

PPPM 4/565, Program Evaluation  
Fall Quarter, 2019  
(4 credits)  
CRN: 15164/15175

University of Oregon, School of Planning, Public Policy & Management

Location and Time: 142 HEDCO  
Monday, 4:00 – 6:50 PM

Course Website: <http://canvas.uoregon.edu>

**Saurabh Lall, Ph.D.**

Office hours:

Mondays (1:30 PM – 2:30 PM)

Wednesdays (11:30 AM – 12:30 PM)

and by appointment (please [email](#))

Office: 109, Hendricks Hall

Email: [slall@uoregon.edu](mailto:slall@uoregon.edu) (Best way to reach me)

Phone: 541-346-7354

**NOTE: We do not have class on September 30, 2019. The University of Oregon is closed in observance of Rosh Hashanah. <https://registrar.uoregon.edu/calendars/academic/five-year>. We will meet on October 7!**

**Introduction**

This course is intended to give the student an appreciation of the contributions and limitations of program evaluation in the social sector, including organizations and agencies in the public, nonprofit, and social enterprise domains. We will focus on the conceptual, organizational, methodological, and ethical problems which face evaluators, and build basic skills needed to conduct evaluations.

We will start by introducing the concept of evaluation, and distinguish evaluation as a professional field, distinct from the broader realm of social science research. Program evaluation uses many of the (quantitative and qualitative) methods used by social scientists. However, the purpose of evaluation is to answer questions about *specific* program activities, outputs, and outcomes, for *specific* users in a practical manner, rather than the broader generation of knowledge. Thus, a recurring theme in this class will be understanding the intended users of evaluation findings and managing different stakeholder groups.

Making meaningful comparisons is at the heart of strong evaluation design. We will explore the idea of the counterfactual – what might have happened in the absence of this program? How do we know if and how the program contributed to certain outcomes? We will examine concepts like internal validity, external validity, and reliability of evaluation results. We will focus on aligning evaluation and performance measurement with organizational strategy, and explore 4 related approaches to measuring social performance.

You will learn some tools and skills in both quantitative and qualitative evaluation, and also appropriate ways to present data and findings in a way that enables the use of those findings. Finally, we will start to look at some of the emerging areas in program evaluation, such as the use of geographic information and big data.

**General information**

This course is designed to provide a practical overview of program evaluation. **This is not a research methods class, and we will not be covering either quantitative or qualitative methods in detail.** It is helpful if you have taken one basic

quantitative methods/statistics course, but don't worry if you have not. I will be revising some basic statistical concepts in the first couple of weeks, which should help you get up to speed for the class.

For all writing assignments in class, the quality of your written work must be high. Poor quality writing is distracting to readers. It is also easy to misinterpret evaluation findings, so clear and precise writing is essential. One of the most important skills you should aim to develop through this class is to explain complex processes and results in simple and accurate ways.

We may have some guest speakers in the class, joining in-person or via Skype. You should plan to read their bios and prepare at least one thoughtful question for any guest speakers.

It is your responsibility to get assignments in on time; late assignments may have a per-day point penalty. It is also your responsibility to ensure you can access the course website. Turn in all assignments through Canvas, NOT on paper. If Canvas is down, submit via email.

If you know you are going to miss a class, let me know in advance, and be sure to get notes from a colleague in class. **We will only have class once a week, so you will miss quite a lot if you are not in class. I will be posting my PowerPoint slides on Canvas after the lecture, but they do not fully cover the class material.** We will also be doing a number of exercises in class, to help you understand some of these concepts, so you will benefit more from attending.

**Read the weekly readings BEFORE class.**

This is an adaptive class, so I will be updating the readings based on your interests and based on the check-in on Day 1 about your familiarity with basic statistical concepts.

