

Professor McAvoy  
Political Science 611  
Spring 2009

Office: 213b Graham  
Phone: 256-0517  
Office Hours: T, Th 11-12  
Th, 4:30-5:30  
E-mail: gemcavoy@uncg.edu

## **Program and Policy Evaluation**

Program evaluation is the process by which we assess the effectiveness or impact of the work of government or non-profit agencies. The challenge in program evaluation is to isolate the impact of program activities from environmental factors so that you can determine the effectiveness of a program. There are a variety of strategies to try to best determine the impact of a program—from experiments to quasi-experiments to case studies.

Performance measurement is a relatively new addition to the set of tools used to evaluate programs. In developing performance measures, programs try to put in place ongoing indicators of program performance. These measures can be used to determine where resources should be allocated, how programs are meeting their mission, and, sometimes, whether they will get additional funding to continue to provide services.

### **Goals**

In this course students will learn to:

- understand the role of evaluation in the policy process
- conduct and implement evaluations of public programs
- prepare and present evaluation reports to public officials and citizens
- develop and evaluate performance measures
- recognize the conflicts and limitations inherent in policy and program evaluations

### **Required Texts**

The following three books are required for this course and are available from the book store:

Peter J. Haas and J. Fred Springer. 1998. *Applied Policy Research: Concepts and Cases*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Harry P. Hatry. 2008. *Performance Measurement: Getting Results*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute

Emil J. Posavac and Raymond G. Carey. 2007. *Program Evaluations: Methods and Case Studies*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

A recommended book for the course is:

Evan M. Berman. 2002. *Essential Statistics for Public Managers and Policy Analysts*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly.

Other books that cover some of the same material are:

Edward Tufte, *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy*.

Elizabeth O'Sullivan and Gary Rassel. *Research Methods for Public Administrators*.

Susan Welch and John Comer. *Quantitative Methods for Public Administration*.

Kenneth Meier and Jeffrey L. Brudney. *Applied Statistics for Public Administration*.

There are a number of articles that are required reading for the course. You can get them via the web at the web addresses provided, or through the UNCG Library on-line databases. I recommend using JournalFinder to locate the specific journal and then go to the assigned article.

### **Course Requirements**

Grades for this course will be determined on the basis of the following course requirements: four "microtheme" response papers and presentations (15%); three small data analysis exercises (15%), a short paper on performance measurement (20%), a group project and report (25%), and an evaluation of Milwaukee's school choice program (25%).

### **Readings and Course Topics**

Week 1. (Jan. 22) Introduction

Week 2. (Jan. 29) Overview of an Evaluation

Posavac and Carey, Chapters 1-3

Haas and Springer, Chapters 1-3.

Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor, "Metropolitan Mosquito Control District: Executive Summary and Summary" 1999. (<http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/1999/pe9903.htm>).

Mary Jo Bane. 2001. "Presidential Address - Expertise, Advocacy and Deliberation: Lessons from Welfare Reform," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. Vol. 20, No. 2, 191-197. (Journal Finder)

Week 3. (Feb. 5) The Development of Measures and Ethics in Evaluation  
Posavac and Carey, Chapters 4, 5 & 12

Berman, Chapter 1 (Research Design and Measurement)

David A. Reingold, Gregg G. Van Ryzin, Michelle Ronda .2001. "Does Urban Public Housing Diminish the Social Capital and Labor Force Activity of Its Tenants?," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. Vol. 20, No. 3, 485-504.\* (JournalFinder)

Jan Blustein. 2005. "Toward a More Public Discussion of the Ethics of Federal Social Program Evaluation," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. Vol. 24, No. 4, 824-846.\* (JournalFinder) Note: There are several responses that follow the article. You are welcome to read them, but do not need to.

Week 4. (Feb 12) Performance Measurement-Types of Measures  
Hatry, Chapters 1-7

Primer on Performance Measurement (Handout)

Week 5. (Feb. 19) Overview of Quantitative Analysis in Program Evaluation

Berman, Chapter 2 (Univariate Analysis); Chapter 3 (Hypothesis Testing); Chapter 4 (Measures of Association); Chapter 6 and 7 (Regression and Assumptions)

David L. Strayer, Frank A. Drews, and Dennis J. Crouch. 2006. "A Comparison of the Cell Phone Driver and the Drunk Driver," *Human Factors*. Vol 48, No. 2, 381-391 \*(JournalFinder)

Week 6. (Feb. 26) Approaches to Gathering Program Information  
Posavac and Carey, Chapters 6 & 7

Haas and Springer, Chapter 10.\*

"Statistical Analysis of Factors That Affected Uncounted Votes in the 2000 Presidential Election," GAO Report, October 2001, Report No: GAO-02-122 (www.gao.gov).

