

**PUAD 604-001**  
**Public Program Evaluation**  
**Spring 2014**

**Course Information:**

Time: Wednesdays, 5:30 – 8 pm

Location: Ward 304

**Instructor Information:**

Professor: Jane Palmer, PhD

[jane.palmer@american.edu](mailto:jane.palmer@american.edu)

Office: Ward 329

Skype: Prof\_Palmer

**Office hours:** To check my availability and schedule an appointment, go to:

<http://meetme.so/Palmer>.

Appointments can be in person, over the phone or online via Skype/Google Hangout. If my availability does not match your availability, email me to identify a mutually agreeable time to meet.

**Course Description and Objectives:**

Program evaluations supply information to assist program managers and policymakers in making decisions about which programs to fund, modify, expand or eliminate. Program evaluations, when done well, are necessary to figure out what works in which contexts and for whom. This course serves as an introduction to the research methods and analysis strategies commonly used to assess publicly funded programs. Students will become familiar with the concepts, methods, and applications of evaluation research; learn how to read evaluation research critically; understand how to use evaluation results to inform policy design and implementation; and will be able to conduct an original impact evaluation of a policy or program.

**Required Textbooks:**

Langbein, L. (2012). *Public program evaluation: A statistical guide*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe.

Kremelberg, D. (2010). *Practical statistics: A quick and easy guide to IBM® SPSS®, Stata, and other statistical software*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

**Blackboard:**

Blackboard will be used to send announcements to the class. All assigned readings that are not from the Langbein text book will be posted on Blackboard. **You are required to upload all assignments via Blackboard. Do not submit assignments via email or as a hard copy** (unless there is a documented technical difficulty with Blackboard per the university).

**Software:**

You are required to use a statistical software package in this course to complete the final project. You may choose which statistical package you use; however, I will only provide support regarding Stata or SPSS.

**Computer Lab Resources:**

The CTRL lab on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Hurst should be your friend. They offer workshops and technical assistance. If your dataset is not in the proper file format, go to Hurst to use a program called StatTransfer. See <http://www.american.edu/ctrl/lab.cfm> for more information about the lab and its hours. If you do not have statistical software on your computer, you can use the computer labs or the virtual computing lab from home via <http://www.american.edu/vcl/>

### Assignments:

1. **RCR Certification.** Go to <https://www.citiprogram.org/> click on “Register” (Affiliation: American University) to complete “*Responsible Conduct of Research for Social, Behavioral and Education Sciences*” (RCR) course. Email the professor a PDF copy of your completion certificate **by 5:30 pm on Wednesday, January 29<sup>th</sup>.**
2. **Evaluation in the news.** Each student will find an article in a newspaper (e.g., the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*) that cites an evaluation that indicates that a policy or program is effective or is not effective. Find the original evaluation (it should be in a peer-reviewed journal). Write a brief summary of the news article and a brief summary of the journal article (1-2 paragraphs each), and one paragraph on how accurately you think the journalist covered the original research. Plan to present your findings in class.  
**Presentation dates: Feb 12, 19, 26 or Mar 5.**  
***Paper is due by midnight on the day of your presentation.***
3. **Briefing Memo.** Imagine you are working for a policymaker or program administrator who needs to make a decision about whether or not to fund, modify, expand or eliminate a program. To complete this assignment, find an example of an evaluation in a peer-reviewed journal of a public or nonprofit program, management initiative, or recent reform effort. The evaluation could concern a program in the United States, or in another country. The design should be a randomized field experiment or a quasi-experiment. [Write a 2-page memo providing your critique and recommendation for your boss.](#) Base your recommendations on the quality and substance of the research article. Plan to present your findings with the class.  
**Presentation dates: Mar 19, 26, Apr 2 or 9.** Your classmates will read and [provide feedback](#) on your memo by the class period after your presentation.  
***Paper is due by midnight on the day of your presentation.***
4. **Evaluation, Power & Ethics.** This assignment focuses on the “stakes” of an evaluation in your policy area (i.e., your impact evaluation topic). Who are the stakeholders? What are the specific evaluation research design, political and ethical issues evaluators working in your policy content area must consider? For your specific impact evaluation, what are the consequences of your potential findings? What challenges do evaluators in your topic area face in designing RFEs or making ‘evidence-based’ recommendations? What kinds of ethical issues might you face if you were to disseminate your results to stakeholders? Have past evaluations in your topic area faced any controversies? What additional information is needed in your policy area to make informed recommendations about whether or not to fund, modify, expand or eliminate the program or policy you are evaluating? You must cite readings from Weeks 2, 11 and/or 12. Additional research may be necessary. Your essay should be 3 – 5 pages. **Due Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm.**
5. **Impact evaluation.** You will conduct an original impact evaluation using an existing dataset to examine a question that has not yet been examined in your policy area.
  - a. **Research question consultation and submission.** You are required to schedule a 30-minute meeting with the professor to discuss your research question for your final paper. Submit your research question, data source and design to me **by Class 4, Wednesday February 5<sup>th</sup>, via email.**
  - b. **Introduction and Literature review (3 – 5 pages).** Provide a description of the program or policy you are studying, its intended benefits and it’s the underlying

