

PA 622: Public Program Evaluation
Spring 2019, MW 6:00-7:15 p.m.
White Hall Classroom 211

Instructor: Alex Combs, Ph.D.
Office: 407 Patterson Office Tower
Office Hours: Monday 4:00-6:00 p.m.
Email: alex.combs383@uky.edu

Pre-Requisites

PA 622 builds upon material covered in PA 621 or similar statistics course covering probability, measures of central location and dispersion, hypothesis testing, and basic regression.

Course Description

Program evaluation is the systematic use of empirical data to assess the effect or impact of public or non-profit programs. Funders and policymakers who are concerned with the effective use of public or philanthropic resources increasingly require program evaluations to inform policy and management decisions. Decisions to continue, expand, modify, scale down, or terminate a program should be based on evidence provided by evaluation research.

This course is designed to provide students the skills they need to be effective producers and consumers of evaluation research. The focus of the course is to help students develop the capacity to generate evidence-based answers to questions regarding the impact of public programs and policies.

Required Materials

Text

There is one required text for this course, listed below. Additional required readings and materials will be available on the course Canvas site.

1. Gertler, Martinez, Premand, Rawlings, & Vermeersch (2016). *Impact Evaluation in Practice, 2nd Edition*. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank. (GMPRV in course schedule.) This text is available to download for free <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25030>.

Statistical Software

Students are required to complete course assignments using Stata. Students are encouraged to purchase a Stata license, but access to Stata in the Martin School's computer lab makes it possible to complete assignments without a license. Examples of how to execute methods in Stata as well as some general Stata instruction will be provided in class, but students are expected to be proficient with Stata through prerequisites or their own practice outside of class. The Stata website includes [links](#) to tutorials.

Student Evaluation

All assignments are to be turned in on the course Canvas site by 6:00 pm on the due date unless otherwise specified. Late work will not be accepted without explicit written permission from the instructor obtained before the due date.

1. Program evaluation proposal (50%): Due April 29

Students will design a study that evaluates a public program or policy, though the student does not need to formally implement the evaluation.

2. Problem sets (50%): Due February 11, March 8, and April 15

Three problem sets will require students to reproduce and extend methods covered in the course, and provide short answers to conceptual questions. Students can work in groups of at most three and submit collectively.

Grading Scale:

90 – 100% = A

80 – 89% = B

70 – 79% = C

0 – 69% = E

Academic & Professional Honesty

All participants in the class are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic and professional honesty. If you are not familiar with the University of Kentucky rules and regulations regarding cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty, become so. You can find the UK Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities [here](#). Plagiarism is sometimes misunderstood. To be sure that you understand the rules regarding plagiarism, please see the [Academic Ombud's website](#) and review the very detailed pdf [document](#). You should also consult the Code of Ethics of the American Society for Public Administration.

Academic Accommodations Due to Disability

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours or after class. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC coordinates campus disability services available to students with disabilities. It is located on the corner of Rose Street and Huguelet drive in the Multidisciplinary Science Building, Suite 407. You can reach them via phone at (859) 257-2754 and via email at drc@uky.edu. Or visit their web site [here](#).

Changing Grades after Completion of Course

No changes can be made to grades after the conclusion of the semester other than in cases of clerical error.

The Syllabus

This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore change content and requirements during the semester at their discretion.

Electronic Devices

No cell phone usage for any purpose is allowed during class. No recording of the class is allowed without express written consent by the instructor.

Course Schedule

(1/9) Introduction, Uses & Types of Evaluation

- GMPRV Chs. 1, 17
- Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman (2004). *Evaluation*, Ch. 1

(1/14) Needs Assessment

- Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman (2004). *Evaluation*, Ch. 4
- Finlayson, Baker, Rodman, & Herzberg (2002). The process and outcomes of a multimethod needs assessment at a homeless shelter. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*.

