

**PAD 6726**  
**Applied Research Methods for Accountability**  
**in Public and Non-Profit Organizations**  
Spring 2021 (Hybrid-Remote)

**Instructor:** Alexander Kroll, Ph.D.

**Messages:** Within Canvas

**Office Hours:** By appointment (via Zoom)

**Time:** Tuesday, 6:25 – 9:05PM

**Location:** Zoom

### **Course Objectives**

This course is structured around one of the most fundamental questions of public administration: How can we assess whether government programs are effective? To answer this question, the course will provide an overview of the basics of program evaluation. As you will learn, conducting a program evaluation shares many similarities with conducting research more broadly, which is why what we cover in this class will also be relevant for the implementation of other research-like projects. The course will focus on planning evaluations, the development of logic models, performance indicators and appropriate evaluation designs, as well as manifold ways to collect qualitative and quantitative data.

The course will deal with all the components relevant for the planning and designing program evaluations. However, it will not cover strategies for the analysis of empirical data, which was the focus of PAD 6701. As it is crucial to have a basic understanding of data analysis in order to be able to design effective evaluations, I expect that all students have taken PAD 6701, which is a prerequisite for this course. Though the concepts of program evaluations and performance management share a good deal of commonality, this course will mainly focus on the former, whereas elective PAD 5460 covers the latter and can be considered as a useful addition to this course.

The course's critical objectives are:

- Being able to plan and design program evaluations appropriate for specific program settings and understand the concepts of causality, validity, and operationalization.
- Being familiar with experimental, quasi- and non-experimental research designs and being able to apply them to the context of program evaluations but also to other research-related projects.
- Being able to develop logic models and meaningful performance indicators for different programs.
- Being familiar with different ways to collect qualitative and quantitative data and understand the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.
- Being able to critique program evaluations and to make constructive suggestions how to improve them.

- Understanding the politics around program evaluations as well as the challenges with regard to the use of evaluation data.
- Being able to produce a concise, impactful, and effective report.

### **MPA Program Objectives**

More broadly, the course will also help you to achieve the following MPA program learning outcomes. Students will...

- Analyze and solve policy problems with both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the public sector.
- Communicate persuasively with multiple and diverse publics in written form
- Communicate persuasively with multiple and diverse publics in verbal form

### **Class Format and Communication**

Classes will always be a mix of the following components: discussions of the readings, my lecture, student presentations, group work on exercises, and the discussion of the group work results. All communication outside the classroom will be through Canvas. That is, send me Canvas messages rather than emails.

This course is a hybrid, which means we have meetings every other week and online sessions during alternate weeks. While online sessions have deadlines for the submission of assignments, only on meeting weeks will you be required to be available during the assigned slot.

All meetings will be held via Zoom. Since we want to make these meetings as interactive and classroom-like as possible, please make sure you are available for the entire slot and put your camera on, so we can all see each other. Please join meetings using a laptop or computer (as opposed to a phone or tablet), because you may have to multitask (take notes, talk to group members, refer to readings etc.) during our meetings. Please log into Zoom using your full name.

### **Readings**

Newcomer, Kathryn E., Harry P. Hatry, and Joseph S. Wholey. 2015. Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation. 4th Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 978-1-118-89360-9

Please note that you do not need to buy this book! As an FIU student, you have access to its chapters (in PDF format) through our library. You will find a link to the required chapters in Canvas.

Readings are selected chapters from the Newcomer et al. handbook (hereafter “Handbook”). I will provide all additional readings, which are listed on the course schedule

below, through Canvas. Completing the weekly reading assignments will be essential to do well in this course because a) in class discussions I may ask you specific questions related to the readings and b) you are supposed to draw on the readings in your seminar papers.

