

EHLP 8830
Education Policy and Program Evaluation
Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations
Summer 2018

Schedule of meetings: June 1-2, June 29-30, July 27-28

Meeting Dates & Start Times:

Friday, June 1	4:10-8:30
Saturday, June 2	8:30-4:30
Friday, June 29	4:10-8:30
Saturday, June 30	8:30-4:30
Friday, July 27	4:10-8:30
Saturday, July 28	8:30-4:30

Class & Instructor Information:

Class Location:	Payne 013
Instructor:	Carolyn Heinrich
Office:	Payne 205B
Office Hours:	e-mail for appointment
Telephone:	615-322-1169
email:	carolyn.j.heinrich@vanderbilt.edu

Course description and objectives

In the classic text *Evaluation* (which we will use in this course), Peter H. Rossi, Howard Freeman and Mark Lipsey define program evaluation as “the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs.” They elaborate on this definition, describing the use of social research methods to study, appraise and help improve social programs, from their conceptualization and design, implementation and administration, and to their outcomes and the efficiency with which they are produced. Some evaluations take place in more formative stages of a program, addressing questions about the problem the intervention is designed to ameliorate, what types of interventions are feasible, what are the appropriate target populations for the intervention, and what features theory and practice suggest should be incorporated into the design. Throughout this course, we will discuss cases of how evaluations are designed and implemented, but the primary focus will be on methods to evaluate established programs or policies.

The goals of this course are threefold: (1) to introduce you to concepts and methods of program evaluation; (2) to equip you with skills for designing, implementing and interpreting program evaluations, and (3) to help you become more savvy consumers of educational research and to understand and think critically about educational policy and program evaluation and the use of evaluation results for improving programs and practice. We will begin with an introduction to program evaluation as well as an overview of the marked shift in the past decade and a half in federal educational policy in the United States. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001 (No Child Left Behind) called for educational practice to be informed by “scientifically based research,” specifically, educational research that uses experimental or quasi-experimental designs, with a stated preference for random assignment experiments. Thus, during the class meetings, we will examine some of the more widely used statistical methods in educational policy research and program evaluation in light of recent shifts in federal educational policy. We will also engage in discussions of the practical significance of program evaluation, as well as the context (political, social and economic) in which evaluations are designed and conducted.

Required Texts and Readings

Rossi, P., Lipsey, M, & Freeman, H. (2004). *Evaluation: A systematic approach*. 7th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
Referred to in syllabus as **RLF**

Other (electronic) readings can be found on Blackboard Oak in the “Course Content” folder.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Class attendance and participation 10%

Class attendance is mandatory. Please read the assigned readings *before* class and come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss the assigned readings. Each class will be a mixture of lecture, student discussion, and small group discussion. Your grade will be based on your contribution to both whole class and small group work.

Assignment #1

Discussion lead, Weekend 2 15% *Due Friday, June 29*

During Weekend 1, we will form groups that you will work with to lead a discussion for Weekend 2. Each group will be in charge of leading a discussion of one of the following readings on the syllabus for Weekend 2: Bettinger and Baker, 2014; Magnuson, et. al., 2004; Hillman et al., 2015; Gamoran and An, 2015; or Monaghan and Attewell, 2015. You can rely on your instructor to cover the more complex, statistical details of the methods discussed in these articles. The goal of your discussion lead should be to encourage questions and reflections on the evaluation approach pursued and its limitations, the interpretation of the study results, and whether you think the evaluation provides information that is relevant to policy and/or practice. Plan for a presentation and discussion that *together* last approximately 15 minutes.

Assignment #2

Discussion contribution, Weekend 3 10% *Due Friday, July 27*

With a partner or your capstone group, identify an ethical or “social context” issue in your capstone project that one needs to navigate or address to successfully conduct the evaluation work. What project elements or “stakeholders” does it involve or concern, and how would you overcome the challenges that it poses? Write an approximately two-page note describing the issue and a possible response to submit at the start of class on July 27, and be prepared to discuss this during weekend 3.

Assignment #3

Evaluation critique paper

25%

Due Tuesday, July 31

With a partner or your capstone group, choose a research paper or report publication that describes an evaluation that is related to your capstone project. In a paper of approximately 5 pages in length, critique any of the following choices or elements of the evaluation: sample, measures, data and methodologies applied; the authors' recognition of the limitations of their work; and the credibility of the findings (e.g., if you were a policymaker, what would you take from the evaluation of this program?) Make sure that you read the paper to be critiqued in advance of the final class meeting (weekend 3), so that you can contribute to an in-class discussion of evaluation critiques.

Assignment #4

Capstone Project Description and Plan

40%

Due Wednesday, August 8

Propose your initial/draft plan for your Capstone study, building on your description for Assignment 1. The proposal should be no more than 15 pages double-spaced (not including references, tables, and appendices), and must include the following components:

- 1) an introduction to and description of the institution/program/policy and the problem or need that your Capstone assignment is meant to address;
- 2) the program theory or logic model that underlies your plan and guides your research or evaluation efforts;
- 3) a description of your proposed plan, including: a) design and components, b) description of data, data collection methods, population(s) that will be studied and what sample(s) will look like, how and how often data will be collected, c) strengths and weaknesses of your design, d) data analysis techniques, including limitations, e) practical significance of the proposed evaluation to administrators and/or policy-makers, f) relevance and contribution of the proposed evaluation to the extant literature.

