PubPol 479: Evaluating Public Policies  
Fall, 2018  
Syllabus

Instructor: Paula Lantz, Ph.D.  
Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
4125 Weill Hall, Ford School of Public Policy  
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. or by appointment

GSI: Lydia Wileden, PhD student in Sociology & Public Policy  
3207 Weill Hall, Ford School of Public Policy  
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, Fridays 10:00 am to 11:30 am, or by appointment

Course Materials: Assigned Readings: Canvas PubPol 479 Website  
Purchase of one Harvard Kennedy School Case Study ($3.95)

Course Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10/04/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article Critique</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10/25/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Evaluation Design</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11/29/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Evidence Memo</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12/17/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stata Exercises</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Objectives of the Course:

1. To understand the role of program and policy evaluation in the policymaking process.
2. To gain skills needed to understand and critique published evaluations of public policies and programs.
3. To develop expertise in framing evaluation questions and crafting research designs and data analysis plans to answer the questions, including in the format of a funding proposal.
4. To gain skills in using program and policy evaluation research studies to inform and communicate policy recommendations, including in politically-charged environments.

Important Stuff

Class Format: Our class time together will be in a variety of formats: lecture, class discussion of assigned articles and other topics, guest speakers, and small group exercises/discussions. The use of these different formats reflects the fact that learning how to do evaluation research is not a simple
task. The reading assignments and lectures will provide the technical basis required for program and policy evaluation. However, one also needs many opportunities to discuss and apply the terms, concepts, and technical tools. In addition, evaluation research is often a "social" endeavor, meaning that one rarely performs an evaluation all alone. Therefore, having the opportunity to sit down with other people to jointly design evaluation approaches and to interpret evaluation research findings is essential to the learning process.

Students will gain the most out of this course if they read the assignments before class, and actively participate in class discussions and exercises. The days on which there are small group exercises may seem like good times to miss class, but these are the days when most of the learning regarding how to actually perform a program evaluation will take place. They are an important determinant of your class participation grade.

Readings: A variety of readings available on Canvas are required for the course. Students are expected to do the assigned readings for each class period, even though we often will not discuss all of the readings in class. It is assumed that students will do the readings and will gain important information from them, and that class time can be used to go over additional material. The readings are important, because they provide helpful examples of different evaluation designs and measurement approaches, and give you the opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of actual evaluations. They will also be useful for exams and written assignments.

Class Participation: Class participation is 10% of the course grade. An important part of class participation is attending class, especially for the small group exercises. Class participation also involves asking questions, answering questions, sharing experiences or insights, or even challenging comments made by the professor or other classmates. All students are expected to make productive contributions to class discussions and to small-group exercises. Students are also expected to share their opinions/perspectives and to respectfully challenge the perspective of others if they disagree. Program/policy evaluation invokes a wide variety of opinions (many subjective) about what makes “good” public policy, what are desirable outcomes of a policy program, and what the role of evidence is in measuring those outcomes and allocating resources towards the public good.

Assignments: All assignments will be given in writing, with clear instructions. Late work needs to be negotiated before the day the assignment is due (just like you would do on a job). Professor Lantz is always willing to negotiate a new deadline with you if you have a reasonable reason for needing an extension. However, assignments that are turned in late without prior discussion or approval will be docked one grade step for every day they are late.

Classroom Expectations/Etiquette:

- **Please arrive to class on time.** We will start promptly at 10:00 a.m. each day.
- Please refrain from going in and out of the room during class, unless absolutely necessary.
- We will be engaging in discussions and debates in class. It is perfectly fine to disagree with each other and to have contrary opinions and perspectives. It is not appropriate to personalize differences of opinions, or to engage in rude, insulting or hostile behavior during our debates or outside of class. The goal is to have lively, respectful and productive exchanges. If you feel uncomfortable with an aspect of class discussion but are not comfortable raising this during class, please reach out to Lydia or Professor Lantz to discuss one on one.
- **The use of laptop computers, iPads or handheld devices will only be allowed on certain days for specific purposes.** The research evidence is mounting that open use of laptops and other devices in classroom settings has a negative impact on student learning, for you and the students around you. We will together figure out what works best in the context of this course, but having laptops or electronic tablets open and in use throughout class will not be the standard
Ethical Conduct: The Ford School of Public Policy believes that the conduct of students registered or taking courses in the School should be consistent with that of a professionally-employed person. Courtesy, honesty, and respect should be shown by students toward faculty members, guest lecturers, administrative support staff, and fellow students. Similarly, students should expect faculty to treat them fairly, showing respect for their ideas and opinions and striving to help them achieve maximum benefits from their experience in the School.

