study–School Choice Programs*


*Week 13. (April 12) Evaluation of Programs Influencing Early Childhood Education*
Clark, Patricia. & Kirk, E Elizabeth. 2000. “Review of recent research on all-day kindergarten,” 
*Childhood Education*, 76(4), 228-231.


Week 14. (April 19) Conclusions
Presentation of Research Projects

**Final Project Due Tuesday, May 3rd, 5:00pm**
Microthemes:

These must be NO LONGER than 1 page, single-spaced with an extra line between paragraphs, with 1 inch margins and a font size of 11 or larger. Despite the short length, the usual writing conventions should be followed -- like clear sentence structure with good transitions and adherence to rules of grammar and punctuation! I will ask you to do different kinds of things for your microthemes.

For example, I may have you do a "summary-writing" microtheme to work out a clear account of a section of argument that seems difficult and interesting to me. To do this in a page, you will obviously have to differentiate between the main ideas and less important points, and figure out what you can leave behind without losing the sense of the argument. For "thesis-support" essays, I will ask you to answer a particular question about the readings. You'll need to be able to support your answer with textual evidence, guard against any tendency to ignore textual evidence that might undermine your thesis, etc.

The point of writing microthemes is for you to practice and further develop your capacities for interpretation, analysis, and explication. You will be required to present your microthemes, either in cooperation with another student or on your own. I also expect you to use them to inform your participation in seminar. To facilitate this, you need to get your micro-theme to me by noon on the day that it is due. You can email, fax, or hand deliver it to me. The readings that are marked with an asterisks (*) are those for which micro-themes can be written.

I will give you the assignment for each microtheme the class period before they are due, or email it to you in time for you to complete it for the following class.