## Grading

Weight	Deliverables
30%	Paper 1: Logic Model and Design
30%	Paper 2: Full Evaluation Plan and Presentation
10%	Article Discussion
10%	Participation
10%	Online Assignments (3)
7%	Online Discussions (3)
3%	Mini Assignments (3)

The lowest unrounded scores for the following letter grades are:

Exceeds expectations: **A** 95 **A-** 90

Meets expectations: **B+** 87 **B** 84 **B-** 80

Below expectations: **C+** 77 **C** 74

Schedule an appointment to see me: **D** 65 **F** below 65

## Submissions, Tardiness, and Troubleshooting

If you miss submission deadlines for the papers, your score will be reduced by one grade level (10%) for every 24 hours of tardiness. All other assignments cannot be submitted late.

In cases in which you experience issues with uploads via Turnitin, please do the following in the given order: Take a screenshot that shows the error message as well as the time and date on your computer screen; try the upload a second time using a different web browser and, if possible, a different computer; send me a Canvas message prior to the deadline and attach your document and the screenshot; contact technical support and resolve the issue; and eventually upload the document via Turnitin.

## Deliverables

The detailed assignments can be found on Canvas, but here is a brief overview of the deliverables.

## Papers

For paper 1, students will select a program for which they will draft an evaluation plan, including a logic model, performance indicators, and a research design.

For paper 2, students will, based on my feedback, elaborate on paper 1 and develop a complete evaluation plan. In addition to the elements of paper 1, paper 2 should also include a literature review, a section on data collection, and the development of a survey instrument. At the end of the course, you will present the paper in class and comment on someone else's paper.

I encourage pairs of two students to work jointly on the papers. My experience is that joint papers – on average – are of better quality than single submissions. This may have to do with the fact that the work can be divided, and students can serve as each other's "peer reviewers." Having said that, I leave it up to you whether you want to work in pairs or not. Students who opt to work in pairs will receive one (the same) group grade.

### **Article Discussion**

To get exposure to different types of program evaluations in various policy areas, we will discuss a set of published evaluation studies (see course schedule below). With the article discussion, you are supposed to show that you can make sense and comment on somewhat technical research studies, which are highly relevant for public administration work. I will randomly assign articles to students at the beginning of the semester, and every student is supposed to present one study. In larger classes, the lottery may create pairs of two students who jointly present the same study.

Discussing a program evaluation means the following: explain the program under evaluation; the methods of the study; its main findings; its limitations; and make suggestions how the study design could be improved. Devote less time summarizing the study and more time critically assessing it. Rather than listing the limitations already identified by the study authors, use your own judgment and assess, for example, the study's internal, external, and measurement validity. Once we have talked about randomized and quasi-experiments, you could also discuss how the study's design could be improved using such techniques.

Prepare a PowerPoint presentation and send it to me one day prior to your discussion date (if you want my feedback on your presentation, send it to me about a week in advance). The article discussion should be followed by an open class discussion moderated by you. Considering that your classmates may not be as familiar with the article you present as you are, frame your questions around big picture issues and the major cross-cutting themes of the class. Pose "stimulating," open-ended questions or state controversial hypotheses that your classmates can agree or disagree with.

Your presentation and discussion should altogether be no longer than 15 minutes (with about half of the time devoted to each of the two parts). Please note that your talk should not be about the 'ins and outs' of the program or policy but the methods of the evaluation study. I do not expect you to understand all the details of the statistical analysis, but you should have a good handle on the evaluation design, particularly once we are a few weeks into the semester. Please also note that an effective moderator keeps the discussion going, leads it in a particular direction, and is able to draw a meaningful conclusion at the end.

## **Participation**

Participation refers to your continuous qualitative and quantitative contributions to our in-class discussions and to the group work.

## **Online Discussions**

To avoid repetition and early saturation, I will use multiple smaller discussion groups and randomly assign students to one of these groups at the beginning of the semester.

Posts are graded on an 8-point scale that consists of four sub-dimensions. Below are the rubric definitions for an effective post (full points):

- *Plausibility*: Post provides a very well-argued and focused answer that moves the discussion forward.
- *Detail*: Main points are supported by detailed explanations, examples, or illustrations.
- *Relating to Other Posts*: Post clearly articulates how it is related to at least one previous post. Describes how it is different from the previous post(s).
- *Form*: Within the given word range (250-300 words, not counting references) and very well written (no typos or grammar issues).