Analysis #1

Week 7. (March 5) Experiments and Quasi-Experiments  
Posavac and Carey, Chapters 8 & 9

Haas and Springer, Chapter 9.\*

Thomas S. Dee. 2001. "Does Setting Limits Save Lives? The Case of 0.08 BAC Laws," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. Vol. 20, No. 1, 111-128.\*(JournalFinder)

David J. Houston and Lilliard E. Richardson, Jr. 2006. "Reducing Traffic Fatalities in the American States by Upgrading Seat Belt Use Laws to Primary Enforcement," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. Vol. 25, No. 3, 645-659.\* (Journal Finder)

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Spring Break (March 19)

Week 8. (Mar 19) Experiments and Quasi-Experiments, continued

Posavac and Carey, Chapters 10 & 11

A.C. Lewin. 2001. "Changing Work Ethic and Welfare Dependence Through Welfare Reform: The 100-Hour Rule Waiver Experiment for AFDC-U," *Evaluation Review*. vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 370-388. \* (Journal Finder)

Haas and Springer, Chapter 6.\*

\*\* Analysis #2

Week 9. (March 26) Performance Measurement--Use of Measures

Hatry, Chapters 8-12

Burt S. Barnow. 2000. "Exploring the Relationship between Performance Management and Program Impact: A Case Study of the Job Training Partnership Act," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol 19, No. 1, 118-141.\* (Journal Finder)

\*\* Analysis #3

Week 10. (April 2)

No class, Midwest Political Science Association Meeting

Week 11. (April 9) Performance Measurement--Summary

Hatry, Chapters 13-16

B. Guy Peters and Donald Savoie. 1996. "Managing Incoherence: The Coordination and Empowerment Conundrum." *Public Administration Review*. 56:3, 281-290.\* (Journal Finder)

Anna B. Blalock and Burt S. Barnow. 2001. "Is the New Obsession with Performance Measurement Masking the Truth about Social Programs?" in *Quicker Better Cheaper?: Managing Performance in American Government*, ed. Dall W. Forsythe, Rockefeller Institute Press. (Blackboard)

Week 12. (April 16) Qualitative Evaluations

Posavac and Carey, Chapter 4

Haas and Springer, Chapter 7 and 12.\*

\*\*Performance Measurement Paper Due

Week 13. (April 23) Evaluation of Programs Influencing Early Childhood Education

Clark, Patricia. & Kirk, E Elizabeth. 2000. "Review of recent research on all-day kindergarten," *Childhood Education*, 76(4), 228-231.

Natale, Jo Anna, 2001. "Early Learners," *American School Board Journal*, March, 22-25.

Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development. 2002. *Preschool for All: Investing in a Just and Productive Society*, 1-22.

Week 14. (April 30) Conclusions

Presentation of Research Projects

**Final Project Due Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>**

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### Microthemes:

These must be NO LONGER than 1 page, single-spaced with an extra line between paragraphs, with 1 inch margins and a font size of 11 or larger. Despite the short length, the usual writing conventions should be followed -- like clear sentence structure with good transitions and adherence to rules of grammar and punctuation! I will ask you to do different kinds of things for your microthemes.

For example, I may have you do a "summary-writing" microtheme to work out a clear account of a section of argument that seems difficult and interesting to me. To do this in a page, you will obviously have to differentiate between the main ideas and less important points, and figure out what you can leave behind without losing the sense of the argument. For "thesis-support" essays, I will ask you to answer a particular question about the readings. You'll need to be able to support your answer with textual evidence, guard against any tendency to ignore textual evidence that might undermine your thesis, etc.

The point of writing microthemes is for you to practice and further develop your capacities for interpretation, analysis, and explication. You will be required to present your microthemes, either in cooperation with another student or on your own. I also expect you to use them to inform your participation in seminar. To facilitate this, **you need to get your micro-theme to me by noon on the day that it is due.** You can email, fax, or hand deliver it to me. The readings that are marked with an asterisks (\*) are those for which micro-themes can be written.

I will give you the assignment for each microtheme the class period before they are due, or email it to you in time for you to complete it for the following class.