Student academic misconduct refers to behavior that may include plagiarism, which is defined as taking the words or ideas of someone else and attempting to pass them off as your own. The preparation of reports, papers, and examinations, assigned on an individual basis, must represent each student’s own effort. Reference sources should be indicated clearly and listed in a professional manner. Academic misconduct also includes cheating, fabrication, falsification of records or official documents, intentional misuse of equipment or materials (including library materials), and aiding and abetting the perpetration of such acts. Academic misconduct is taken very seriously, and could result in failing the course or even expulsion.

Ford School Inclusivity Statement:

Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

• share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
• be open to the views of others
• honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
• appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
• value one another’s opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
• keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
• use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let your instructor know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of courses may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make your instructor aware of your needs, they can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential.

Student Mental Health and Well-Being Resources: The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impact students’ academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and/or University Health Service (UHS). For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: http://umich.edu/~mhealth/

Please review additional information and policies regarding academic expectations and resources at the Ford School of Public Policy at this link:

http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectations
**PUBPOL 479: SYLLABUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic/Reading Assignment</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Course</td>
<td>9/4/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role of Program Evaluation in the Policy Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation Terms/Planning an Evaluation</td>
<td>9/6/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION SECTION Participatory Action Research</td>
<td>9/7/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>View in Class: Participatory Video for Monitoring and Evaluation: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktdyjbjb3Msw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktdyjbjb3Msw</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentals of Research Design</td>
<td>9/11/18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Ferraro PJ. Counterfactual thinking and impact evaluation in environmental policy. In M. Birnbaum & P. Mickwitz (Eds.), *Environmental Program and Policy Evaluation. New Directions for Evaluation.* 2009; 122, 75-84.


**Fundamentals of Research Design**


**DISCUSSION SECTION – Discuss Article**


**Data and Measurement Issues**


Wintemute GJ, Hemenway D, Webstar D, Pierce Gl, Braga A. Gun shows and gun violence: fatally flawed study yields misleading results. *AJPH.* 2010; published online.

**DISCUSSION SECTION Measurement of Variables**


**Randomized Controlled Trials**

Moves to Opportunity Project in Seattle:
http://creatingmoves.org/
http://creatingmoves.org/research/


Randomized Controlled Trials 9/27/18


DISCUSSION SECTION Exam Preparation 9/28/18

Case Study of “Ban the Box” Policy 10/2/18


EXAM 10/04/18

NO DISCUSSION SECTION 10/05/18

Class Exercise: Designing a Randomized Trial 10/09/18


Sommers BD, Baicker K, Epstein AM. Mortality and access to care among adults after state Medicaid expansions. NEJM. 2012;367:1025-34.

**Team Evaluation Design Assignment**  
Assignment will be explained; teams will meet for the first time  
10/25/18

**DISCUSSION SECTION - Statistical Analysis for Program Evaluation**  
10/26/18

**Evaluation in Practice:**  
GUEST RESEARCHERS will present their evaluation studies  
10/30/18

William Elliot III, PhD. Professor of Social Work, University of Michigan  
Silvia Robles, PhD, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Education Policy Initiative, Ford School of Public Policy


**STATA LAB or Meet with Team**  
11/01/18  
11/02/18

**Logic Models/Systems Thinking**  
11/06/18


Root causes of inequality: addressing structural racism (Figure 3-2 and Box 3-2 Massachusetts) [https://www.nap.edu/resource/24624/RootCausesofHealthinequity/](https://www.nap.edu/resource/24624/RootCausesofHealthinequity/)

**STATA LAB or Exercise Designing a Quasi-Experiment**  
11/08/18  
11/09/18

**Process Evaluation**  
11/13/18


**Using Program Evaluation Results to Design/Promote Public Policy** 11/15/18


**Medicaid Work Requirements:**


**DISCUSSION SECTION**  Check in for Team Projects  11/16/18

**Ethical Issues in Program Evaluation**  11/20/18


**No Class -- Happy Thanksgiving**  11/22/18  11/23/19

**Understanding and Using the Policy Evaluation Research Literature**  11/27/18
Guest: David Thacher, Associate Professor, Ford School of Public Policy and Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning


Optional Readings:


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATA LAB or Mexico Case Study of Income Security Policy</th>
<th>11/29/18</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STATA LAB or Mexico Case Study of Income Security Policy</td>
<td>11/30/18</td>
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| Pay for Success – Role of Evaluation | 12/04/18 |


**Case Study:** IRB Review of Proposed Program Evaluation 12/06/18

http://www.uniteforsight.org/evaluation-course/module15

DISCUSSION SECTION: Final Assignment-Policy Evidence Memo 12/07/18

Course Wrap-Up 12/11/18