Make it easy for me to see your post's unique contribution and how it related to posts by other group members. If your post is below the requested word range, ask yourself whether you have addressed all aspects of my question(s) and provided enough detail. If your post is above the range, revise it and try to be more concise.

To facilitate the readability of the discussion forums, please make all posts as "original, standalone posts" rather than replying to individual posts by your group members.

Missing, late, or very poorly constructed posts are worth zero points.

## **Online Assignments**

This category includes three assignments in which you develop an experimental nudging design; discuss several different design choices; and outline a literature review for your paper. Online assignments will be graded along a 5-point scale across the dimensions: plausibility, detail, and form.

## **Mini Assignments**

I will ask you to complete three mini assignments that will help you manage your time and schedule: the program preferences list, time management proposal, and time management reflection piece.

## **Attendance**

I understand that unexpected work- or family-related emergencies may necessitate an absence during the course of the semester, which is why I will grant you one absence. However, you will not be able to pass the class with more than one absence. If you already know that you will miss more than one class, then you may want to take this class at a different time.

## **Incompletes and Make-Up Exams**

In the absence of a dire, documented emergency, I am opposed to the granting of incomplete grades. This is consistent with University policy. Make every effort to complete the course in a timely manner. Please note that enrolling in this class means you agree with the syllabus and are able to provide papers, submissions, and presentations at the listed dates.

## **Students with Disabilities**

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities.

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305-348-3532 or visit them at the Graham Center GC 190.

## **Statement on Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the representation of another person's words, ideas, and creative work in general as one's own. This misrepresentation is a breach of ethics that seriously compromises a person's reputation. Professional careers have been ruined by revelations of plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism, researchers and professionals in public, private, or nonprofit organizations must scrupulously give credit whenever they use another person's idea, opinion, theory, written or spoken words, as well as any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings- any pieces of information- that are not common knowledge. The following rules should be observed to make sure that the distinction between one's own words, ideas or work, and those of others is justly maintained.

1. Put in quotations everything that comes directly from the text of another's work, especially when taking notes.

2. Alternatively, you can paraphrase another person's work, but be sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words. A good strategy is to (1) read over what you want to paraphrase carefully, (2) cover up the text with your hand, (3) write out the idea in your own words without peeking, and (4) check your paraphrase against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information is accurate.
3. Whether you quote, paraphrase or otherwise borrow another's work, always **cite** or indicate the source of the information, and provide references following one of the many accepted styles or formats.
4. Common knowledge such as George Washington's date of birth or meaning of OLS regression need not be quoted, cited, or referenced. However, borrowing another's original or creative presentation of common knowledge should follow the above mentioned rules. When in doubt, follow the rules.

Of course, submitting a paper that is completely the work of another person is plagiarism in its most extreme form. A student who plagiarizes all or part of an assignment can expect severe cumulative penalties, ranging from failure in the course to expulsion from the university, with an annotation of the sanction received on the student's transcript.

It should be kept in mind that, although it is not as egregious an offense as copying someone else's work, the extensive copying of a paper that one has prepared for one course for subsequent use and submission in another course is totally inappropriate. Especially at the graduate level, students may wish to prepare more than one paper in the same area. However, these must be substantially different papers which, while they may be in the same general area, represent a substantively different focus and do not significantly overlap in written text.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week #1, Jan 12, Planning Evaluations**

Readings:

1. Handbook, Ch. 1 & 2

Guiding Questions:

- What types of evaluations exist?
- When are evaluations considered "valid"?
- How can we engage stakeholders in the evaluation process?

### **Week #2, ONLINE, Logic Models**

\*\*\* By Jan 25 (3p), submit online discussion post.

Readings:

1. Watch video lecture
2. Handbook, Ch. 3
3. Remler, Dahlia and Gregg Van Ryzin. (2015). *Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, Ch. 2, p. 38-46.

