CREDITS: 3

CANVAS COURSE URL: https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/116347

COURSE DESIGNATIONS AND ATTRIBUTES: General

MEETING TIME AND LOCATION: Thursday 2:30 – 4:25pm, Biochem 1116

INSTRUCTIONAL MODE: all face-to-face

The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 180 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instructor - student meeting times (120 minutes per week), reading, writing, problem sets, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Yang Wang

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday 2:30 – 4:30pm at 5277 Grainger Hall and by appointment

INSTRUCTOR EMAIL: ywang26@wisc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Public program evaluation is the systematic, data-based assessment of the performance of programs or policies that have been implemented in public sectors. The main purpose of program evaluation is to provide valid findings to determine whether a particular program or policy is achieving its goals, and whether it should be continued, improved, expanded, or curtailed. And program evaluation has been increasingly required by policy makers concerned with accountability and efficient use of public resources.

This course will expose you to a variety of “state of the art” research designs and related methodological tools useful for evaluating the impact of public policies and programs. It will also provide you with an understanding of when and how these tools can be most usefully applied to produce knowledge and evidence of program effectiveness to guide program and policy decision making.

This course focuses primarily on quantitative methods of program evaluation necessary for you to first become critical consumers and effective users of evaluations and then build higher quality programs and policies.
In this course we will examine evaluation designs that have been applied to various public programs and issues in order to demonstrate key points. Each design relies on different sets of assumptions to construct the counterfactual state (what would have happened in the absence of the program) and to justify the causal claims it produces. We will learn to evaluate what these assumptions are, when these assumptions are likely to be violated, and how such violations lead to misleading conclusions.

**REQUISITES:** PA818

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**
By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Describe the key elements of the field of program evaluation;
- Understand the purpose, logic, and process of program evaluation;
- Explain contemporary program evaluation methods, including their strengths and weaknesses;
- Assess existing program evaluations; and
- Design and implement their own program evaluation, as well as contextualize, interpret, and present their findings.

**TEXTBOOK AND OTHER RESOURCES**
There is no required textbook for this course.


We will also use readings that illustrate “real world” applications of the methods we learn in class in academic, government, and other contexts. All the readings are available online, or will be made available at CANVAS (please check ‘Modules’, not ‘Files’ or other parts) or directly from me.

Required readings should be completed before we meet each week.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**
All assignments are designed to hone evaluation skills and provide experience that will be useful on the job market. Please use this course and the course assignments to deepen your expertise in a policy area of interest and to complement your other course work. Course grades will be based on the following:

- Class attendance and participation (general participation + some structured activities): 30%
- Program evaluation exercises (2): 30% (15% each)
• Attend at least two seminars/presentations on campus that use quantitative methods covered in class, and write a one-page summary for each seminar/presentation you attend: 5%
• Policy briefing: 5%
• Program evaluation paper and presentation (group project): 30%

Grade Criteria: A >= 93%, AB >= 89%, B >= 80%, BC >= 75%, C >= 65%, D >= 55%, F <55%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
Attendance is required for this class. Please email me if you cannot make it to the class for any reason. Class participation is an essential component of the course and is critical to your learning and that of your peers. You will be expected to read assigned materials prior to our class meetings and come prepared for discussions. In this way, lecture provides a second exposure to the material. I will not go over all of the details in lecture but will hit the highlights. Participation in structured, in-class activities such as group discussions, case studies, role plays, and debates is also important. Regular class attendance is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for getting full credits in class attendance and participation.

COURSE WEBPAGE
We have a CANVAS webpage for this course. You can find most course materials there (please check ‘Modules’, not ‘Files’ or other parts), including the syllabus, readings, and so forth. You will also submit your assignments onto CANVAS course webpage, so please make effort to get familiar with how it works. You are responsible for accessing the course webpage on a regular basis.

ASSIGNMENTS
Please try your best to work on the assignments, as it is one of the best ways to learn the materials. You are encouraged to discuss with your classmates, but be sure that you understand the materials yourself.

ILLNESS POLICY
If you are sick and you think it could be contagious, please stay at home and rest. Email me or check with classmates to get the material you have missed. If you believe that your illness or anything else might give you a long absence from class, please contact me immediately so that we can work out a plan to make sure that you do not fall too far behind.

