PSYCHOLOGY 802
PROGRAM EVALUATION
Fall, 2008

Instructor

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Office hours: 3:30-5 pm, Tuesday, Thursday, or by appointment

Class Time and Location

Tuesday, 12:30-3:20pm, 232 King St., Room 202

Course Description from the Graduate Calendar

This course offers an advanced investigation of current methods for evaluating programs and services. Topics include measurement of processes and outcomes, needs assessment, impact analysis, the politics of evaluation, and relevant ethical issues.

Focus of the Course

In order to understand what is meant by the term program evaluation, it is useful to consider what is meant by a program. The key function of a social program is personal or social change; using this as a basis, a program can be defined as:

an organized set of activities having as their main objective the production of some kind of change in the program’s recipients or their environment.

Given that social programs can be defined in terms of social change, program evaluation can be defined as:

the application of a broad range of social research methods to answer questions about the need for social programs, the way in which such programs are designed and implemented, and their effectiveness in producing desired changes or outcomes at a reasonable cost.

The course is divided into two parts. The first, and longest, part focuses on the methods of evaluation and emphasizes a practical “how to do it” approach, along with an examination of some of the issues, strengths, and weaknesses of different evaluation methods. The second part focuses on the theoretical perspectives that underlie program evaluation methods. In this section, several of the main evaluation theorists and their contributions to the field are examined.
Acknowledgements

I have borrowed liberally from the materials, requirements, and approach of Mark Pancer, who has taught this course in the Laurier Community Psychology Ph.D. program since its inception in 2003. Thanks to Mark and the following community psychology colleagues who shared their program evaluation course outlines with me: Tim Aubry and Bob Flynn of the University of Ottawa, Francine Lavoie of Université de Laval, François Chagnon of Université du Québec à Montréal, Paul Toro of Wayne State University, and Becki Campbell of Michigan State University. Thanks also to Manuel Riemer of Laurier who generously shared his materials and ideas about this course.

Text


Additional Readings

There are a number of articles and book chapters that will be required readings for the course, and some that individuals will report on that not everyone will read. A few of the required readings are in a course package that you can purchase from the bookstore, while others are available (most are online) from the Laurier library.

Course Objectives

The main objectives of the course are for students to:

(a) acquire knowledge about the main methods and issues in the field of program evaluation (e.g., needs assessment, the measurement of program processes and outcomes, evaluation research designs, qualitative approaches to evaluation, the role of the evaluator, and the ethics and politics of evaluation research),
(b) develop an understanding of the major theoretical approaches to evaluation (e.g., empowerment, fourth generation constructionist, utilization-focused, post-positivist)
(c) gain practical experience in formulating an evaluation in a real-life setting, and
(d) learn the art of evaluation by integrating action, research, and theory (ART).

Roles and Class Format

To achieve these objectives, you will be reading widely from the evaluation literature and we will be using a seminar format to discuss the readings, rather than a lecture format. Each week, we will focus on a particular topic in evaluation. The first part of each class, from roughly 12:30-2:10 will be devoted to the topic and readings for the class. In this part of the class, one student will be responsible for facilitating the class and for presenting a brief summary of one non-required reading on the topic of the week and posing questions to the class about that reading.
In addition, throughout the term, each class member will be working with a community agency or organization to develop an evaluation plan for that organization. The last hour of each class, 2:20-3:20, will involve a discussion of issues arising from students’ developing evaluation plans.

I see the students’ role as being responsible for:

(a) attending class (please let me know by phone or email if you will not be able to attend due to illness or some other unexpected event),
(b) making presentations,
(c) coming to class prepared (having done the readings, having read your peers’ reading response papers, reflecting on the readings, being prepared to make presentations),
(d) facilitating some class discussions (making an agenda for the class, posing questions to your peers, making sure everyone has a chance to speak, actively listening to your peers, summarizing discussions),
(e) actively participating in class discussions (asking questions related to the material, answering questions, contributing to discussions, connecting course material to current affairs, introducing ideas relevant to the topics but not covered in the reading materials, sharing personal reflections related to warm-up exercises, other in-class exercises, the readings, and presentations), and
(f) supporting your peers (e.g., providing useful feedback to other students, demonstrating a supportive attitude toward other students).