Class meeting 1: June 1-2

Introduction to program evaluation

RLF, Chapters 1-2

Whitehurst, G.J. (2012) The Value of Experiments in Education. *Education Finance and Policy*, 7(2). 107-123

Wholey, Joseph S. (1994). Assessing the Feasibility and Likely Usefulness of Evaluation. Ch. 2 in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, Wholey, et al. (eds.), Jossey-Bass.

Program Theory, Implementation and Process Evaluations

RLF, Chapters 3-6

W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Using Logic Models to Bring Together Planning, Evaluation, and Action: Logic Model Development Guide. January, 2004.

Optional: Festen, Marcia, Marianne Philbin & Kim Klein. 2006. Level Best: How Small and Grassroots Nonprofits Can Tackle Evaluation and Talk Results. Jossey-Bass. Chapter 4 “Asking the Right Questions” and Chapter 5, “Tracking Information.”

Data, Measures and Validity

RLF, Chapter 7

W. James Bradley and Kurt C. Schaefer, Chapter 6, “Limitations of Measurement in the Social Sciences” in *The Uses and Misuses of Data and Models*, Sage Publications, 1998.

Methods Overview and Experimental Design

RLF, Chapter 8

Bettinger, Eric P. and Rachel B. Baker. 2014. The Effects of Student Coaching: An Evaluation of a Randomized Experiment in Student Advising. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 3–19.

Schanzenbach, D. W. (2012). Limitations of Experiments in Education Research. *The Value of Experiments in Education. Education Finance and Policy*, 7(2): 219-232.

Class Meeting 2: June 29-30

Ordinary Least Squares Regression (review) and Application in Evaluation

RLF, Chapter 9

Reichardt, Charles S. and Carol A. Bormann. 1994. Using Regression Models to Estimate Program Effects. Ch. 18 in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, Wholey, et al. (eds.), Jossey-Bass.

Magnuson, K. A., Meyers, M. K., Ruhm, C. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2004). Inequality in preschool education and school readiness. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41, 115-157.

Fixed Effects and Value-added Models and Interrupted Time Series

RLF 291-295

Hillman, Nicholas W., David A. Tandberg and Alyssa H. Fryar. 2015. Evaluating the Impacts of “New” Performance Funding in Higher Education. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 501–519

Gamoran, Adam and Brian P. An. 2015. Effects of School Segregation and School Resources in a Changing Policy Context. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

Other Quasi-experimental Methods

RLF 275-279

Monaghan, David B. and Paul Attewell. 2015. The Community College Route to the Bachelor’s Degree. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Vol. 37, 1: pp. 70-91.

RLF 286-289

Martorell, Paco and Isaac McFarlin. 2011. “Help or Hindrance? The Effects of College Remediation on Academic and Labor Market Outcomes”. *Review of Economics and Statistics*. 93:2, 436–454.

Optional: Heinrich, Carolyn J., Alessandro Maffioli and Gonzalo Vázquez. *A Primer for Applying Propensity-Score Matching*. Impact-Evaluation Guidelines. Technical Notes. No. IDB-TN-161. August 2010.

William R. Shadish, M. H. Clark, and Peter M. Steiner. 2008. Can Nonrandomized Experiments Yield Accurate Answers? A Randomized Experiment Comparing Random and Nonrandom Assignments. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, Vol. 103, No. 484.

Meeting 3: July 27-28

Mixed methods approaches to evaluation

RLF, Chapter 4

Dean, Debra L. (1994). How to Use Focus Groups. Ch. 14 in Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, Wholey, et al. (eds.), Jossey-Bass.

Roderick, M. and Engel, M. (2001) "The Grasshopper and The Ant: Motivational Responses of Low Achieving Students to High-Stakes Testing." Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23(3), 197-227.

Optional: Heinrich, Carolyn J. & Annalee Good (2018): Research-informed practice improvements: exploring linkages between school district use of research evidence and educational outcomes over time. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*.

Social context and ethical issues

RLF, Chapter 12

Plowright, David. 2011. Chapter 12, "Ethical Issues in Participant-Centered Research" in Using Mixed Methods. Sage Publications.

Interpreting Practical Significance: Magnitude/Effect Size, Statistical Power

RLF, Chapter 10

Hill, C. J., Bloom, H. S., Black, A. R. and Lipsey, M. W. (2008). Empirical Benchmarks for Interpreting Effect Sizes in Research. *Child Development Perspectives*, 2: 172–177

Cohen, Jacob. "A power primer." *Psychological bulletin* 112.1 (1992): 155-159.

Cost-Benefit Analysis and Meta-analysis

RLF, Chapter 11

Belfield, C., Nores, M., Barnett, S., Schweinhart, L. (2006). The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program: Cost-Benefit Analysis Using Data from the Age-40 Follow-up. *The Journal of Human Resources*. XLI (1) 162-190.

Heckman, J.J., Moon, S.H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P.A. and A. Yavitz. 2010. The rate of return to the HighScope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics* 94 (1-2): 114-128.

Optional: Kee, James Edwin. (1994). Benefit-Cost Analysis in Program Evaluation. Ch. 19 in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, Wholey, et al. (eds.), Jossey-Bass.

Mark W. Lipsey. 1997. What can you build with thousands of bricks? Musings on the cumulation of knowledge in program evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, Volume 1997, Issue 76: 7-23.

U.S. Department of Education. 2010. Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies.