**Program Evaluation Methods**

SOCY 7171, Section 002

Spring 2021

Tuesdays 4:10 – 6:40

<https://cuboulder.zoom.us/j/98378549143>

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 1-4pm

**Description:**

This course is designed as an introduction to the field of program evaluation, research done to investigate the impacts of social programs, and is tailored to graduate students interested in conducting evaluation studies and pursuing evaluation as a potential career path.

We’ll focus on (1) characteristics of the most common types of evaluation projects (e.g. needs assessments, process evaluations, impact evaluations, etc.); (2) stakeholder engagement and different approaches to the role of the evaluator (e.g. utilization-focused evaluation, participatory evaluation, evaluation as accountability, etc.) (3) creating theories of change and logic models; (4) common qualitative methods utilized by evaluators (e.g. interviews, focus groups, etc.); (5) common quantitative methods utilized by evaluators (e.g. RCT and QED studies); and (6) networking and obtaining employment in the field of program evaluation.

**Required text:**

*Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, 8th edition (2018), Peter H. Rossi, Mark W. Lipsey, Gary T. Henry*

*Evaluation Failures: 22 Tales of Mistakes Made and Lessons Learned Edited by: Kylie Hutchinson (2018)*

Additional readings will be provided electronically on Canvas.

**Objectives:**

* Students will understand the terminology of the evaluation field, including the major types of evaluation projects and some of the most prominent evaluation approaches and theorists.
* Students will understand the tradeoffs inherent in different evaluation designs, from both a methodological and epistemological standpoint.
* Students will practice common skills utilized in the evaluation field, including the development of logic models and indicators.
* Students will critically review a variety of evaluation studies, assessing their methodological choices, and become familiar with the types of work done in the evaluation field.
* Students will be introduced to the American Evaluation Association, the major professional association for evaluators, and will have a chance to engage with working evaluators through classroom panel discussions.

It’s my intention that you’ll leave this course better prepared for a career in program evaluation and with a clearer sense of whether this is a path you’d like to pursue.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

*Class Preparation and Participation*

30% of your grade for this class will be based on class attendance and participation. This course will provide a forum for us to discuss your opinions and questions about evaluation practices, and it’s imperative that you’re present in class and that you participate in course discussions, both by sharing your own ideas and by listening thoughtfully and responding respectfully to the ideas of others. If you’re unable to attend a class meeting, I ask that you email me in advance to notify me of your upcoming absence. If you miss a class, I highly encourage you to attend office hours that week to discuss what we covered in class. You’re required to attend office hours if you miss two classes to discuss course material and ensure you’re on track for the remainder of the semester. To earn these participation points your presence should contribute to the learning experience for the class as a whole; come to class prepared for our discussion and remain engaged throughout the class period, providing commentary and insights that will advance our collective understanding of the material we’re covering.

*Weekly Reactions to Readings and Questions*

On 10 of the 15 weeks this semester (your choice of weeks from those where readings are assigned), you’ll turn in reading reactions and a set of questions the readings raised for you that you’d like to discuss in class that week. Please format these as follows: For each reading, (1) give an approximately one paragraph reaction to the reading, (2) provide a bulleted list of the most important points from the reading (approximately ½ page will suffice), and (3) list approximately 2-5 questions that the reading raised for you. These will be due on Monday night at 11:59pm, so I can review your reactions and questions on Tuesday mornings and come to class prepared for our discussion. These will be worth 20% of your grade.

*Homework Assignments*

On 8 weeks during the semester, you will complete short homework assignments in preparation for our class discussion. These will be due at 11:59pm on Monday night along with your reading reactions for that week. These assignments will allow you to practice skills being discussed in our readings, particularly the Rossi textbook. Examples include drafting indicators for a social program or attempting to locate publicly available data for a sample needs assessment. These assignments should take no more than an hour and are designed to directly facilitate your understanding of course concepts – i.e. I’ve designed them to be useful to you! These assignments are worth 20% of your grade.

