

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

Professor Janet C. Gornick

FALL 2008

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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:

Bingham, Richard D. and Claire L. Felbinger. 2002.
Evaluation in Practice: A Methodological Approach. New York: Chatham House.
(hardback, available from Amazon, \$79.95 -- used copies also available)
Note: you must have the Second Edition.

Rich, Andrew. 2004. Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
(paperback, available from Amazon, \$28.99).

Hird, John A. 2005. Power, Knowledge, and Politics: Policy Analysis in the States.
Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
(paperback, available from Amazon, \$26.95).

Rose, Richard. 1993. Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy: A Guide to Learning Across Time and Space.
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.

August 27	class #1	Overview of the Course.
September 3	class #2	Evaluating Public Policy -- Introduction -- Part I. Introduction, Program Verification, Situational Validation.
September 10	class #3	Evaluating Public Policy -- Introduction -- Part II. Societal-Level Vindication, Social Choice, Conclusion.

PART II. METHODS.

September 17	class #4	Quantitative Methods I: Experimental Designs.
September 24	class #5	Quantitative Methods II: Quasi-Experimental Designs.
October 15	class #6	Quantitative Methods III: Cost-Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness Analyses; and Other Designs.
October 22	--	no class
October 29	class #7	Program Evaluation: The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate.
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.
December 3	class #12	Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy.
December 10	class #13	Wrapping Up.

READING

PART I. OVERVIEW.

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

From the reading packet:

Fischer, Frank. 1995. Evaluating Public Policy. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

chapter 1 Public Policy Analysis as Practical Deliberation:
Integrating Empirical and Normative Evaluation.

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:

Fischer, Frank. 1995. Evaluating Public Policy. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

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.

book: Bingham, Richard D. and Claire L. Felbinger. 2002. Evaluation in Practice: A Methodological Approach. New York: Chatham House.

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.

book: Bingham, Richard D. and Claire L. Felbinger. 2002. Evaluation in Practice: A Methodological Approach. New York: Chatham House.

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.

book: Bingham, Richard D. and Claire L. Felbinger. 2002. Evaluation in Practice: A Methodological Approach. New York: Chatham House.

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:

The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate: New Perspectives.
New Directions for Program Evaluation.
A Publication of the American Evaluation Association.
Edited by Charles S. Reichardt and Sharon F. Rallis.
Number 61, Spring 1994.

- article 1 The Relationship Between The Qualitative and Quantitative Research Traditions.
- article 2 Integrating the Quantitative and Qualitative.
- article 3 The War Between the Quals 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 1 and II.)

PART III. POLITICS.

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

book: Rich, Andrew. 2004. Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

November 19 class #10 Power, Knowledge and Politics.

book: Hird, John A. 2005. Power, Knowledge, and Politics: Policy Analysis in the States. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

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.
A Publication of the American Evaluation Association.
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.

book: Rose, Richard. 1993. Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy: A Guide to Learning Across Time and Space. New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers.

December 10 class #13 no reading