Evaluation of Crime and Justice Policies and Practices
CRIM 516-DL1, 3 Credits, Spring 2024

Instructor: Evan Lowder, Ph.D.   Office: Enterprise 308 and via Zoom
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Course Overview:
This course will provide a graduate-level introduction to the principles and practices of criminal justice program evaluation. Topics will include program theory, types of program evaluation (i.e., formative vs. summative), culturally responsive program evaluation, methodological approaches to impact evaluation, data collection, and communicating evaluation findings. Course content will cover both theory and methodological approaches while maintaining an emphasis on program evaluation in practice. Students will learn to appraise both evaluation approaches and products. Students will be expected to bring their professional interests to enhance course discussions and applications of content. Active, high quality student participation is expected.

Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Differentiate between types of program evaluation and determine the best fit for a given program.
2. Appraise the methodological strengths and weaknesses of various evaluation approaches and evidence.
3. Assess the evaluation potential of a criminal justice program.
4. Develop an evaluation plan customized to a criminal justice program.
5. Communicate evaluation plan to a professional audience.

Course Description (from University Catalog):
The major principles and approaches of program evaluation applied to crime and justice policies. Presents a conceptual framework for problem evaluation. Explores issues and methods for developing evaluation questions and assessing various aspects of program theory, operation and outcomes. May not be repeated for credit.

Recommended Prerequisites:
CRIM 515 (Criminal Justice Research Methods and Data Analysis)

Required Text:
Newcomer, K. E., Hatry, H. P., & Wholey, J. S. (2015). Handbook of practical program evaluation. John Wiley & Sons. (available online or via GMU Libraries)

Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). Evaluation: A systematic approach, 7th Edition (7th edition). SAGE Publications, Inc. (select chapters available on Blackboard)

Additional readings as assigned.

Required Technology:
Students will need access to a computer with a reliable Internet connection and browser that meets minimum requirements for Blackboard: https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/introduction-

. Additionally, students must have a functional microphone and speaker; webcam is preferred.

Course Management:
Blackboard will be used for hosting course materials (i.e., syllabus, readings, assignment descriptions, supplementary materials) and assignment submissions. To access Blackboard, navigate to https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/ and login with your Mason NetID and password, then navigate to 'Courses' → 'Spring 2024 → '202410.17965 CRIM-516-DL1 (Spring 2024).'

Course Format:
This course is designed with both a synchronous (i.e., live) and asynchronous (i.e., on-your-own) component. As part of this design, you will be responsible for the following each week:

1. Completing Weekly Asynchronous Coursework: Prior to each live session, you will be responsible for watching a brief lecture, completing assigned readings and tasks, and submitting weekly assignments. All weekly assignments will be due by 11:59pm on the Monday before Tuesday's live session.

2. Completing Major Assignments: Major assignments will be due throughout the semester. Please pay attention to due dates on the course syllabus and Blackboard. If assigned, major assignments will always be due before class on Tuesday (i.e., 5:55pm).

3. Attending Weekly Synchronous Sessions: Each Tuesday, we will meet as a class from 5:55 to 7:10pm via Blackboard Collaborate. Blackboard Collaborate can be accessed via our Blackboard course website. Live sessions will provide more in-depth discussion of specific topics, facilitate group interaction and discussion, and allow you to receive dynamic peer and instructor feedback on major assignments.

The course plan is subject to change with advance notice.

Grading:

A+	97-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D	60-69%
A	93-96%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	F	<60%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%		

Note: Grades will not be automatically rounded (e.g., a 92.99 will be graded as an A-, not an A).

Course Requirements:

Weekly Asynchronous Assignments – (30% of final grade)
Each week, students will complete asynchronous assignments designed to integrate course material (i.e., lectures; reading) with practical examples of criminal justice program evaluation.

Synchronous Course Participation – (10% of final grade)
Synchronous course participation will reflect student engagement in live sessions. Participation will be measured by a combination of attendance, engagement in group activities and discussion, and submission of in-class assignments.

Evaluation Proposal – (50% of final grade)
The major assignment will be a 12-15-page, double-spaced evaluation proposal applying relevant evaluation approaches to a specific criminal justice program of the student's choice. Students will have the opportunity to make gradual progress on the proposal over the course of the semester via the following assignments:

- Program Identification and Description (5%): Students will identify a criminal justice program of interest and describe the key features of this program (i.e., history, jurisdiction, intervention components, population served, etc.).