*Final presentation*

There will be no term paper for this course. The skill of writing academic papers has honestly hindered my performance as an evaluator as much as it’s helped; I’ve had to unlearn the tendency to write lengthy documents and expect clients to read them! Instead of producing a final written product for this class, each student (or pair of students – your choice) will prepare an approximately 45-minute presentation on (1) a research method commonly utilized in evaluation studies that you were previously unfamiliar with, selected from a list of options I’ll provide, or (2) an evaluation plan you’ve developed for a project you intend to undertake. I expect most students to choose the first option; however, I give the second option for any student enrolled in this course as direct means of preparing for an upcoming evaluation.

More information on this presentation will be provided in class – but in a nutshell, broadening your methodological horizons (i.e. adding another tool to your methodological toolkit!) and practicing the communication of technical information to an audience of mixed technical expertise will be crucial in your career as an evaluator. This presentation seeks to give you a practical skill you’ll take home with you at the end of the semester and will allow us to learn and grow from each other. Some of the topics I’ll ask you to choose from include those I’m still relatively unfamiliar with myself (and if I’m honest, I still get a little self-conscious about) – so in line with the mindfulness approach of the *Evaluation Failures* text we’re reading this semester, I encourage you to get comfortable with your weak spots and lean into one in an effort to help all of us grow. This presentation will be worth 30% of your grade.

**Tentative Course Outline and Readings:**

*Week 1: Jan 19 – What is evaluation, why is it needed, and why might you want to do it?*

* Rossi, Chapter 1
* Patton’s Utilization-focused Evaluation, Chapters 1 & 2

*Week 2: Jan 26 – What is an evaluator, and could you be one?*

* AEA literature – Guiding Principles, Evaluator Competencies, Cultural Competence Statement
* Program Evaluation Standards Checklist from Western Michigan University
* Evaluation Roots introductory chapter by Alkin and Christie
  + Skim the introductory information on different types of evaluation, and then read specifically: Rossi, Stufflebeam, Patton, Scriven, Guba & Lincoln, Fetterman
* Browse the AEA website: eval.org
  + Read “About” 🡪 “About AEA”
  + Check out the videos on “About” 🡪 “What is Evaluation?”
  + Check out the blog, under “Read” 🡪 “Evaluation tips – aea365”
  + Browse Events, Learn, Career (job postings)
* Evaluation Failures, Forward & Introduction, Chapters 13, 17, and 22
* NOTE: For reading responses this week, address the AEA literature as one reading, Evaluation Failures as one reading, and Evaluation Roots as the third reading.

*Week 3: Feb 2 – Engaging stakeholders and your role as an evaluator*

* Patton’s Utilization-focused Evaluation, Chapter 3
* Fetterman et al. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 6 (and optionally, Chapter 9)
* Donaldson, Gooler, and Scriven (2002) article
* Evaluation Failures Chapters 5, 7, 8, and 18
* NOTE: For reading responses this week, treat each of the above bullet points as one reading.

*Week 4: Feb 9 – Needs Assessment*

* Rossi, Chapter 2
* LTF document (skim)
* And skim the following:
  + Bopp et al. (2012)
  + Nolin et al. (2006)
  + Huff et al. (2015)
* NOTE: For reading responses this week, do Rossi Chapter 2 and treat the remaining sample needs assessments as one reading.

*Week 5: Feb 16 – Program Theory and Logic Models*

* Rossi, Chapter 3
* Logic Model Checklist from Western Michigan University
* Evaluation Failures – Chapters 10, 11, and 19
* NOTE: For reading responses this week, do Rossi Chapter 3 and treat the Evaluation Failures chapters as one reading.