Guiding Questions:

- Why do we use logic models?
- What do logic models consist of?

### **Week #3, Jan 26, Evaluation Designs: Randomized Experiments**

\*\*\* By Jan 29 (3p), submit three program preferences (as an individual or in pairs of two students) and time management proposal (individually) via Canvas.

Readings:

1. Handbook, Ch. 7
2. Bowen, William, Matthew Chingos, Kelly Lack, and Thomas Nygren. (2014). Interactive Learning Online at Public Universities: Evidence from a Six-Campus Randomized Trial. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 33(1): 94-111.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the role of randomization?
- What are strengths and weaknesses of experiments?

Article Discussion:

- Verderber, Stephen. (2008). Emergency Housing in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina: An Assessment of the FEMA Travel Trailer Program. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 23(4): 367-381.
- Erickson, Mary and Laura Hales. (2014). Teen Artists: Impact of a Contemporary Art Museum. *Studies in Art Education* 56(1): 412-425.

### **Week #4, ONLINE, Behavioral Interventions and Nudging**

\*\*\* By Feb 8 (3pm), submit online assignment (experimental nudging design) via Canvas.

Readings:

1. Watch video
2. Kamensky, John. (2019). [How Behavioral Science Could Improve Federal programs](#). *Government Executive*.
3. Halpern, David and Michael Sanders. (2016). Nudging by Government: Progress, Impact, and Lessons Learned. *Behavioral Science & Policy* 2(2): 53-65.

## **Week #5, Feb 9, Evaluation Designs: Quasi Experiments**

Readings:

1. Handbook, Ch. 6
2. Padgett, Vernon and John Reid. (2003). Five Year Evaluation of the Student Diversity Program: A Retrospective Quasi-Experiment. *Journal of College Student Retention* 4(2): 135-145.

Note: In the Handbook chapter, you can disregard designs 6 and 8.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the idea behind the comparison group design?
- What are its strengths and weaknesses?

Article Discussion:

- Kallemeyn, Leanne, Amber Evenson, Sherry Scott Heller, Catherine Taylor, Linda Gilkerson, and Tracy Moran. (2017). Local Adaptation during Implementation: A Case Study of the Fussy Baby Network® New Orleans and Gulf Coast initiative. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 42: 128-139.
- Vera, Elizabeth, David Shriberg, Alison Alves, Jessie Montes de Oca, Kassandra Reker, Meghan Roche, Manuel Salgado, Jessica Stegmaier, Lindsay Viellieu, Vicky Karahalios, Michael Knoll, Kristen Adams, Yahaira Diaz, and Ellen Rau. (2016). Evaluating the impact of a summer dropout prevention program for incoming freshmen attending an under-resourced high school. *Preventing School Failure* 60(2), 161-171.

## **Week #6, ONLINE, Making Sense of Design Choices**

\*\*\* By Feb 22 (3pm), submit online assignment (design choices) via Canvas.

Watch a set of videos on Canvas that provide additional information (and visualizations) of the different evaluation designs as well as application examples. Based on the videos, you will work through the design choices assignment, which will make you reflect on several design alternatives and their feasibility for the program that you are evaluating.

## **Week #7, Feb 23, Measuring Program Performance**

\*\*\* By Feb 26 (3pm), submit PAPER 1 via Canvas

Readings:

1. Handbook, Ch. 5
2. Kroll, Alexander and Donald Moynihan. (2018). The Design and Practice of Integrating Evidence: The Connections between Performance Management and Program Evaluation. *Public Administration Review* 78(2): 183-194.

Guiding Questions:

- What types of different performance measures for programs are there?
- How can performance management and program evaluation be integrated? What are obstacles?

### **Week #8, ONLINE, Data Collection I: Agency Records and Surveys**

\*\*\* By Mar 8 (3pm), submit online discussion post.

Readings:

1. Watch video lecture
2. Handbook, Ch. 13 & 14

Guiding Questions:

- How do these methods work? What are their unique features?
- When to use or not use them for the purpose of program evaluation?

