CRIM 516—EVALUATION OF CRIME & JUSTICE POLICIES
CRIM 781—JUSTICE PROGRAM EVALUATION
Spring 2021

Dr. Charlotte Gill | Department of Criminology, Law and Society, George Mason University
CRIM 516: Hybrid with live session Tuesdays 5:55-7:10pm
CRIM 781: Hybrid with live session Tuesdays 4:30-5:45pm

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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

Assigned Texts

All students: Giancola, S. P. (2021). *Program evaluation: Embedding evaluation into program design and development.* Sage Publications.

Recommended for CRIM 781 students: Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Henry, G. T. (2019). *Evaluation: A systematic approach* (8th ed.) Sage Publications.

Course Format and Key Assignments

This course will be taught fully online in a hybrid format. You will be assigned readings, pre-recorded lectures, and other resources or activities to complete on your own time, and we will meet live on Zoom once per week for a seminar. The live seminar is intended to clarify issues that arise in the readings, assess important questions and controversies, and develop your own critical thinking through discussion and questions. This approach relies heavily on you completing the assigned readings and other activities before class so you are prepared to contribute to these activities in the live session. 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.

Assignments for all students

- **Weekly in-class reflection paper:** 10%
- **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.

Assignments for CRIM 516 students only

- **Online discussion board leader:** 15%. Once during the semester, pose a question to your classmates on the discussion board.
- **Online discussion board participation:** 10%. Respond to the discussion board leader's question each week.

Assignments for CRIM 781 students only

- **Reading briefs:** 15%. Submit three briefs on topics of your choice throughout the semester.
- **Live class discussion participation:** 10%. Come to each live class prepared with a discussion question and provide thoughtful responses to your classmates' questions.

Grading

Letter grades for this course will be based on the following points breakdown, according to the Graduate Regular scale:

A+	97-100	A	93-96.9	A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9	B	83-86.9	B-	80-82.9
C	70-79.9	F	< 70		

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 and other online assignments should be completed *before* the live class date listed.**

Live Class Date	Topic & Readings
January 26	**Class introduction and overview** • Giancola Chapter 1 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 1 • Additional activities on Blackboard
Module 1: Introduction to Program Evaluation	
February 2	**Approaches to evaluation** • Giancola Chapter 4 • Additional activities on Blackboard
February 9	**Evaluation ethics** • Giancola Chapters 2-3 • Additional activities on Blackboard
Module 2: Needs Assessment	
February 16	**Needs assessment** • Giancola Chapter 5 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 2 • Additional activities on Blackboard
Module 3: Program Theory and Design	
February 23	**Program theory and design** EVALUATION PLAN PART 1 DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM • Giancola Chapter 6 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 3 • Additional activities on Blackboard
Module 4: Process Evaluation	
March 2	**Process and implementation** • Giancola Chapter 7 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 4 • Additional activities on Blackboard
Module 5: Impact Evaluation	
March 9	**Identifying and measuring outcomes** • Giancola Chapter 7 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 5 • Additional activities on Blackboard
March 16	**NO LIVE CLASS THIS WEEK** EVALUATION PLAN PART 2 DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM
March 23	**Choosing an evaluation design** • Giancola Chapter 8 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapters 6-8 • Additional activities on Blackboard
March 30	**Implementing the evaluation** • Giancola Chapter 9 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 11 • Additional activities on Blackboard

Live Class Date	Topic & Readings
April 6	**Analyzing the data** EVALUATION PLAN PART 3 DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM • Giancola Chapter 10 • Additional activities on Blackboard
April 13	**Interpreting the results** • Giancola Chapter 11 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 9 • Additional activities on Blackboard
Module 6: Cost-Benefit Analysis	
April 20	**Cost-benefit analysis** • Giancola Chapter 12 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 10 • Additional activities on Blackboard
Module 7: Using Evaluation Findings	
April 27	**Translation and dissemination** EVALUATION PLAN PART 4 DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM • Giancola Chapter 12 • CRIM 781 OPTION: Rossi et al. Chapter 12 • Additional activities on Blackboard
TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY MAY 7 AT 11:59PM	

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