Assignments and Evaluation

10%  Class Facilitation and Article/Chapter Presentation: During weeks 3-6 and 8-10, each student will be responsible for facilitating one class and for making a brief (10 minute maximum) presentation on one article or chapter from the “Other Readings” on the outline (or some other article/chapter on the topic that is not on the outline, but which is relevant to the topic). The reading should provide a case example of the topic (e.g., an actual needs assessment), rather than a theoretical piece. This component of your mark is worth 10 points. Since your classmates will not read the article/chapter, you must provide a clear and concise summary of its contents, including a one single-spaced page (12 point font) handout, in which you review the contents of the article and end with your own critical comments and evaluation of the article. The handout is due the day of the presentation. You are responsible for making the handouts. Class facilitation includes providing a written agenda with timelines for each item, preparing questions, exercises, or case studies to help stimulate and guide discussion, debate, and reflection on the readings for the week, and keeping the discussion on track, focused, fun, and substantive. Feel free to use creative strategies for facilitating the class. Also, I encourage you to pick a topic for class facilitation that is relatively novel to you (e.g., if you are already very familiar with qualitative evaluation, pick the session on evaluation design and measuring outcomes).
40% **Reading Response Papers:** During weeks 2-6 and 8-10, you must write 6 responses to the assigned readings. You get to choose which weeks you want to write a paper, but you must write 6 in the 9 week period. The responses should be about 2-3 double-spaced pages (500-1000 words), no reference section, no quotes. This is a chance for you to critically reflect on the readings, addressing such questions as: What are the connections between the readings? What are the points of tension or divergence? How do the readings connect to readings from previous weeks? What are the implications for theory, research, and action? Reading response papers are to be sent to me and your classmates the day before the class. In the subject line of your email, please put “reading response paper, the number of the paper, and your first and last names.” You must read your classmates’ papers before class.

A reading response paper is not a summary of the readings, it’s an analysis, integration and critical reflection. Each reading response paper is worth 8 points (I will drop the mark for your lowest paper so that only your 5 best papers count), and your mark will be based on both the quality of your writing and the quality of your ideas. Using Bloom’s taxonomy of learning, your reading response papers should focus on the higher-order skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are defined below. Notice that **evaluation** is at the top of the pyramid.

**Knowledge:** Recall data or information. This is regurgitation.

**Comprehension:** Understand the meaning, translation, and interpretation of instructions and problems. State a problem in one’s own words.

**Application:** Use a concept in a new situation or unprompted use of an abstraction. Applies what was learned in the classroom to novel situations.

**Analysis:** Separates material or concepts into component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. Use of theory for interpretation of information.

**Synthesis:** Builds a structure or pattern from diverse elements. Put parts together to form a whole, with emphasis on creating a new meaning or structure.

**Evaluation:** Make judgments about the value of ideas or materials.

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15% **Evaluation Theory Presentation:** During weeks 11-13, we will be covering different evaluation theories and theorist. Each student is responsible for making a class
presentation on two different evaluation theorists. The presentation should be 15-20 minutes, followed by a 15-20 minute class discussion that the presenter will facilitate. Additionally, you must prepare a 5-page (maximum, excluding references) double-spaced paper on the theorists that must be sent to me and your classmates the day before the class. You must read your classmates’ papers before the class, as these papers are a stimulus for class discussion. The papers should focus on the positions of the different theorists on the following theoretical issues identified by Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991): (a) social programming, (b) knowledge construction, (c) valuing, (d) knowledge use, and (e) evaluation practice, plus any other issue(s) that you believe to be important. I also want you to indicate the implications of the different theorists for the practice of evaluation. In other words, explain how the theoretical position proposed by the theorists would guide an evaluation of a program that addresses a particular social problem. The paper should be in APA format and include a reference section (I’ll provide you with a summary of this format).

