Public Policy Evaluation
93696 - PSC 74000 – GC – 3 credits
The Graduate Center, CUNY

Professor Janet C. Gornick

FALL 2008

Professor: Janet Gornick, M.P.A., Ph.D.
Professor of Political Science and Sociology, The Graduate Center, CUNY

Contact information: The Luxembourg Income Study at the CUNY/GC
The CUNY Graduate Center
Room 6203.07
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY USA 10016-4309
TEL: 212 817 1872
jgornick@gc.cuny.edu

Class Meetings: 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm Wednesdays / Room 8202

Office Hours: 5:30pm to 6:30pm Wednesdays – Room 6203.07
Additional hours by appointment.

Course Description:

This course will begin with an overview of the field of public policy evaluation, from a political science perspective. The first section of the course covers lessons on evaluating the empirical aspects of public policy and provides an analytic framework for assessing the value judgments that inevitably influence policy decisions.

The second section of the course provides a survey of standard public policy evaluation techniques. In this part of the course, we will cover the common quantitative approaches, including experimental designs, quasi-experimental designs, and cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses. We will also explore the ways in which qualitative and quantitative methods can be combined in the field of public policy evaluation.

The third section of the course focuses on politics. Here, we will take an in-depth look at the role of think tanks and their influence on public policy; and we will assess the role of policy research on decision-making, through the lens of the American states.

In the final section of the course, we assess the potential for misuse of evaluations. We then close by analyzing the conditions under which policy lessons can be drawn across time and space.

The course will be conducted as a seminar. Each student will be required to chair one class session, either solo or with a partner. There will be a midterm examination and a final examination.
Required Reading:

1. This course has a reading packet, which is available for purchase at:

   The Copy Specialists, Inc.
   44 East 21st Street (between Broadway and Park Avenue South)
   Phone: 212-533-7560

   The packet will be ready for pickup as of Thursday, August 28.

2. In addition, the following books are required reading:

   (hardback, available from Amazon, $79.95 -- used copies also available)
   Note: you must have the Second Edition.

   Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 

   (paperback, available from Amazon, $26.95).

   New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers. 
   (paperback, available from Amazon,$24.95; may take 4-6 weeks)

   Note: You may borrow my book(s) for short periods to photocopy, if you wish.
   Note: See http://www.gc.cuny.edu/bookshop/ for information about the GC CUNY Virtual Bookshop.

Assignments:

Grades will be based on the following components:

1. Each student will be responsible for guiding a discussion of the reading for one class. 
   The presentation schedule will be set up on September 3, in class. 
   15 percent.

2. Class participation. 
   15 percent.

3. Midterm Exam (given in class, November 5). 
   30 percent.

4. Final Exam (given during Final Examination period, December 17–23). 
   40 percent.
# CLASS SCHEDULE

*Note: There is no class October 1, October 8, or October 22.*

## PART I. OVERVIEW.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 27</td>
<td>class #1</td>
<td>Overview of the Course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>class #2</td>
<td>Evaluating Public Policy -- Introduction -- Part I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction, Program Verification, Situational Validation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 10</td>
<td>class #3</td>
<td>Evaluating Public Policy -- Introduction -- Part II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Societal-Level Vindication, Social Choice, Conclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART II. METHODS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 17</td>
<td>class #4</td>
<td>Quantitative Methods I: Experimental Designs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 24</td>
<td>class #5</td>
<td>Quantitative Methods II: Quasi-Experimental Designs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>class #6</td>
<td>Quantitative Methods III: Cost-Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness Analyses; and Other Designs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 22</td>
<td>--</td>
<td><strong>no class</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 29</td>
<td>class #7</td>
<td>Program Evaluation: The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 5</td>
<td>class #8</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM (covers Parts I and II.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART III. POLITICS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 12</td>
<td>class #9</td>
<td>Think Tanks and the Politics of Expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 19</td>
<td>class #10</td>
<td>Power, Knowledge and Politics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART IV. LESSON-DRAWING.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class #</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 26</td>
<td>class #11</td>
<td>Preventing the Misuse of Evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 3</td>
<td>class #12</td>
<td>Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 10</td>
<td>class #13</td>
<td>Wrapping Up.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
READING

PART I. OVERVIEW.