- Evaluability Assessment (10%): Students will conduct a short (i.e., 3 pages) evaluability assessment detailing the program theory and logic model, available data sources, program readiness for specific type of evaluation, and appraisal of practical utility of evaluation findings given program operations.

- Concept Proposal (5%): Students will build on the evaluability assessment to conduct a short 2-3-page concept proposal providing a high-level overview of the central components of the proposed evaluation.

- Draft Proposal (5%): Students will prepare a draft evaluation proposal for in-class peer review and instructor feedback. Additional guidelines and rubric are available on Blackboard.

- Final Proposal (25%): The final evaluation proposal will represent 25% of the final course grade. The proposal will be a 12-15-page, double-spaced document drafted for a criminal justice agency audience. As part of the evaluation proposal, students will articulate the program background, program theory and logic model, evaluation questions, and proposed evaluation design. Additional guidelines and rubric are available on Blackboard.

Proposal Presentation – (10% of final grade)
Each student will record a short (5-minute) presentation of their proposed evaluation design oriented to a criminal justice agency audience. Presentations will be evaluated both by peers and the instructor.

Contacting the Instructor:
The best way to contact me is via email or by appointment. Please email if you would like to set up a time to meet. I will check email regularly during the workweek. You can expect a response within 24 hours of sending me an email during the workweek, though often sooner. There is no guarantee of a response over weekends and holidays. Be proactive! Do not save your questions or concerns until the last minute.

Late Assignments:
Late assignments will only be accepted in the case of a documented emergency or at my discretion.

Academic Misconduct Policy:
Academic misconduct is a serious offense, and I will take seriously any instances of plagiarism in this course. Every assignment you submit via Blackboard Collaborate for this course is reviewed for possible plagiarism. If you are found responsible for academic misconduct, the default sanction will be a failing grade (i.e., "0" on that assignment). Exceptions to the policy will be made on a case by case basis. Acting with academic integrity means that you (1) submit your work and your work alone; 2) submit new work for this class (i.e., do not "recycle" previous assignments or self-plagiarize); and 2) use a documented citation style (e.g., APA style) to properly attribute the works and ideas of others. If you are ever in doubt, err on the side of over-citing. Please seek clarification from me when you are unclear about the rules or guidelines for a given assignment. You are expected to abide by the Mason Honor Code. For more information on the Honor Code, please see: https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/

Course Schedule
Subject to change with advance notice.

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1: 1/16	What is Program Evaluation?	Syllabus	
Week 2: 1/23	Customizing Program Evaluation	Newcomer Ch. 1; Ch. 2 Rossi Ch. 3	
Week 3: 1/30	Program Theory and Logic Models	Newcomer Ch. 3 Rossi Ch. 5	
Week 4: 2/6	Evaluability Assessment	Newcomer Ch. 4	
Week 5: 2/13	Process Evaluation	Newcomer Ch. 5 Rossi Ch. 6	Program Identification and Description
Week 6: 2/20	Outcome Evaluation	Newcomer Ch. 5 Rossi Ch. 7	
Week 7: 2/27	Cultural Responsivity in Evaluation	Newcomer Ch. 12	Evaluability Assessment
Week 8: 3/5	SPRING BREAK NO CLASS		
Week 9: 3/12	Impact Evaluation: Causal Inference and the RCT	Newcomer Ch. 7 Rossi Ch. 8	
Week 10: 3/19	Impact Evaluation: Alternative Designs	Newcomer Ch. 6 Rossi Ch. 9	
Week 11: 3/26	Impact Evaluation: Efficiency	Newcomer Ch. 24 Rossi Ch. 11	Concept Proposal
Week 12: 4/2	Data Collection	Newcomer Ch. 13-14; briefly review Ch. 16-17	
Week 13: 4/9	Communicating Findings	Newcomer Ch. 27-28	Draft Final Proposal
Week 14: 4/16	Contracting for Evaluation	Newcomer Ch. 29	Final Proposal
Week 15: 4/23	Project Debrief and Wrap-Up		Proposal Presentation (Due by Friday 4/19) Peer Evaluation