35% Evaluation Proposal or Project: Students will work with an organization to develop a comprehensive proposal for the evaluation of a major program of that organization. The proposal should include a detailed analysis of the program’s evaluability and a description of the program theory, making reference to relevant research literature. Alternatively, students may work on an actual evaluation project for a community organization. I am open to negotiating an individualized contract with you for this course requirement to maximize your learning. You can work on this project by yourself, in pairs, or as a group. Your proposal should be similar in form to one that might be submitted by a research consulting firm in response to a request for proposals (RFP). More specifically, your proposal should include a description of each of the following:

1. the PROGRAM (this would include a description of the need or problem addressed by the program, who the clients are, the program's CHANGE goals, what is done to achieve those goals [i.e., major service activities, program components], how people come into contact with the program, service providers, the organizational structure, and the funding sources and budget of the program. You should also include a flow model of the program in this section),
2. the EVALUATION OBJECTIVES (e.g., to determine the extent to which program participation increases self-esteem),
3. the OUTCOME MEASURES OR DATA/INFORMATION COLLECTION PROCEDURES you plan to use,
4. the EVALUATION DESIGN AND/OR QUALITATIVE STRATEGY you will be employing,
5. the PARTICIPANTS, who they are, how they will be selected,
6. the PROCEDURE you will follow in contacting participants, administering measures, etc.,
7. the ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES of all those involved in the evaluation (e.g., who will administer the measures; how many staff will be involved in the evaluation; what will their duties be?),
8. the SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES,
9. the PRODUCTS or DELIVERABLES of the evaluation, and
10. the BUDGET for the evaluation.

This is not an exhaustive list. Feel free to include any other information that you deem to be relevant or important, such as a discussion of ethics, if you feel it would be appropriate in the context of this evaluation, or an outline of your particular philosophy or approach to evaluation, or some specification of who would “own” the results of the study and the process to be followed if you wanted to publish any of the information derived from the evaluation. A final paper, roughly 20 pages in length, written in APA format is due in December (we will negotiate the exact date).

Overview of Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Facilitator/ Presenter(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – Sept. 9</td>
<td>Overview of evaluation</td>
<td>Geoff</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 – Sept. 16</td>
<td>Working with stakeholders</td>
<td>Enoch</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 – Sept. 23</td>
<td>Assessing needs, resources, and assets</td>
<td>Geoff</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 – Sept. 30</td>
<td>Program theory, logic models, and evaluability assessment</td>
<td>Felix</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 – Oct. 7</td>
<td>Program process and implementation; Michael Patton to speak at KPL at 4:30</td>
<td>Rich</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – Oct. 14</td>
<td>Program outcomes: Design and outcome measures, handout mid-course review</td>
<td>Geoff</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 – Oct. 21</td>
<td>Guest presentation by Mark Pancer on the evaluation of Better Beginnings, Better Futures</td>
<td>Mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 – Oct. 28</td>
<td>Qualitative evaluation, review mid-course review</td>
<td>Glen</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 – Nov. 4</td>
<td>Utilization and knowledge transfer</td>
<td>Rachel</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 – Nov. 11</td>
<td>The politics and ethics of evaluation</td>
<td>Susan</td>
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<td>11 – Nov. 18</td>
<td>Evaluation theories and theorists</td>
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<td>12 – Nov. 25</td>
<td>Evaluation theories and theorists</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 – Dec. 2</td>
<td>Evaluation theories and theorists, final evaluation of course</td>
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Detailed Schedule and Readings

Week 1 (September 9) – Overview of evaluation

Common Readings

P & C, Ch. 1


Week 2 (September 16) – Working with stakeholders

Common Readings

P & C, Ch. 2


Discuss the following three articles as a set


Discuss the following three articles as a set.