September 3 class #2  Evaluating Public Policy -- Introduction -- Part I. Introduction, Program Verification, Situational Validation

*From the reading packet:*


chapter 2  Evaluating Program Outcomes: Empirical Logic and Methods.

chapter 3  Debating the Head Start Program: The Westinghouse Reading Scores in Normative Perspective.

chapter 4  Evaluating Program Objectives: Multiple Criteria and Situational Relevance.

chapter 5  Contesting the Times Square Redevelopment Study: Problem Definition and the Politics of Criteria.

September 10 class #3  Evaluating Public Policy -- Introduction -- Part II. Societal-Level Vindication, Social Choice, Conclusion.

*From the reading packet:*


chapter 6  Evaluating Policy Goals: Normative Assumptions and Societal Consequences.

chapter 7  Reassessing Disability Policy Goals: Equal Rights Versus Societal Costs.

chapter 8  Evaluating Ideological Commitments: Public Policy, Social Values, and the Good Society.

chapter 9  Environmental Policy and Risk-Benefit Analysis: The Green Critique of Technocratic Ideology.

chapter 10  Policy Deliberation as Political Methodology: Implications for Theory and Practice.
PART II. METHODS.

September 17 class #4 Quantitative Methods I: Experimental Designs.


chapter 5 Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design.
chapter 6 Solomon Four-Group Design.
chapter 7 Posttest/Only Control Group Design.

September 24 class #5 Quantitative Methods II: Quasi-Experimental Designs.


chapter 8 Pretest-Posttest Comparison Group Design.
chapter 9 Interrupted Time-Series Comparison Group Design.
chapter 10 Posttest-Only Comparison Group Design.

October 15 class #6 Quantitative Methods III: Cost-Benefit & Cost-Effectiveness Analyses; and Other Designs.


chapter 13 Cost-Benefit Analysis.
chapter 14 Cost-Effectiveness Analysis.
chapter 15 Patched Designs.
chapter 16 Meta-Evaluation Designs.
October 29 class #7 Program Evaluation: The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate.

From the reading packet:


article 1 The Relationship Between The Qualitative and Quantitative Research Traditions.

article 2 Integrating the Quantitative and Qualitative.

article 3 The War Between theQuals and the Quants: Is a Lasting Peace Possible?

article 4 Qualitative Plus/Versus Quantitative: The Last Word.

article 5 The Quantitative-Qualitative Debate: Possibilities for Integration.

article 6 Paradigm Wars: A Basis for Peaceful Coexistence and Beyond.

article 7 Evaluation: A Singular Craft.

article 8 Qualitative and Quantitative Inquiries Are Not Incompatible: A Call for a New Partnership.

November 5 class #8 MIDTERM EXAM (covers Parts I and II.)

PART III. POLITICS.

November 12 class #9 Think Tanks and the Politics of Expertise.


November 19 class #10 Power, Knowledge and Politics.

PART IV. LESSON-DRAWING.

November 26   class #11   Preventing the Misuse of Evaluation.

*From the reading packet:*

Preventing the Misuse of Evaluation.
New Directions for Program Evaluation.
Edited by Carla J. Stevens and Micah Dial.
Number 64, Winter 1994.

article 1     What Constitutes Misuse?
article 2     The Political Roots of Misuse of Evaluation.
article 3     Use and Abuse of Internal Evaluation.
article 4     The Gradual Extinction of Evaluation Within a Government Agency.
article 5     Confronting Ideology and Self-Interest: Avoiding Misuse of Evaluation.
article 6     The Misuse of Evaluation in Educational Programs.
article 7     Misusing Program Evaluation by Asking the Wrong Question.
article 8     Evaluation Misuse from a User's Perspective.

December 3   class #12   Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy.


December 10   class #13   no reading