- causal model / program theory. Include a review of the literature and convince your reader why this evaluation matters. **Due Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> by 11:59 pm.**
- c. **Methods and Measurement (2 – 3 pages).** Specify the research question(s), sample, data collection procedures or source of the data, operational definitions of the predictors and outcomes, and the specific measures to be used. **Due Sunday, April 20<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm.**
  - d. **Final presentation.** Prepare a short presentation and PowerPoint on your final paper for the last class meeting. **Due Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>.**
  - e. **Final paper.** The final paper will include the above sections plus a section on the results, discussion, implications for policy and limitations. **Due Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm. Length: 10 – 15 pages (Master’s); 15 – 20 pages (Ph.D.)**

**For the final paper, Master’s students should follow the template posted on Blackboard closely. Ph.D. students should identify a potential peer-reviewed journal and write their final paper as a manuscript to be submitted per the selected journal’s requirements.**

**More detail about the expectations for each assignment is posted on Blackboard.**

#### **Grading:**

<i>Relative Weight of Assignments</i>		<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>
Introduction & Lit Review	10%	A	94-100
Methods	10%	A-	90-93
Evaluation in the news	10%	B+	87-89
Evaluate the evaluation	10%	B	84-86
Evaluation, Power & Ethics	10%	B-	80-83
Evaluation Project Presentation	5%	C+	77-79
Evaluation Project Final Paper	20%	C	74-76
Class Contribution and Participation	20%	C-	70-73
RCR certificate	5%	D+	67-69
		D	64-66
		D-	60-63
		F	Below 60

#### **Participation Points:**

Class contribution and participation points will be gained for providing thoughtful contributions to class discussions. You will also receive participation if you email me at least two questions for class discussion based on the assigned readings by Wednesdays at 9 am.

#### **Expectations:**

All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font with one-inch margins on all four sides. All assignments should be submitted electronically (Word is preferred but PDF will be accepted) via the Assignments tab on Blackboard. **Late assignments will be accepted under very limited circumstances and may result in a grade reduction. Failure to proofread your work will result in a grade reduction.**

#### **Absences:**

You are expected to come to each class on time, prepared and ready to discuss the assigned readings. Weekly attendance is expected. Excessive unexcused absences or tardiness may result in a grade reduction. Absences for religious holidays, medical or family emergencies will be excused with timely notification. Notify me in writing of any absence.

**Use of Electronics:**

All phones should be turned off or silenced at the start of class and should only be used during break. If you are caught using your phone, you will lose participation points. Laptop computers may be used for the purpose of note taking only or, if applicable, in-class activities. If I suspect you are using your computer for any other purpose, you will lose participation points and may be asked to turn off your computer for the rest of class.

**Class Cancellation:**

Students will be notified via email if class will be cancelled for any reason. Class may be held online in lieu of class cancellation.