CLASS MANNERS
  o Please come to class on time. If you know that you will be late, please let me know in advance.
  o Please do not leave class early. If you have to leave early, please let me know in advance.
  o Please mute your phone prior to class.
  o Please do not use your phone or computer for personal matter in class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison’s community of scholars in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are
held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement: “The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.” http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Institutional statement on diversity: “Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” https://diversity.wisc.edu/

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that the following outline and listed readings will be adjusted and updated to accommodate new materials, class needs, and student interests and experience. I will also frequently bring in additional materials reflecting current events and issues related to program evaluation. Changes will be communicated in class and/or by e-mail, and an updated syllabus will be posted on CANVAS.
Part One: Introduction

Week 1: September 6, “Introduction to Program Evaluation”
- What is program evaluation?
- Why should we care about program evaluation?
- Course overview

Required Readings
- Evaluation, Ch. 1, “An Overview of Program Evaluation”

Week 2: September 13, “Ethics of Program Evaluation”
- Ethical issues in evaluation: early abuses, current oversight, and lingering controversies
- Guiding principles for evaluation
- Asking the right questions

Required Readings

Recommended Readings

Week 3: September 20, “Basic Concepts & Logic Models”
- Basic statistical concepts
- Guest speaker: Hilary Shager: Logic models: Why should a program work, and what should you measure?
Required Readings


Recommended Readings

- UW-Extension Logic Model training and tools: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html

Part Two: Experiments

Week 4: September 27, “Randomized Experimental Design”

- What are randomized experimental designs?
- Why are they considered the “gold standard” of evaluation?
- What are the limitations and challenges of implementing experimental designs?

Required Readings

- Evaluation, Ch. 8, “Assessing Program Impact: Randomized Field Experiments”

Recommended Readings
Part Three: Quasi-experiment: Selection on Observables
Week 5: October 11, “Propensity Score Matching”

- What is propensity score matching?
- What are the key assumptions?
- What are the limitations and challenges of propensity score matching?

Required Readings
- *Evaluation*, Ch. 9, Assessing Program Impact: Alternative Design (Note: please focus on the parts on propensity score matching and skim the other parts on regression discontinuity, time-series design, etc.)

Recommended Readings
Part Three: Quasi-Experiment Design: Selection on Unobservables

Week 6: October 18, “DD and DDD”

- What is difference-in-differences?
- What are the key assumptions?
- What are the limitations and challenges of DD?
- Guest Speaker: Ben Nerad, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Fiscal Management

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Week 7: October 25, “Instrumental Variable”

- What is IV?
- What are the key assumptions?
- What are the limitations and challenges of IV?

Required Readings


**Recommended Readings**


• Levitt, Steven D. 1997. “Using Electoral Cycles in Police Hiring to Estimate the Effect of Police on Crime.” *American Economic Review*. 87(3): 270-290. [Read the “easy” parts of this paper and don’t worry about the complicated parts.]


**Week 8: November 1, “Methodological Debates: Experimental vs. Non-Experimental Designs”**

• What are the pros and cons of experimental and non-experimental designs?

• Which method is better?

• *Guest Speaker, Jennifer Noyes, PhD, the Associate Dean for Operations and Staff at UW - Madison (formerly Associate Director of Programs and Management, Institute for Research on Poverty)*

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


Rodrik, Dani. "The new development economics: we shall experiment, but how shall we learn?" (2008).

**Week 9: November 15, “Regression Discontinuity”**

- What is RD?
- What are the key assumptions?
- What are the limitations and challenges of RD?

**Required Readings**

- Shadish, Cook & Campbell (2002), Ch. 7, “Regression Discontinuity Designs”

**Recommended Readings**


**Week 10: November 29, “Quantile Regression”**

- What is quantile regression?
- Why do we want to do quantile regression?

*Guest Speaker, Joe Chrisman, State Auditor, Legislative Audit Bureau*

**Required Readings**

Recommended Readings


**Week 11: December 6, “Final Presentations”** (Please note that we may have to run a bit long on the last day to accommodate all presentations.)