GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
CRIMINOLOGY, LAW, AND SOCIETY
CRIM 516: Evaluation of Criminal Justice Policy
Fall 2023

In-person meeting: Thursdays at 7:20 PM to 10:00 PM, Horizon Hall, 1007
Instructor: Dr. Danielle Fenimore (she/her)
Contact information: dfenimor@gmu.edu
Student hours: Virtual, by appointment

Course Description
Pulled from Course 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.

Through this course you will learn the process of conducting evaluation research of criminal justice programs. This course will consist of online and in-class discussions of both textbook materials and specific examples of evaluation, including developing questions, funding sources, typical evaluation methodologies, measuring outcomes, and understanding program theory.
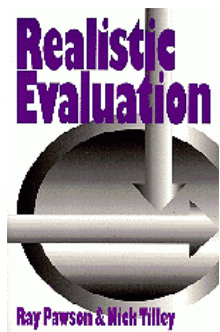

One note: It is *required* that you complete CRIM 515 before starting this course. CRIM 515 provides the groundwork for this course, examining criminal justice research methods, with a specific focus on research design. This is an *applied* research methods course, so this information is invaluable.
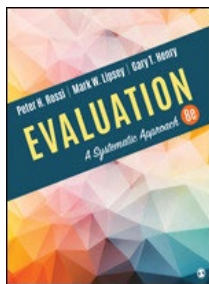

Learning Objectives:
1. Develop a comprehensive understanding of evaluation concepts.
2. Apply principles of social research methods to evaluation of criminal justice programs.
3. Assess the impact of contextual factors on policy evaluation.
4. Understand the importance of effectively communicating evaluation recommendations.

Required Texts:

Text: *Realistic Evaluation*
By: Ray Pawson & Nick Tilley
ISBN: 9780761950080

Text: *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach*
By: Peter Rossi, Mark Lipsey, & Gary Henry
ISBN: 9781506307893

Chapters 1 and 6 are available [online](#).

Other Required Materials: Packback subscription. See below.

Computer requirements:

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at https://mymason.gmu.edu. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher. You can check your speed settings using the speed test on this [website](#).)

Locations for on-campus computer labs*:
    Fairfax Campus: Johnson Center, Room 342
                        Innovation Hall, Room 301

Netiquette
We will frequently be using the internet as a means to enhance our discussions. Please be respectful of your peers and your instructor and do not engage in activities that are unrelated to the class. Such disruptions show a lack of professionalism and will be addressed accordingly.

Communication Policy
I am teaching full-time during the Fall 2023, and will generally be available to answer emails or schedule office hours between 8 AM and 5 PM Monday through Friday. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24-48 hours. I know the semester can get hectic and overwhelming sometimes, but please do your best to plan ahead, particularly with regard to time-sensitive assignments like exams.

Students must use their Mason email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address. I also ask that you refrain from sending messages through the Blackboard messaging system; these messages often get lost and I may not see them. Finally, please remember that an email is a letter at its heart, and requires a greeting, a body, and a closing. I will not respond to emails that are incomplete or that do not have sentence structure.

Course Design

This course will be largely discussion-based, though there is some material not included in the text that I will provide some lectures on. Lectures will last no longer than an hour and a half and may have an associated PowerPoint. Some topics will be exemplified through small group, in-class activities. Participation is required for these; however, it will only count for approximately 5% of your grade (see below).

Readings that are listed in the schedule that cannot be found in the texts will be posted at the beginning of the semester under the corresponding module and week number. Search for the week corresponding to the dates in the Course Schedule to make sure you are reading the correct articles.

Evaluation & Grading

Grade Weights:	**Grading Scale:**
Online Discussions – 20%	A: 90 – 100
In-Class Activities – 5%	B: 80 – 89
Written Assignments – 30%	C: 70 – 79
Exams – 30%	D: 60 – 69
Group Research Proposal – 15%	F: 0 – 59

NOTE: This is a weighted grade. Simply calculating the average for your grade will not be accurate. Blackboard should be keeping a running calculation of your current grade.

Online Discussion Assignments

Online discussions will facilitate the out-of-class portion of this hybrid course, and the **Packback Questions platform** will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback Questions is an online community where you can be fearlessly curious and ask open-ended questions to build on top of what we are covering in class and relate topics to real-world applications.

Packback Requirements:
Your participation on Packback will count toward 20% of your overall course grade.

There will be 8 total discussions that will require participation with a Wednesday at 11:59PM EST deadline for submissions. Each of these discussions will be worth 20 points. In order to receive full credit, you should submit the following per each deadline period:

- 1 open-ended Question every week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 80, worth 8pts of each assignment grade
- 4 Responses every week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 60, worth 12 pts of each assignment grade (3 pts each)
- Half credit will be provided for questions and responses that do not meet the minimum curiosity score.

Written Assignments

Packback Deep Dives, a Packback Questions-based submission platform, will be used to assess independent research skills and improve academic communication through long-form writing assignments. While completing the summative writing prompts on Deep Dives, you will interact with an AI-based Research Assistant that will help you gather your notes and cite your sources, and Digital Writing Assistant for in-the-moment feedback and guidance on your writing.