### **Competencies**

By completing this course, students will be able to:

- Develop knowledge of and skills in culturally responsive evaluation & identify potential ethical dilemmas in evaluation
- Work with stakeholders to frame evaluation and performance measurement questions
- Develop theory of change and program logic models
- Help different types of social sector organizations align their mission and strategy with their measurement practices
- Design clear and useful data collection instruments for use in evaluation work
- Design user-oriented reports to convey evaluation findings
- Develop useful and feasible recommendations based on evaluation findings

**NOTE: Both American English (e.g., organization, color) and British English spellings (e.g., organisation, colour) are perfectly acceptable in class. You are also free to use either Metric or Imperial units in your assignments as needed.**

**Grading Components:** As a 400/500 level course, the grading components and course expectations are different for graduate and undergraduate students. In general, writing assignments will be graded based on (a) clarity & thoughtful analysis; (b) quality of research and analysis; (c) structure and professionalism. Grades will be assigned based on your score out of 100 points as follows:

<b>Grade Distribution</b>	
A	94-100%
A-	90-93.99%
B+	86-89.99%
B	84-85.99%
B-	80-83.99%
C+	76-79.99%

C	74-75.99%
C-	70-73.99%
D+	66-69.99%
D	64-65.99%
D-	60-63.99%
F	Under 60%

## **Graduate Students**

**Class Participation** (10% of the grade). Students are expected to be active participants in classroom discussions. If you expect to miss class for any reason, please email me in advance. You will gain more from this class by attending, as we will be doing a number of hands-on activities throughout the term to help reinforce some of the concepts from the readings. Additionally, each student must prepare at least one question for any guest speaker in the course, and submit it to me the day before.

**Ethics in Evaluation Blog** (10% of the grade). Students will write a 300-word blog on an ethical issue of their choice as it applies to evaluation. Further instructions will be provided on Canvas. **DUE OCT 21 (Week 4)**

**Final project proposal (GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY) (Not graded, but required)** Graduate students must submit the name of their proposed public, nonprofit, or social enterprise organization for approval, along with a draft logic model of the program by **Week 5**.

**Midterm:** (20% of the grade) The midterm exam will be based on course readings, class discussions and guest speaker material. The midterm will be take-home, and open book. You will receive the exam in Week 5 and it will be due 1 week later. It will consist of short essay type questions, and a case analysis. **DUE NOV 4 (Week 6)**

**Evaluation Critique** (25% of the grade). Students will review a published evaluation report (quantitative or mixed methods) and critique it, based on the material we discuss in class. More details will be provided in class. **DUE NOV 18 (Week 8)**

**LTD Group Project** (10% of the grade). You will be working in groups to help Lane Transit District better align their performance measures with their strategy. More instructions will be provided in class. **DUE NOV 25 (Week 9)**

**Final Project (GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY) (25% of the grade)**. Graduate students will prepare an evaluation plan for a program for an approved public, nonprofit, or social enterprise organization. The plan should include a logic model, stakeholder analysis, measurement strategy/research design (based on the Ebrahim model), and timeline. More details will be provided in class. **DUE DEC 2 (Week 10)**

**NOTE: There is no final exam, only a final project.**

## **Undergraduate Students:**

**Class Participation** (10% of the grade). Students are expected to be active participants in classroom discussions. If you expect to miss class for any reason, please email me in advance. You will gain more from this class by attending, as we will be doing a number of hands-on activities throughout the term to help reinforce some of the concepts from the readings. Additionally, each student must prepare at least one question for any guest speaker in the course, and submit it to me the day before.