**Statement of Emergency Preparedness (from the University):**

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies.

**Academic Integrity:**

All students are expected to abide by [American University's Academic Integrity Code](#).

**Everything you write that is not a completely original thought must be cited.** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated whether it is intentional or unintentional. **If I suspect that you failed to cite something that should have been cited, I reserve the right to upload your paper to the turnitin.com program to detect plagiarism.** When in doubt, cite. If plagiarism is detected, you will receive an F on that assignment and may be reported to the Dean's office.

**Academic Support and Other University Services:**

Please discuss with me any concerns you have about completing the required assignments or fulfilling course expectations at the beginning of the semester. In addition, American University offers several services to help you succeed as a student. Please familiarize yourself with the following resources:

- **Academic Support Center** (MGC 243): [www.american.edu/ocl/asc](http://www.american.edu/ocl/asc)  
Offers confidential assistance with study skills, tutoring and services for students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD.
- **Counseling Center** (MGC 214): [www.american.edu/ocl/counseling](http://www.american.edu/ocl/counseling)  
Offers confidential assistance with personal concerns via crisis intervention, individual counseling, group counseling or self-help resources.
- **Disability Support Services** (MGC 206): [www.american.edu/ocl/dss](http://www.american.edu/ocl/dss)  
Offers confidential assistance with physical, medical or psychological disabilities.
- **Writing Center** (Battelle-Tompkins 228): <http://www.american.edu/cas/writing>  
Offers assistance with writing papers. I highly recommend that you take advantage of this resource. Also see <http://www.library.american.edu/tutorial/index.html>

**If you require any accommodations in this course, please notify me early in the semester via the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services.**

**Late Assignments:**

All work must be submitted under the Assignments folder on the course Blackboard website by 11:59 pm on the due date (do NOT email). For each day late, 15% will be subtracted from the assignment (that is, one day late, maximum grade of 85%, two days, maximum grade of 70%). Limited exceptions will be made for emergencies. Medical emergencies may require a note from a health care provider. Internet problems are not considered emergencies. Violations of the university's Academic Integrity Code will result in serious sanctions, a grade of F in the course, or suspension from the university. Please read the sections set forth below on Reading and Writing Standards and the Academic Integrity Code carefully.

**Information Sources:**

- If you have not already done so, please go to American University Library's Information Literacy Tutorial, <http://www.library.american.edu/tutorial/index.html> prior to starting your literature review.
- Review "Evaluating Websites: Criteria and Tools" <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webeval.html>
- Do not cite Wikipedia as a source.
- In general, the best sources are peer-reviewed journals, university publications, and publications by reputable commercial presses, research organizations, and government agencies.

Note:

This is a **Certified Green Course** via AU's Center for Teaching, Research and Learning (see [www.american.edu/ctrl/green.cfm](http://www.american.edu/ctrl/green.cfm)). Therefore, I will rarely hand out printed materials (except the syllabus on the first day). I will use Blackboard to post handouts, collect assignments, and provide you with feedback on assignments. To help make our class as "green" as possible, I encourage you to buy e-books, used books or use library books. I also encourage you to minimize paper use and if you choose to print, please print double-sided and recycle the paper at the end of the semester.

## Class Schedule & Reading Assignments

### Week 1: January 15

#### Introduction to the Course

- Langbein, L. (2012). What this book is about. (ch. 1, p. 3 – 25)
- Frechtling, J. (2002). Section 1: Evaluation and types of evaluation. (p.3 – 13)
- [American Evaluation Association guiding principles](#) (July, 2004):

### Week 2: January 22

#### Ethics and Cultural Competence

- [American Evaluation Association Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation](#) (2011, Apr 22)
- Rossi, P. H. (1987). No good applied research goes unpunished! *Social Science and Modern Society*, 25(1), 74-79.
- Seiber, J. & Tolich, M. (2013). Journalist ethics ≠ social scientist ethics. Chapter 5 in *Planning ethically responsible research* (p.77 – 92). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Blustein, J. (2005). Toward a more public discussion of the ethics of federal social program evaluation. In Nathan, R.P. (2005) The ethics of social program evaluation. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 24(4), p. 824 – 846.