### **Week #9, Mar 9, Data Collection II: Observer Ratings, Interviews, and Focus Groups**

Readings:

1. Handbook, Ch. 16, 19, 20
- Read 2 out of the 3 chapters; pick the two that interest you the most.*

Guiding Questions:

- How do these methods work? What are their unique features?
- When to use or not use them for the purpose of program evaluation?

Article Discussion:

- Isserman, Andrew and Terance Rephann. (1995). The Economic Effects of the Appalachian Regional Commission: An Empirical Assessment of 26 Years of Regional Development Planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 61(3): 345-364.
- Meeker, Daniella. (2014). Nudging Guideline-Concordant Antibiotic Prescribing: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Internal Medicine* 174(3):425-431.

### **Week #10, ONLINE, Crafting a Literature Review**

\*\*\* By Mar 22 (3pm), submit online assignment (lit review outline) via Canvas.

Readings:

1. Watch video lecture

2. Remler, Dahlia and Gregg Van Ryzin. (2015). *Research Methods in Practice: Strategies for Description and Causation*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, Ch. 17.
3. Knopf, Jeffrey. (2006). Doing a Literature Review. *Political Science and Politics* 39(1): 127-132.

### **Week #11, Mar 23, Case Studies**

#### Readings:

1. Handbook, Ch. 8
2. Bohanon, Hank, Pamela Fenning, Kelly Carney, Myoung Minnis-Kim, Sarah Anderson-Harriss, Kristyn Moroz, Kira Hicks, Beverly Kasper, Carrie Culos, Wayne Sailor, and Therese Pigott. (2006). Schoolwide Application of Positive Behavior Support in an Urban High School: A Case Study. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions* 8(3): 131-145
3. Peters, Guy. (1998). *Comparative Politics: Theory and Method*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 36-41.

#### Guiding Questions:

- What types of case studies are there? What are they good for?
- The Peters piece explains the most similar and most different cases design: how are the two different? How could public management applications of the two designs look like?

#### Article Discussion:

- Rosenheck, Robert, Julie Lam, Joseph Morrissey, Michael Calloway, Marilyn Stolar, Frances Randolph, and the ACCESS National Evaluation Team. (2002). Service Systems Integration and Outcomes for Mentally Ill Homeless Persons in the ACCESS Program. *Psychiatric Services* 53(8): 958-966.
- Unger, Karen and Roy Pardee. (2002). Outcome Measures across Program Sites for Postsecondary Supported Education Programs. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal* 25(3): 299-303.
- Cohen, Deborah, Terry Marsh, Stephanie Williamson, Bing Han, Kathryn Derosé, Daniella Golinelli, and Thomas McKenzie. (2014). The Potential for Pocket Parks to Increase Physical Activity. *American Journal of Health Promotion* 28(3): S19-S26.

### **Week #12, ONLINE, Scientific Evidence in Politics**

\*\*\* By Apr 3 (3 pm), for those of you who present on Apr 6, submit your PowerPoint presentation to me via Canvas message.

\*\*\* By Apr 5 (3pm), submit online discussion post.

#### Readings:

1. Handbook, Ch. 30

2. James, Oliver, Donald Moynihan, Asmus Olsen, and Gregg Van Ryzin. (2020). *Behavioral Public Performance: How People Make Sense of Government Metrics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 5.

Guiding Questions:

- Which are the most important challenges to the use of evaluation findings?
- What is politically motivated reasoning, and how can it be addressed?

### **Week #13, Apr 6, Presentations**

Review the presentation of the papers you were assigned to discuss. Prepare notes.

\*\*\* By Apr 10 (3 pm), for those of you who present on Apr 13, submit your PowerPoint presentation to me via Canvas message.

### **Week #14, Apr 13, Presentations**

Review the presentation of the papers you were assigned to discuss. Prepare notes.

\*\*\* By Apr 20 (3pm), submit PAPER 2.

\*\*\* By Apr 23 (3pm), submit time management reflection piece.