*Week 6: Feb 23 – Process Evaluation*

* Rossi, Chapter 4
* Example process evaluations

*Week 7: Mar 2 – Outcome Evaluation & Introduction to Impact Evaluation*

* Rossi, Chapters 5 & 6
* Western Michigan University Checklists: Evaluation Questions checklist and Indicators checklist
* SEP Guidance
* Evaluation Failures – Chapters 14, 15, and 16

*Week 8: Mar 9 – QEDs*

* Rossi Chapter 7
* Sample QED’s

*Week 9: Mar 16 – RCTs*

* Rossi Chapter 8
* Sample RCT’s

*Week 10: Mar 23 – Detecting Effects & Meta-Analysis*

* Rossi Chapter 9
* Anjie Rosga’s Trust & Numbers (optional)

*Week 11: Mar 30 – Economic Efficiency Studies & Evaluation Plans*

* Rossi Chapters 10 (skim) & 11
* Evaluation Failures – Chapters 2, 6, 9, and 12
* Sample SEP
* Patterson et al. (2015) – Sharing Results to Effect Change
* Western Michigan University Evaluation Plan Checklist and (optionally) Budgeting Checklist and budgeting for SIF document

*Week 12: Apr 6 – The Social & Political Context of Evaluation*

* Rossi Chapter 12
* Evaluation Recommendations Checklist
* Evaluation failures, Chapters 1, 3, 20, and 21

*Week 13: Apr 13 – End-of-Semester Evaluator Q&A Panel*

* No readings

*Week 14: Apr 20 – Presentations*

* No readings

*Week 15: Apr 27 – Presentations*

* No readings

Classroom Behavior

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior) and the [Student Code of Conduct](https://www.colorado.edu/sccr/sites/default/files/attached-files/2020-2021_student_code_of_conduct_0.pdf).

Requirements for COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:

* maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
* wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
* clean local work area,
* practice hand hygiene,
* follow public health orders, and
* if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert [CU Boulder Medical Services](https://www.colorado.edu/healthcenter/coronavirus-updates/symptoms-and-what-do-if-you-feel-sick).

Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](https://www.colorado.edu/sccr/). For more information, see the policies on [COVID-19 Health and Safety](https://www.colorado.edu/policies/covid-19-health-and-safety-policy) and [classroom behavior](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior) and the [Student Code of Conduct](http://www.colorado.edu/osccr/). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

All students who are new to campus must complete the [COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course](https://www.colorado.edu/protect-our-herd/how#anchor1). Before coming to campus each day, all students are required to complete the [Buff Pass](https://pass.colorado.edu/login).

Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home. In this class, if you are sick or quarantined, please contact your instructor before missing class. If advance notification is not possible, please contact us within 24 hours after your missed class to discuss any additional accommodations that will be needed to make up for the absence.

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed.  Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment.  Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](https://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance.  If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students/temporary-medical-conditions) on the Disability Services website.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu)); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](https://www.colorado.edu/osccr/honor-code).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](https://cuboulder.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0PnqVK4kkIJIZnf), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](http://www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity/).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, we will make accommodations for absences due to religious observance, as long as you contact us about your impending absence at least one week prior to the absence.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-and-absences-classes-andor-exams) for full details.

Basic Needs:

I believe that in order to learn, students need to have their basic needs met: food to eat and a safe place to live. If you’re having trouble with either, the campus has some resources for you. If you’re facing food insecurity, reach out to [food@colorado.edu](mailto:food@colorado.edu), and they will work with you to find food resources. If you’re having trouble paying rent or facing housing insecurity, you can get in touch with these advocates: [Boulder County Housing & Human Services](https://www.bouldercounty.org/families/housing/rental-assistance/#about) at 303-441-1000 or [Off-campus Housing](https://www.colorado.edu/offcampus/) at [och@colorado.edu](mailto:och@colorado.edu) & 303-492-7053. For assistance with landlord-tenant matters, contact [Mediation Services](https://bouldercolorado.gov/community-relations/mediation-program) at 303-441-4364 and  [mediation@bouldercolorado.edu](mailto:mediation@bouldercolorado.edu).  A [**Student Emergency Fund**](https://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/student-emergency-fund) has been created to support students experiencing a temporary financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. Other campus resources are available here (including mental health resources and [free therapy](https://www.colorado.edu/counseling/)). [Case manager resources](https://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/sscm) are also available to help you find appropriate campus and local resources. A 24/7 [**Suicide Prevention hotline**](https://www.colorado.edu/resources/suicide-prevention) is available for you: just call 303-492-2277. Please don’t hesitate to also approach me if you have trouble negotiating these resources.