### Week 3: January 29 – LAB

#### Selecting a Topic & Finding a Dataset

- Langbein, L. (2012). Defensible program evaluations. (ch. 2, p.26 – 50)
- Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). Identifying issues and formulating questions. Chapter 3 in *Evaluation: A systematic approach* (p. 67 – 100)
- Vartanian, T.P. (2010). What is a secondary data set? and Advantages, disadvantages, feasibility and appropriateness of using secondary data. Chapters 2 – 3 in *Secondary Data Analysis* (p.9 – 22).

#### Recommended:

- Vartanian, T.P. (2010). *Secondary datasets*. Chapter 4 in [Secondary Data Analysis](#).

→**Certificate of RCR completion due by Class 3 (Wednesday, January 29<sup>th</sup>).**

### Week 4: February 5

#### Underlying Program Theory

- Weis, C.H. (1998). Understanding the program. Chapter 3 in *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies* (p. 46 – 71).
- Frechtling, J. (2002). Section 2: The steps in doing an evaluation. (p.15 – 30)
- Goldstein, J. (2013, Aug 18). The Crazy Cash-Giveaway Experiment. *New York Times Magazine*.
- “Money for nothing and your cows for free.” (2013, Aug 16). Act one of Episode 503: I was just trying to help. From *This American Life*: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/503/i-was-just-trying-to-help> (28 minutes)

→**Consultation with Professor due by Class 4 (Wednesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>).**

Week 5: February 12**Internal Validity & the Counter Factual**

- Langbein, L. (2012). Internal validity. (ch. 3, p.51 – 72)
- Khandker, S.R., Koolwal, G.B., & Samad, H.A. (2010). Basic issues of evaluation (p. 18 – 29). *Excerpt* of chapter 2 in *Handbook on impact evaluation: Quantitative methods and practices*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

*Required for Ph.D. students; Recommended for Master's students:*

- Morgan, S. & Winship, C. (2007). Introduction (p.3 – 30). Chapter 1 in *Counterfactuals and causal inference* (2007)

Week 6: February 19 – LAB**Workflow of Data Analysis**

- Long, J.S. (2009). Introduction; Planning, organizing and documenting; and Writing and debugging do-files. Chapters 1 – 3 from *The workflow of data analysis using Stata* (p.1 – 82).

Week 7: February 26**Impact Evaluation (Randomized Field Experiments)**

- Langbein, L. (2012). Randomized field experiments. (ch. 4, p.73 – 109)
- Howell, Wolf, Campbell & Peterson. (2002). School Vouchers and Academic Performance: Results from Three Randomized Field Trials. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 21(2), 191-217.
- Baicker, et al. (2013). The Oregon experiment: Effects of Medicaid on clinical outcomes. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 368(18), 1713 – 1722.
- Trenholm, C., et al. (2008). Impacts of Abstinence Education on Teen Sexual Activity, Risk of Pregnancy, and Risk of Sexually Transmitted Diseases. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 27(2), 255-276.

**→Introduction & Lit Review due on Sunday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> by 11:59 pm.**

Week 8: March 5**Impact Evaluation (Quasi-Experiments)**

- Langbein, L. (2012). The quasi-experiment. (ch. 5, p.110 – 142)
- Newman, S., Holupka, C. S., & Harkness, J. (2009). The long-term effects of housing assistance on work and welfare. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 28, 81-101.
- Aquino, R., de Oliveira, N. F., & Barreto, M. L. (2009). Impact of the Family Health Program on infant mortality in Brazilian municipalities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(1), 87-93.
- Xu, S., Hannaway, J., & Taylor, C. (2011). Making a difference? The effects of Teach for America in high school. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 30(3), 447-469.

