

CRIM 516—EVALUATION OF CRIME & JUSTICE POLICIES

CRIM 781—JUSTICE PROGRAM EVALUATION

Fall 2019

Dr. Charlotte Gill | Department of Criminology, Law and Society, George Mason University
Mondays 7:20–10:00pm | 1109 Peterson Family Health Sciences Hall, Fairfax Campus

✉ cgill9@gmu.edu | ☎ (703) 993-6085 | 🏠 317 Research Hall (office hours by appointment)

Course Description and Objectives

We know that crime and justice policies and practices need a sound evidence base, but how is that evidence base created? How do we know whether a program works in practice? What does it even mean to ask whether a program “works”? This course will introduce you to the principles, methods, and practice of **program evaluation**. This is not a stats or research methods class, but we’ll explore how researchers use different research designs and analytical tools to assess program implementation and effectiveness. We’ll discuss how justice agencies establish the need for a program, and how to design an approach with a clear theory of change. We’ll explore how program design and theory inform the inputs, outputs, and outcomes that need to be measured to understand implementation, effectiveness, and efficiency. We will also examine how practitioners and policymakers can use well-designed evaluation findings to effect meaningful system change.

On completion of this course you should be able to:

- Define *program evaluation* and summarize key principles and approaches
- Describe how to design a *needs assessment, logic model, evaluability assessment, and evaluation plan*
- Understand the relationship between program *theory, outcomes, and effects*
- Compare and contrast different approaches to evaluating program implementation, impact, and cost-effectiveness
- Evaluate the use and impact of program evaluation in the criminal justice system and the community
- Apply concepts learned in this class to real-world scenarios

Required Text

Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Henry, G. T. (2019). *Evaluation: A systematic approach* (8th ed.) Sage Publications.

The 8th edition is brand new, but you may be able to find used copies of the 7th edition. You can substitute the older edition, but be aware it is 15 years old and while it is similar the content has been updated for the 8th edition and there are a couple of new chapters.

Course Format and Key Assignments

This course will be taught in a student-led discussion seminar format. This approach relies heavily on you completing the assigned readings before class and coming prepared to discuss them. The purpose of the classes is to clarify issues that arise in the reading, assess important questions and controversies, and develop your own critical thinking through discussion and questions. When all students commit to actively participating, everybody benefits and maximizes their learning and understanding of the material. This course is cross-listed between the MS (CRIM 516) and MA/PhD (CRIM 781) programs; requirements will be adjusted for each group of students (e.g. CRIM 781 students will be assigned additional readings and more rigorous assignment expectations).

See Blackboard for full details of each assignment.

- **Weekly in-class reflection paper:** 15%
- **Students as Experts:** 20%. Lead class discussion; CRIM 781 students complete 3 written briefs.
- **Evaluation plan:** 40%. Semester-long cumulative paper in which you design your own evaluation of a topic of your choice.
- **Take-home final:** 25%. Short-answer essays.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

The weekly schedule is subject to change depending on the progress of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard. Additional non-textbook readings will be posted in the Course Content section of Blackboard. **Required reading assignments should be completed *before* the class for which they are listed.**

Week	Date	Content & Readings
1	Aug 26	Introduction to program evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 1 • Additional reading on Blackboard
2	Sep 2	NO CLASS (Labor Day)
3	Sep 9	Needs assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 2 • Additional reading on Blackboard
4	Sep 16	Program theory and design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 3 • Additional reading on Blackboard
5	Sep 23	Process evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 4 • Additional reading on Blackboard
6	Sep 30	Outcome identification and measurement EVALUATION PLAN PART I DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 5 • Additional reading on Blackboard

Week	Date	Content & Readings
7	Oct 7	Impact evaluation Part 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 6 • Additional reading on Blackboard
8	Oct 15	CLASS MEETS TUESDAY 15TH THIS WEEK Impact evaluation Part 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 7 • Additional reading on Blackboard
9	Oct 21	Impact evaluation part 3 EVALUATION PLAN PART II DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 8 • Additional reading on Blackboard
10	Oct 28	Planning an evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 11 • Additional reading on Blackboard
11	Nov 4	Interpreting program effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 9 • Additional reading on Blackboard
12	Nov 11	NO CLASS (ASC Conference) EVALUATION PLAN PART III DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reading: work on your paper!
13	Nov 18	Cost-effectiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 10 • Additional reading on Blackboard
14	Nov 25	Evaluation in the real world <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossi et al. Chapter 12 • Additional reading on Blackboard
15	Dec 2	Review and summary session EVALUATION PLAN PART IV DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No assigned reading
	Dec 16	TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 5:00PM

See Blackboard for full syllabus, including links to readings and assignment instructions, course policies, and student resources.