(1/16) Theories of Change

- GMPRV Ch. 2
- Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman (2004). *Evaluation*, Ch. 5

(1/21) No Class: MLK Jr. Day

(1/23) Regression Review

(1/28) Causality & Random Assignment

- Pearl (2018). *The Book of Why*, Ch. 1

(1/30) No Class: Too cold

(2/4) Research Design – Internal, Construct, and External Validity

- McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorne (2018). *Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement*, Ch. 3
- GMPRV Ch. 11

(2/6) Causality & Random Assignment

- GMPRV Chs. 3, 4

(2/11) Measurement Validity & Statistical Conclusion Validity

- McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorne (2018). *Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement*, Ch. 4
- GMPRV Ch. 15
- Gooden, & Berry-James (2018). *Why Research Methods Matter*, Ch. 5
- Check out: https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/race/MREAD_1790_2010.html

(2/13) Data

- GMPRV Ch. 16

(2/18) Observational Studies – Regression Model Specification & Diagnostics

- Angrist, & Pischke (2015). *Mastering Metrics*, Ch. 2

(2/20) Observational Studies – Marginal & Heterogeneous Effects

- Mitchell (2012). *Interpreting and Visualizing Regression Models Using Stata*, Chs. 2, 10

(2/25) Instrumental Variables

- GMPRV Ch. 4
- Figlio (2007). Boys named Sue: Disruptive children and their peers. *Education Finance and Policy*.

(2/27) Instrumental Variables

(3/4) Regression Discontinuity

- GMPRV Ch. 4
- Jepsen, Mueser, & Troske (2016). Labor market returns to the GED using regression discontinuity analysis. *Journal of Political Economy*

(3/6) Regression Discontinuity

(3/11) & (3/13) No Class: Spring Break

(3/18) Panel Data

- Xu, Hannaway, & Taylor (2011). Making a difference? The effects of Teach for America in high school. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

(3/20) Panel Data

(3/25) Differences-in-Differences

- GMPRV Ch. 7
- St. Clair & Cook (2015). Difference-in-differences methods in public finance. *National Tax Journal*.

(3/27) Differences-in-Differences

(4/1) Matching

- GMPRV Ch. 8
- Newman, Holupka, & Harkness (2008). The long-term effects of housing assistance on work and welfare. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

(4/3) Matching

- Hyman, J. (2017). ACT for All. *Education Finance and Policy*.

(4/8) Bonus (time permitting): Synthetic Control

- Cunningham, S. (2018). *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*, Ch. 11
http://scunning.com/cunningham_mixtape.pdf

(4/10) Cost Benefit Analysis – Concepts

- McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorne (2018). *Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement*, Ch. 7
- Arrow, K., et al. 1996. Benefit-cost analysis in environmental, health, and safety regulation: A statement of principles.
- Hassett & Swagel (2006, Aug 30). Creative accounting: MoMA's economic impact study. *Wall Street Journal*.

(4/15) Cost Benefit Analysis – Concepts

- Boardman, Greenberg, Vining, & Weimer. *Cost-Benefit Analysis*, Ch. 6
- *The Economist* (2006, Dec 4). How to Value a Grandchild.

(4/17) Cost Benefit Analysis – Applications

- Carlson, Haveman, Kaplan, & Wolfe (2011). The Benefits and Costs of the Section 8 Housing Subsidy Program: A Framework and Estimates of First-Year Effects. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.
- Cellini (2012). For-profit higher education: An assessment of costs and benefits. *National Tax Journal*.
- Siegfried, J., & Zimbalist, A. (2000). The economics of sports facilities and their communities. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*.

(4/22) Cost Benefit Analysis – Uncertainty

- Manski (2011). Policy analysis with incredible certitude. *Economic Journal*.
- Dubner & Levitt (2008, Jan 20). Unintended consequences. *New York Times*.
- Posner (2005, Jan 4). The Probability of Catastrophe. *Wall Street Journal*.

(4/24) Implementation & Management

- GMPRV Ch. 12
- Musso, Biller, & Myrtle (2000). Tradecraft: Professional writing as problem solving. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

(4/29) No Class: Finals Week