

University of Oregon
School of Planning, Public Policy and Management
PPPM 465/565: Program Evaluation
Fall 2022 (CRN 11710)

Location: 110 FEN (Fenton)
Time: Monday / Wednesday: 12:00 PM – 1:10 PM
Course Website: <http://canvas.uoregon.edu>

M. Blair Thomas, Ph.D., MPH, MPA (he / him / his)

Office: Hendricks Hall 109

Student Hours: Wednesdays (1:30 PM – 3:30 PM) and by appointment

Email: blairt@uoregon.edu (Best way to reach me)

GENERAL NOTES:

I am here to support your learning objectives and get you all excited about this topic, but I also want to emphasize that nothing is more important than your mental and physical health.

- **I WILL ALWAYS CARE MORE ABOUT YOU AS A PERSON THAN AS A STUDENT!**
- Please let me know if you are struggling with any of the class material, or if you need extra time for any assignments.
- If you need to miss class for any reason (medical, childcare, work, etc.), that is completely fine – just send me an email. I do NOT need doctor’s notes, or any other justification.
- If you or a household member are sick, please stay at home and take care of yourselves. Don’t worry about missing assignments or classes. If my student office hour timings don’t work for you, email me and we can find an alternative time to chat. All student office hours will be online this term for a safer experience.
- If you need to step outside the classroom briefly, please feel free to do so

READINGS:

- **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 online for a used copy. The eBook is roughly half the price of the print version.
- **Canvas Readings:** 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 other sources 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.

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 four 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.** While not a prerequisite, you will benefit most from this class if you have taken one basic quantitative methods/statistics course. 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. It is your responsibility to get assignments in on time; **late assignments will not be accepted**. 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 **Turning in assignments early is encouraged!** 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 **I will be posting my PowerPoint slides on Canvas after the lecture, but they might not fully cover the class material.** We may be doing in-class exercises to help you understand some of these concepts, so you will benefit more from attending. This is an adaptive class, so I will be updating the readings based on your interests.

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.

General Requirements and Information

If you know you are going to miss a class, let me know, and be sure to get notes from a colleague in class. It is your responsibility to get assignments in on time unless otherwise excused; late assignments may have a per-day point penalty. **If you need extra time, that is perfectly fine, but you must let me know**

in advance. 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. Turning in assignments early is encouraged!**

Course Workload

A general rule of thumb for the expected workload for a graduate level class is approximately 3-4 hours/week per credit hour. Thus, a four-credit course will require approximately 12-16 hours of effort per week. For undergraduate students, you can expect half of that time estimation. Our class meets for three hours each week, so students should expect to spend an additional 9 to 13 hours per week studying for this course. **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.

Writing Lab

This is a reading and writing intensive course. If you struggle with writing, I strongly encourage you to use the services of the Writing Lab: The Writing Lab begins week two of the term and closes at 5:00 pm the Wednesday of finals week. Free tutors are available. Upper-division and graduate student tutors are available on a drop-in basis or by appointment. (You must go to the writing lab to schedule your appointment.) 9:00am – 5:00pm, Monday – Friday, 72 PLC (Prince Lucien Campbell).

Incomplete Policy

Students are expected to behave in a professional manner and to turn in all materials at the designated time. In accordance with university regulations, an incomplete will only be given when “the quality of work is satisfactory, but a minor yet essential requirement of the course has not been completed for reasons acceptable to the instructor.”

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

You are always expected to do your own work. Copying content from other students and submitting it as your own work is grounds for failing the class. The University Student Conduct Code (available at 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 the instructor.

Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at:

www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students. **I use Turnitin to analyze your assignments for plagiarism. High percentage scores on Turnitin (70 and over) will result in 0 points on the assignment and possible further academic consequences.**

Documented Disabilities

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Sexual Violence, Harassment and Survivor Support

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual

harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted to completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

Diversity, Inclusion and Respect Statement

It is the policy of the University of Oregon to support and value diversity. To do so requires that we:

- respect the dignity and essential worth of all individuals.
- promote a culture of respect throughout the University community.
- respect the privacy, property, and freedom of others.
- reject bigotry, discrimination, violence, or intimidation of any kind.
- practice personal and academic integrity and expect it from others.
- promote the diversity of opinions, ideas and backgrounds which is the lifeblood of the university.

Course content, class discussions, projects and activities, and assignments for this class rest on an assumption that human diversity is normative and is an appropriate focus of attention. The course requires and expects critical thinking about, and sensitivity to, the impact of diversity (culture, religion/faith, gender, ethnicity, race, socioeconomics, physical and cognitive ability, sexual orientation, and other considerations) both in relation to the populations we serve, and in the classroom. Students are encouraged to develop and expand their respect for and understanding of diverse identities and experiences.

