

PPPM 4/565, Program Evaluation
Fall Quarter, 2021
(4 credits)
CRN: 15234/15245

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

Location and Time: 117 Lokey Education Building
Monday, 2:00 – 4:50 PM

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

Saurabh Lall, Ph.D.

Student hours (on Zoom only):

Wednesdays (1 PM – 2:30 PM)

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

Zoom link - <https://uoregon.zoom.us/j/4741934152>

*I will be meeting with students during student office hours on Zoom only this term. Please email me if the timing doesn't work and we can find another time to meet.

Office: 109, Hendricks Hall

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

Phone: 541-346-7354

GENERAL NOTES: This has been a challenging year and a half for all of us. While the end is in sight, this term we will face similar and possibly new challenges as we return to in-class instruction. 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.

- 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 test positive for COVID-19, please stay at home and take care of yourselves. Don't worry about missing assignments or classes.
- Please keep your mask on during class time (covering mouth and nose) for everyone's safety.
- 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.

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.

Covid Contingencies

In the event of a campus emergency that disrupts academic activities, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change. Information about changes in this course will be communicated as soon as possible by email, and on Canvas. If we are not able to meet face-to-face, students should immediately log onto Canvas and read any announcements and/or access alternative assignments. Students are also expected to continue coursework as outlined in this syllabus or other instructions on Canvas.

In-person meeting precautions: Since COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant are still spreading rapidly, please be cautious and think of the collective interest:

- If you or a household member test positive for COVID-19, please stay at home and take care of yourselves. Don't worry about missing assignments or classes.
- UO requires students and employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to the start of their fall academic term.
- Unvaccinated UO students and employees, including those who are partially vaccinated or choose an exemption, are required to take part in weekly COVID-19 testing. Students use myUOHealth to record their vaccine(s) or request an exemption.
- Face coverings are required indoors in all UO facilities regardless of vaccination status. Face coverings must fully cover the nose and mouth. Mesh masks, lace masks, and other face coverings with openings, valves, holes, vents, or other visible gaps in the design or material are not in compliance with this policy.
- UO COVID-19 Regulations & Prevention - (see <https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/regulations> and <https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/prevention#if-sick-stay-home> for more information)
- More information here: <https://coronavirus.uoregon.edu/vaccine>

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. I will also be revising some basic statistical concepts in the first few weeks.

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:

Grade Distribution	
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). Graduate 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 18 – GRAD STUDENTS ONLY (Week 4)**

Final project proposal (5% of the grade) 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 **DUE OCT 25 (Week 5)**.

Midterm: (25% 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 1 (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 15 (Week 8)**

Final Project (25% of the grade). 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 NOV 29 (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.

Final project proposal (5% of the grade) 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 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 1 (Week 6)**

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 NOV 15 (Week 8)**

Final Project (25% of the grade). 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 NOV 29 (Week 10)**

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

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)

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.

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 online for a used copy. The eBook is roughly half the price of the print version.

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 27:

Introduction to the Course and Overview of the Field of 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 2: October 4

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 3: October 11

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: October 18

Developing a Niche Strategy

DUE: Ethics Blog (Graduate Students Only)

DUE: Project Proposal (Undergraduate Students Only)

Readings

- Ebrahim, Chapter 2: Niche Strategy

Week 5: October 25

Developing an Integrated Strategy

DUE: Project Proposal (Graduate Students Only)

POSTED: Midterm Exam (All Students)

Readings

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

Week 6: November 1

Emergent Strategy

DUE: Midterm Exam (All Students)

Readings

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

Week 7: November 8

Ecosystem Strategy

Readings

- Ebrahim, Chapter 5: Ecosystem Strategy

Week 8: November 15

Designing Social Performance Measurement Systems; Mixing Methods

DUE: Evaluation Critique (All Students)

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: November 22

Complexity; Roles of Funders

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: November 29

Frontiers of Evaluation & other topics (depending on student interest)

DUE: Final Projects (All Students)

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?

- 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 depending on class interests