Other Readings


**Week 3 (September 23) – Assessing needs, resources, and assets**
Common Readings

P & C, Ch. 6


Other Readings


The Asset-Based Community Development Institute (2004). *Capacity Inventory.*

http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd/abcdtools.html


Week 4 (September 30) – Program theory, logic models, and evaluability assessment

Common Readings


*Other Readings*


**Week 5 (October 7) – Program process and implementation**

*Common Readings*

P & C, Ch. 7


*Other Readings*


**Week 6 (October 14) – Program outcomes: Design and outcome measures**

*Common Readings*

P & C, Chs. 4, 9, 10, & 11

Other Readings


Week 7 (October 21) – Guest presentation by Mark Pancer on the evaluation of Better Beginnings, Better Futures

Common Readings


Week 8 (October 28) – Qualitative evaluation
Common Readings

P & C, Ch. 8


Other Readings


Week 9 (November 4) – Utilization and knowledge transfer

Common Readings

P & C, Chs. 13 & 14


Other Readings


Week 10 (November 11) – The politics and ethics of evaluation
Common Readings

P & C, Ch. 5


Other Readings


Evaluation, 64, 3-13

Weeks 10-12 (November 18, 25 & Dec. 2) – Evaluation theories and theorists

Common Readings


Readings for Evaluation Theorists


Joseph Wholey – evaluation for program improvement; Chapter 6 in Shadish et al. (1991),


**Evaluation Resources**

The following are some key evaluation resources, available from the university library and the internet. There are some excellent materials available on the internet from the various evaluation organizations and centres around the world. One particularly useful site (where you will find
Evaluation Organizations & Web Links

American Evaluation Association (www.eval.org)
Canadian Evaluation Association (www.evaluationcanada.ca)
UK Evaluation Society (www.evaluation.org.uk)
Australasian Evaluation Society (www.aes.asn.au)
European Evaluation Society (www.europeanevaluation.org)
Voluntary Sector Evaluation Research Project (www.vserp.ca)
The Action Evaluation Research Institute (www.aepro.org)
The Evaluation Centre (www.wmich.edu/evalctr)
The Evaluation Exchange (http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval.html)

University Centers focusing on evaluation
(www.eval.org/EvaluationLinks/UniversityCenters.htm)
Centre for Community-based Research (http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/), Kitchener
Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services, Ottawa
(http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/crecs/eng/)

Evaluation Journals

American Journal of Evaluation (formerly Evaluation Practice)
Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation
Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice
Evaluation and the Health Professions
Evaluation and Program Planning
Evaluation Review
New Directions for Evaluation

All of these journals are available on-line through the WLU library on the university’s web-site,
with the exception of the Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation (which is available on-line to
members of the Canadian Evaluation Society), and “Evaluation: The International Journal of
Theory, Research and Practice,” published by Sage Publications.

Evaluation Textbooks


Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.


Sage Publications (www.sagepub.com) has many, many useful books and monographs on almost every aspect of evaluation research. To access their titles in evaluation, click on the “Research Methods and Evaluation” tab on the home page.

**Evaluation Chapters in the Annual Review of Psychology**


**Important Information for Students**

New Course Drop Dates 2008/2009:


Examination Deferrals:

The Academic Date section of the Calendar (Web Site Version) clearly states the examination date period for each semester. **Students must note that they are required to reserve this time in their personal calendars for the examinations.** The examination period for this school year is December 4 - 18, 2008 for Fall Term, and April 8 - 29, 2009 for Winter Term. Students who are considering registering to write MCAT, LSAT or GMAT or a similar examination, should select a time for those examinations that occurs outside the University examination period. For additional information that describes the special circumstances for examination deferment, consult the University calendar.

Student Awareness of the Accessible Learning Office:

Students with disabilities or special needs, are advised to contact Laurier’s Accessible Learning Office for information regarding its services and resources. Students are encouraged to review the Calendar for information regarding all services available on campus.

Academic and Research Misconduct:

Academic misconduct is an act by a student, or by students working on a team project, which may result in a false evaluation of the student(s), or which represents a deliberate attempt to unfairly gain an academic advantage, where the student either knew or ought reasonably to have known that it was misconduct. Please refer to the University Calendar Web Site for further clarification of academic and research misconduct at the link: https://www.wlu.ca/page.php?grp_id=158&p=8383&pv=1

Plagiarism Detection Software:

Wilfrid Laurier University uses software that can check for plagiarism. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form and have it checked for plagiarism.

Learning Services:

Please access the following webpage for detailed information: www.wlu.ca/learningservices
Laurier Email Account: Students are expected to regularly check their Laurier email account for important notices from the university community. Students are also expected to send emails to official members of the university community from their Laurier email account in order to ensure delivery.