As the ultimate goal of the course is to design an evaluation research proposal, we will focus on developing this throughout the semester. The Deep Dive assignments will focus on key aspects of a research proposal. Each assignment will be worth 50 points. When assignments are released, you will receive both instructions for the assignment, as well as a rubric to help guide you through it. **Each assignment will be due no later than 11:59 PM on Sunday evenings** (see *Life Happens Pass and Late Work* section below).

How to Register on Packback:

An email invitation will be sent to you from help@packback.co prompting you to finish registration. If you don't receive an email (be sure to check your spam), you may register by following the instructions below:
1. Create an account by navigating to https://app.packback.co and clicking "Sign up for an Account"
   Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can log in with your credentials.
2. Then enter our class community's lookup key into the "Looking to join a community you don't see here?" section in Packback at the bottom of the homepage.
   Community Lookup Key: **b22f048b-cb5e-423b-ad28-1a47f9e4a509**
3. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

Packback will require a paid subscription. Refer to www.packback.co/product/pricing for more information.

How to Get Help from the Packback Team:

If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please read their FAQ at help.packback.co. If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at help@packback.co.

For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this [video](#).

Exams

There will be two exams in the course. These will take place on Blackboard, they will be open book, and they will consist of 5 essay questions. The exams will be worth 50 points, with each question being worth 10 points each.

You will get a study guide to guide your preparation for the exam, as these will be timed. Study guides will be released the week before an exam. Exam 1 will be added to the Blackboard website the week of the exam. You may take the exam at any time during the week it is released, but you will only be given one 90-minute attempt. Exam 2 will be released during the reading days. You may

take this exam at any time during exam week and will similarly have one 90-minute attempt to complete the exam.

If there is any sort of mishap with your exam, please email me immediately and we will work to resolve the issue. Please note in my communication policy that it may take me a bit to get back to you. Be sure to communicate your issue with me and I will work with you to submit your exam.

Group Research Proposal Project

As loathsome as group projects are, the reality of the evaluation world is that you will likely be working with a team of like-minded colleagues to design, implement, manage, and evaluate a social program. The steps of the written assignments will assist with developing this proposal, but the final presentation will include additional details not addressed in those assignments. More in-depth instructions, as well as a grading rubric, will be made available later this semester. The group project is worth 15% of your grade.

Life Happens Pass

Life happens regardless of our plans. To recognize this, you will be granted one "Life Happens" pass in which you will be able to submit an assignment or sit for an exam up to two weeks after they are due without any questions asked. Please send me an email with the subject line "Life Happens," and have the body only consist of the assignment or exam in question, and we will work out a plan together on how to get your work submitted.

I have the Life Happens pass to allow for things that are completely out of your control, but you are responsible for keeping track of the work that is *not* part of your Life Happens pass.

Late Work & Make-Up Exams

Weekly assignments will have a late penalty of a point per day. Make-up exams will only be given for documented cases, and the instructor reserves the right to give a make-up exam in a different format from the exam that is released on Blackboard. **Make-ups for Exam 2 must be completed no later than December 13, 2023**.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is often a word that gets tossed around at universities, but often goes undefined until someone gets themselves in some trouble for something they didn't even know that they did wrong. "Plagiarism is defined as using another individual's ideas or words without attribution or credit" (Office of Academic Integrity, George Mason University). What does this mean? Using work that is not your original idea or words is a big-time academic crime.

The penalties for plagiarism CAN BE severe, including up to university expulsion. However, I have found in the past if Grammarly or any other similar program detects plagiarism, it is generally a misunderstanding of the rules of plagiarism. That's okay, but we do want to make sure that you understand going forward and get it tidied up before a final draft of whatever you're working on. I will generally ask that you meet with me if I identify potentially problematic text in your work and then will ask that you resubmit the assignment within 24 hours after the issue has been resolved. I

will be more than happy to help you in these instances to ensure that your academic integrity is not challenged. **However, if you choose to ignore my request to meet after I have noted that your work may contain plagiarism, your grade will be a 0, and I will write about the offense to the chair of the CLS Department.**

For additional information on plagiarism, please visit the Purdue Online Writing Lab for more information on plagiarism, or ask to meet with me if you have any further questions.

With recent discussions related to AI-generated text, please note that if you are caught submitting assignments that are generated through ChatGPT or a similar generator, you will receive a 0, and I will make a referral to the Office of Academic Integrity.

University Policies

University Honor Code

>The Honor Code Pledge reads as follows:

>**To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.**

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task without outside assistance. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Some kinds of participation in online study sites violate the Mason Honor code: these include accessing exam or quiz questions for this class; accessing exam, quiz, or assignment answers for this class; uploading of any of the instructor's materials or exams; and uploading any of your own answers or finished work. What this means is it is okay to make flash cards for yourself but uploading my exam questions and their answers to a public forum is not. Always consult your syllabus and your professor before using these sites.

Disability Accommodations

Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me.

Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500.
Email: ods@gmu.edu
Phone: (703) 993-2474

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual or Interpersonal Misconduct

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Non-Confidential Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-993-3686 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

Additional Useful Offices

LBGTQ+ Resources	Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC)
University Career Services	Counseling and Psychological Services
University Writing Center	The Learning Services Office or field-specific tutoring
Student Support Resources on Campus	The Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment

CRIM 516 Fall 2023 Course Schedule

Week (Mon-Sun Dates)	Readings	Assignments Due	In-Class Discussion
Module 1: Introduction to Evaluation			
Week 1 (8/21 – 8/27)			- Syllabus & Introductions - Packback Introduction - Review of Key Terms - Introduction Activity
Week 2 (8/28 – 9/3)	Ch. 1 & 2 – Rossi et al Ch. 1 – Pawson & Tilley Justice Today Podcast – Interview with NIJ Director Nancy La Vigne	Online Discussion 1: Initial thoughts on policy evaluation – **Due 8/30 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- Module Readings - Funding Evaluation Projects - "Requests for Proposals" - Introduction to Subject Matter Librarian
Module 2: Foundations of Evaluation			
Week 3 (9/4 – 9/10)	Ch. 3 & 4 – Rossi et al	Online Discussion 2: Comparing and contrasting evaluation approaches – **Due 9/6 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- Module Readings - Ethical Considerations for Social Research - Ethics Activity
Module 3: Realistic Evaluation Frameworks			
Week 4 (9/11 – 9/17)	Ch. 2 & 3 – Pawson & Tilley Logic Model Reading	Online Discussion 3: Key components of the realistic evaluation framework – **Due 9/13 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK** **Consider evaluation proposal topics*	- Module Readings - Logic Models - Outcomes

Week (Mon-Sun Dates)	Readings	Assignments Due	In-Class Discussion
Module 4: Research Design for Policy Evaluation			
Week 5 (9/18 – 9/24)	Ch. 5 & 6 – Rossi et al	Written Assignment 1: Research Questions and Hypotheses – **Due 9/20 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- One-on-one meetings with Dr. F to discuss proposal topics
Week 6 (9/25 – 10/1)	Weitzer & Tuch (2005) Weisburd et al (2006)	Online Discussion 4: Research Question/Hypothesis Peer Review – **Due 9/27 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK** Develop 2 interview questions & 2 focus group questions to bring to class	- Qualitative Research - Qualitative Data Collection & Analysis - Interview/Focus Groups Activity
Module 5: Data Collection & Analysis in Policy Evaluation			
Week 7 (10/2 – 10/8)	Ch. 7 & 8 – Rossi et al ****Exam 1 Study Guide released**	Online Discussion 5: Strengths and limitations of data collection methods – **Due 10/4 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- Module Readings - Data Collection Strategies - Exam 1 Q&A
Week 8 (10/9 – 10/15)	Engel et al (2020); Wilkes et al (2021); Rossman & Wilson (1985)	****Exam 1 – Due 10/15 by 11:59 PM on BLACKBOARD**	- Article Readings - Randomized Controlled Trials - Quasi-Experimental Designs - Mixed Methods Designs

Week (Mon-Sun Dates)	Readings	Assignments Due	In-Class Discussion
Module 6: Implementation Challenges & Contextual Factors			
Week 9 (10/16 – 10/22)	Ch. 4 & 5 – Pawson & Tilley	Written Assignment 2: How context influences outcomes – **Due 10/18 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- Module Readings - Implementation Challenges Activity
Week 10 (10/23 – 10/29)	Merton (1935) Key Factors for Budgeting Budgeting Checklist	Online Discussion 6: Overcoming Implementation Challenges – **Due 10/25 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- Implementation Challenges - Project Budgets - Project Timelines - Review Logic Models
Module 7: Building a Research Proposal			
Week 11 (10/30 – 11/5)	Readings TBD ****Exam 2 Study Guide released**	Written Assignment 3: Proposal Draft (without measurement and analysis plan) – **Due 11/1 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- Variable Measurement - Evaluation Data Analysis - Conceptualization & Operationalization - Exam 2 Q&A
Week 12 (11/6 – 11/12)	Readings TBD	Online Discussion 7: Proposal Summary & Peer Review – **Due 11/8 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- Deliverables & Outputs - Group Selection & Presentation Roles

Week (Mon-Sun Dates)	Readings	Assignments Due	In-Class Discussion
Week 13 (11/13 – 11/19)		****Exam 2 – Due 11/19 by 11:59 PM on BLACKBOARD**	******NO CLASS ON 11/16*
NOTE: During Week 13, Dr. Fenimore will be attending the annual meeting for the American Society for Criminology in Philadelphia. She will be available electronically, but may be slower to respond			
***THANKSGIVING RECESS -** Enjoy your break!*			
Week 14 (11/27 – 12/3)		Online Discussion 8: Key takeaways from course – **Due 11/29 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	- Group Proposal Presentations
Reading Days: 12/4 – 12/5 *Final Exam Week: 12/6 – 12/13*			
Exam Week (12/4 – 12/13)		Written Assignment 4: Final draft of research proposal – **Due 12/10 by 11:59 PM on PACKBACK**	