**Spring Break – No Class on March 12**

Week 9: March 19 - LAB**Non-Experiments**

- Langbein, L. (2012). The non-experimental design. (ch. 6, p.143 – 208)
- Kremelberg, D. (2011). Descriptive statistics. Chapter 3 in *Practical Statistics* (p.57-65, 98-118).

*Recommended:*

- Newcomer, K.E. & Conger, D. (2010). Using statistics in evaluation. Chapter 20 in *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (p. 454 – 492)

Week 10 – March 26**Impact Evaluation Debates**

- Grossman, J. & Mackenzie, F.J. (2005). The randomized controlled trial: Gold standard or merely standard? *Perspectives in biology and medicine*, 48(4), 516-534.
- Oakley, A. (2002). Social science and evidence-based everything: The case of education. *Educational Review*, 54(3), 276 – 286.
- Hyder, et al. (2011). National policy-makers speak out: Are researchers giving them what they need? *Health Policy and Planning*, 26, 73-82
- Pirog, M. (2009) (Ed.). The role of random assignment in social policy research. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 28(1), p. 164 – 181.

Week 11 – April 2**Politics of Program Evaluation**

- Chelimsky, E. (1987). The politics of program evaluation. *Society*, 25(1), 24-32.
- Patton, M.Q. (2008). Power, politics and ethics. Chapter 14 in *Utilization-focused evaluation* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (p.523 – 557). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Knickman, J. & Jellinek, P. (1997). Epilogue: Four lessons from evaluating controversial programs. *Children & Youth Services Review*, 19(7), p.607-614.

*Recommended:*

- Fienberg, S. (1997). Ethics, objectivity and politics: Statistics in a public policy context. Chapter 4 in *Statistics & Public Policy* (p.62-81). Oxford University Press.

**→Evaluation, Politics and Ethics essay due on Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm.**

Week 12 – April 9**Participatory Evaluation; Needs assessments; Process Evaluations**

- Coupal, F.P. and Simoneau, M. (1998). A Case Study of Participatory Evaluation in Haiti. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 80: 69-79.
- Berberet, H.M. (2006). Putting the pieces together for queer youth: a model of integrated assessment of need and program planning. *Child welfare*, 85(2), p.361-384.

- Curran, Gittelsohn, Anliker, et al (2005). Process evaluation of a store-based environmental obesity intervention on two American Indian reservations. *Health Education Research*, 20(6), p.719 – 729.

*Recommended:*

- Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame. (2002). *Bordering the mainstream: A needs assessment of Latinos in Berwyn and Cicero, Illinois*. [http://www.robparal.com/downloads/Bordering\\_the\\_Mainstream.pdf](http://www.robparal.com/downloads/Bordering_the_Mainstream.pdf)

Week 13 – April 16 – LAB

**Data Analysis & Interpretation**

- Weis, C.H. (1998). Analyzing data and interpreting the data. Chapter 12 in *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (p. 271 – 293).
- Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). Detecting, Interpreting and Analyzing Program Effects. (ch. 10, p.301 – 330).
- Kremelberg, D. (2011). Pearson's R, Chi-Square, T-Test and ANOVA. Chapter 4 in *Practical Statistics* (p. 184-204).

**→Methods section due on Sunday, April 20<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm.**

Week 14 – April 23 – LAB

**Data Analysis & Interpretation**

- Kremelberg, D. (2011). Linear regression. Chapter 5 in *Practical Statistics* (p. 205-220, 229-234).  
OR
- Kremelberg, D. (2011). Logistic, ordered, multinomial, negative binomial and poisson regression. Chapter 6 in *Practical Statistics* (p.235-237, 268-286).

Week 15 – April 30

**Presenting Your Findings so People Will Listen**

- Grob, G.F. (2010). Providing recommendations, suggestions and options for improvement. Chapter 24 in *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (p. 581 – 593).
- Grob, G.F. (2010). Writing for impact. Chapter 25 in *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). (p. 594 – 619).

**→In-class final presentations on final projects.**

**→Final Paper due by midnight**