**Ethics in Evaluation Blog** (15% of the grade). Students will write a 300-word blog on an ethical issue of their choice as it applies to evaluation. Further instructions will be provided on Canvas. **DUE OCT 21 (Week 4)**

**Midterm:** (30% of the grade) The midterm exam will be based on course readings, class discussions and guest speaker material. The midterm will be take-home, and open book. You will receive the exam in Week 5 and it will be due 1 week later. It will consist of short essay type questions, and a case analysis. **DUE NOV 4 (Week 6)**

LTD Group Project (15% of the grade). You will be working in groups to help Lane Transit District better align their performance measures with their strategy. More instructions will be provided in class. **DUE NOV 25 (Week 9)**

Evaluation Critique (30% of the grade). Students will review a published evaluation report (quantitative or mixed methods) and critique it, based on the material we discuss in class. More details will be provided in class. **DUE DEC 2 (Week 10)**

**NOTE: There is no final exam, your evaluation critique will be the final assignment.**

### **Documented Disabilities**

Students who have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course should make arrangements with me as soon as possible. Feel free to stop by my office, speak with me before/after class, or email me.

### **Academic Misconduct**

You are expected at all times to do your own work. Copying content from other students or other authors and submitting it as your own work is grounds for failing the class. The University Student Conduct Code (available at [conduct.uoregon.edu](http://conduct.uoregon.edu)) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. For example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from me. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas). If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is your obligation to clarify the question with me before committing the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at: [www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students](http://www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students).

### **Inclusion & Duty to Report Sexual Assault**

The School of Architecture and Allied Arts, the administrative home of the PPPM department, is a community that values inclusion. We are committed to equal opportunities for all students to develop individually, professionally, and academically regardless of ethnicity, heritage, gender, sexual orientation, ability, socio-economic standing, cultural beliefs and traditions. We are dedicated to an environment that is inclusive and fosters awareness, understanding, and respect for diversity. If you feel excluded or threatened, please let me know. If you are reluctant to speak to someone in person, please know that the University Bias Response Team is also a resource that can assist you. Find more information at their website at <http://bias.uoregon.edu/index.html> or by phoning 541-346-2037.

In addition, we are also committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender based stalking. If this happens to you or a student you know, I will counsel you/and or the student to seek confidential assistance at the University Health Center and the University Counseling Center. I am required by the University to report this to the PPPM Department Head and the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity so that the incident can be investigated and appropriate action taken.

### **Required Readings:**

There is one book required for the class.

- **Measuring Social Change: Performance and Accountability in a Complex World** by *Alnoor Ebrahim* (Tufts University)  
<https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=27990>

You can purchase it through the bookstore, or look on Amazon for a used copy. Stanford University Press also currently has it on sale through September 30 (30% OFF WITH CODE BTS2019) at the link above.

All other readings will be posted online on Canvas. It is absolutely critical that you check Canvas every week, as readings may be updated as the term progresses, depending on the interests of the class and current events. This is not a static class, and you will have the chance to shape your learning as we progress. As part of the required readings, you will also be asked to review a number of websites related to program evaluation. Plan to read through these websites to get an overview of the type of work done by these organizations and prepare questions for any guest speakers in class.

**Class Schedule (Tentative: Subject to Change during the Quarter)**

**Week 1: September 30: NO CLASS (University of Oregon closed in observance of Rosh Hashanah)**

**Week 2: October 7**

**Introduction to the Course and Overview of the Field of Program Evaluation**

**Guest Speaker: Andrew Martin (Lane Transit District) – Sustainable City Year Program project in Program Evaluation**

*Guiding Questions*

What is program evaluation?

How does program evaluation differ from other forms of analysis?

How did the field of program evaluation evolve?

What are the different approaches to evaluation (and related concepts)?

Where does evaluation take place, and who conducts evaluations?

Who are “professional evaluators?”

How does evaluation differ in different contexts (public sector, nonprofits, international development, social enterprise)?

Check-in about basic statistical concepts – means, medians, t-tests, regression

**Readings**

- Ebrahim, Chapter 1: Conceptualizing Social Performance in a Complex World
- Gugerty, M.K. & Karlan, D. (2014). “Measuring Impact Isn’t for Everyone”
- American Evaluation Principles – Guiding Principles for Evaluations (skim)
- Patton, M.Q. (2017). Evaluation Flashcards (skim each week for relevant flashcards, this is a useful reference throughout the course)

**Week 3: October 14**

**Ethical Issues; Would it have happened anyway?**

*Guiding Questions*

What is a counterfactual? How do we know what may have happened in the absence of the program?