GRADING COMPOSITION:

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:

UNDERGRAD PERCENTAGE / PAGES:	ASSIGNMENT	GRADUATE PERCENTAGE / PAGES:
10%; (N/A)	Attendance	10%; (N/A)
10%; 1 page	Civic Engagement	10%; 2 pages
30%; 1-2 pages	Evaluation Critique	30%; 3-4 pages
10%; ½ page	Project Proposal	10%; ½ page
30%; 4 pages	Project Paper	30; 7 Pages
10% (10 questions)	Final Exam	10% (10 questions)

GRADE BREAKDOWN

A	94-100%
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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%

Explanation of Assignments

Class Participation – 10% (All semester)

Students are expected to show up to class and engage. At the minimum, I expect you to complete reflection exercises in addition to showing up for class. If you expect to miss class for any reason, please email me in advance. With approximately 10 weeks of class and 2 days of class, each class counts for roughly .5% (1/2 of 1 percent) of your final grade.

Civic Engagement – 10% (Due by November 14)

You will engage in a civic engagement exercise from a list provided to you on Canvas or by one that you get approved by the course instructor. I want this exercise to MATTER TO YOU! A description of your engagement, your personal feeling about it and how you can apply the experience to course content is expected. **A rubric for grading will be provided on Canvas.** Undergraduates are expected to complete a one-page reflection, while graduate students are expected to complete two pages.

Project Proposal – 10% (Due by October 19)

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.

Evaluation Critique – 30% (Due by October 26)

Students will review a published evaluation report (quantitative or mixed methods) and critique it, based on the material we discuss in class. **A rubric for grading will be provided on Canvas.** Undergraduates are expected to complete two pages long critique, while graduate students are expected to complete four pages.

Project Paper – 30% (Due November 30)

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. **A rubric for grading will be provided on Canvas.** Undergraduates are expected to a project that is four to five pages in length, while graduate students are expected to complete six to eight pages.

Final Exam – 10% (Friday, December 9 at 10:15 am)

The final exam will be based on course readings, class discussions and material on the lectures. It will be 10 questions in length.

Tentative Schedule of Lectures and Readings* (Subject to Change)

Week 1 (Week of September 27): Syllabus Week Overview of the Field of Program Evaluation

Readings:

- **Video:** Steve Jobs, Stanford Graduation Speech
- 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 2 (Week of October 3): Ethical Issues: What It Have Happened Anyway?

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 3 (Week of October 10): Surveys / Qualitative Methods

Readings:

- Newcomer, K. & Triplett, T. (2016). “Chapter 14: Using Surveys” from *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*
- Mason, J. (2002). “Chapter 4: Qualitative Interviewing” from *Qualitative Researching*
- Mason, J. (2002). “Chapter 8: Organizing and Indexing Qualitative Data” from *Qualitative Researching*

Week 4 (Week of October 17): Developing a Niche Strategy

Project Proposals due by October 19

Readings:

- Ebrahim, Chapter 2: Niche Strategy

Week 5 (Week of October 24): Developing an Integrated Strategy

Evaluation Critiques due by October 26

Readings:

- Ebrahim, Chapter 3: Integrated Strategy
- Case Study TBD

Week 6 (Week of October 31): Emergent Strategies

Readings:

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

Week 7 (Week of November 7) Ecosystem Strategy

Readings:

- Ebrahim, Chapter 5: Ecosystem Strategy

Week 8 (Week of November 14): Designing Social Performance Measurement Systems; Mixing Methods

Citizen Engagement Reflections due by November 14
NO CLASS ON November 16

Readings:

- Ebrahim, Chapter. 6: Designing Social Performance Systems
- Greene, J. (2007). “Chapter 6: Mixing Methods on Purpose” from *Mixed Methods in Social Inquiry*
- **GRAD Students Only:** Government Accountability Office (2009) Program Evaluation: A Variety of Rigorous Methods Can Help Identify Effective Interventions
- TBD

Week 9 (Week of November 21): Where do We Go from Here?

NO CLASS on November 23 (Day before Thanksgiving)

Readings:

- Ebrahim, Chapter. 7: Roles of Funders
- **GRAD Students Only:** Preskill, H., Gopal, S., Mack, K., & Cook, J. (2014). Evaluating Complexity: Propositions for Improving Practice *FSG Consulting*

Week 10 (Week of November 28): TBD (depending on interest)

Final Projects (All students) due November 30

Readings:

- TBA, Student Choice
- Study Session for Final Exam

Finals Week (Week of December 5)

Final Exam: Friday, December 9 at 10:15 am

Due Date Summary

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Attendance	All Semester
Project Proposal	October 19
Evaluation Critique	October 26
Citizen Engagement	By November 14
Project Paper	By November 30
Final Exam	December 9 at 10:15