What are the concepts of measurement, internal, external, and statistical conclusion validity? What are some potential threats to validity, and why do they matter?

What are the commonly used designs to measure program outcomes?

What is the importance of the randomized controlled trial in evaluation?

What are some other ways to develop counterfactuals?

What are the considerations in selecting a design to evaluate program impact?

How do the evaluators weigh the tradeoffs in various designs?

How do you evaluate an evaluation?

**Readings**

- Kimmel, A. (1998). “Chapter 2: An Overview of Ethical Problems in Social Research” from *Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research*
- Kimmel, A. (1998). “Chapter 4: Methodological Issues and Dilemmas” from *Ethics and Values in Applied Social Research*
- Glennerster, R. & Takavarasha, K. (2013) – “Chapter 2: Why Randomize” from *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide*
- U.S. Government Accountability Office Training Institute – Appendix 1: Strategies to Help Ensure Validity and Reliability of Data

**Week 4: October 21**

**Developing a Niche Strategy; Qualitative Methods**

**DUE: Ethics Blog (All Students)**

## Readings

- Ebrahim, Chapter 2: Niche Strategy
- Mason, J. (2002). “Chapter 4: Qualitative Interviewing” from *Qualitative Researching*
- Mason, J. (2002). “Chapter 8: Organizing and Indexing Qualitative Data” from *Qualitative Researching*

## Week 5: October 28

### Developing an Integrated Strategy; Quantitative Methods

#### **DUE: Name and Logic Model (Graduate Students Only)**

## Readings

- Ebrahim, Chapter 3: Integrated Strategy
- Newcomer, K. & Triplett, T. (2016). “Chapter 14: Using Surveys” from *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*
- TBD

## Week 6: November 4

### **DUE: Midterm Exam (All Students)**

Guest Speaker: Corey Newhouse (Public Profit)

## Emergent Strategy

## Readings

- Ebrahim, Chapter 4: Emergent Strategy
- Case Study TBD

## Week 7: November 11

### Ecosystem Strategy

## Readings

- Ebrahim, Chapter 5: Ecosystem Strategy
- Case Study TBD

## Readings

- Ebrahim, Chapter 5: Ecosystem Strategy
- Case Study TBD

## Week 8: November 18

### Designing Social Performance Measurement Systems; Mixing Methods

#### **DUE: Evaluation Critique (Graduate Students only)**

## Readings

- Ebrahim, Chapter. 6: Designing Social Performance Systems
- Greene, J. (2007). “Chapter 6: Mixing Methods on Purpose” from *Mixed Methods in Social Inquiry*
- Preskill, H., Gopal, S., Mack, K., & Cook, J. (2014). Evaluating Complexity: Propositions for Improving Practice *FSG Consulting*
- **GRAD Students Only: Government Accountability Office (2009) Program Evaluation: A Variety of Rigorous Methods Can Help Identify Effective Interventions**

**Week 9: November 25**  
**LTD PROJECTS DUE**

**Roles of Funders**

**Readings**

- Ebrahim, Chapter. 7: Roles of Funders
- TBD

**Week 10: December 2**

**GRADUATE STUDENTS – FINAL PROJECT DUE**  
**UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS – EVALUATION CRITIQUE DUE**

**Frontiers of Evaluation**

What does the next phase of evaluation look like?

How is technology changing program evaluation practice?

What are some ethical concerns of these new approaches?

What are some practical concerns of these new approaches?

**Readings**

- Innovations for Poverty Action (2016). “Goldilocks Deep Dive: Micro-satellite Data: Measuring Impact from Space”
- Innovations for Poverty Action (2016). “Goldilocks Deep Dive: A Mobile in Every Pocket: What Does it Mean for M&E”
- TBD