Simon Fraser University
Political Science, Departments
PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION
(POL 359)
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Summer 2019
W, 9:30-13:20
AQ 5040

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Description and Schedule

Description

Objectives

Policy evaluation is a growing field that is garnering ever more interest. In theoretical terms, it is captured by calls for "good governance." In practical terms, it is reflected in calls for accountability, transparency, and responsiveness by government, corporations, and non-profits in terms of how they use scarce resources, how they learn to improve their performance, and how they measure outcomes.

This course is designed to give students who have a basic background in statistics practice in applying them to real life situations in a way that would serve them well as analysts in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The course is practical in orientation and gives background and practice in carrying out a basic policy and program evaluation. The course offers students both quantitative and qualitative skill development. You will be introduced to key planning and evaluation tools including GANTT planning charts, environmental impact assessment (EIA), results-based management (RMB), cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA). Quantitative exercises are based on learning to use Excel and SPSS for real life public policy statistical analysis. We add in a number of case studies to help students understand variable selection and interpretation. Students complete the course with their own evaluation using the tools learned that can then be used as a writing sample.

Required Books

Evan M. Berman and XiaoHu Wang, 2012. *Exercising Essential Statistics.* 3rd ed. Workbook only. LA: CQ Press. HA 29 B426 2012 **Available at the SFU bookstore and on reserve.**

Also on reserve, is this excellent introduction to excel: Xiaohu Wang, *Performance Analysis for public and nonprofit organizations.* Sudbury, Mass: Jones and Bartlett, 2010, HD 62.6 W36 2010
and the companion textbook to the workbook we are using, with more extended explanations.

Students will need to practice Excel and SPSS outside of the class laboratory, using SFU computer labs. I will walk them through basic instructions, but if they are new to the software, they should run through some of the readily available tutorials.

All other course materials are available on the class website on Canvas.

Assignments

The keys to success in any course for both the professor and student are thorough preparation and active participation. Students must not only attend every session, but also be prepared to participate in each meeting.

Students will be graded upon participation, homework, and writing assignments. Students will have multiple opportunities for interaction through discussion of the texts and homework assignments. Students will present the homework every week as part of that discussion.

Grading
The assignments will be graded proportionally as follows:
-participation and attendance, 10%
-quizzes, on reading material, Excel and SPSS-based exercises, 20%
-weekly homework assignments, 10%
-literature review and data set feasibility check, 10%
-Preliminary proposal and data runs, 15%
-10-15 page evaluation of an existing public policy or project, including whether it meets its objectives, strengths and weaknesses and how it could have been improved, fit for an expert audience, 20%
-Peer review of evaluation report, 5%
-Presentation of evaluation report, 10%

Assignments are due promptly at the beginning of class.

Office Hours
My office is in AQ6048. I am generally around M-F 9-3, but it's best to send an e-mail beforehand. I do not mind students dropping in without an appointment unless the issue requires significant time. I will gather a voluntary contact list for this purpose early in the class.

Schedule

The schedule is planned by weeks. Readings should be done prior to each class. **Assignments will be due at the beginning of the class.** Most HW is from the workbook. Give me the HW sheets from the workbook and print outs of any SPSS work you have done.

I. Introduction to Course, Why Evaluation (May 10)
-About the Professor, the students, and the course
-Ethical Standards, see http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?en:6:10
-Discussion of Project guidelines including final paper criteria and review of paper examples

II. Research Design (May 17)
Student example projects
Lecture: Research design options for public policy evaluation
-the reality of scarcity of appropriate statistics in public policy
-Correlation vs. causality
-The Project Cycle
-pre- and post-test design

-what do we mean by underperformance
-quasi-experimental design
-Results-based management
-meta evaluation
-Walkthrough: How to use Excel for basic statistical analysis and graphs, Berman workbook
Discussion and preliminary selection of projects
Exercises:

-Case 1: World Bank Impact Evaluation cases, c.2 (logical framework)
-Case 2: Results-based management example- from Global Affairs Canada
-Case 3: Examples of Research Design: Insite Meta-evaluation exercise

-Walkthrough: questions from c.s 1 & 2 of Berman and Wang to help students prepare for projects
Readings: Berman and Wang, c.s 1, 2, case study materials
Homework due: Students should conduct research on relevant literature, including existing project materials and evaluations related to their topic.

III. Conceptualization and Measurement, Gantt Charts for Planning (May 24)
Quiz 1- Research Design concepts
HW Review: Excel exercise, students present findings
Excel Practice Run 2, applied problem
Lecture: Variables and Indicators
-Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approaches?
-Categorical, Ordinal & Interval variables
-constructing internal checks
Case 4: Gantt Chart- explanation and Exercise for student project planning
Case 5: Examples of research and discussion of variable choices- Causal Design Exercise
Student research design exercise based on their project: Walkthrough of Berman and Wang c.s 3 & 4 problems as related to their project
Discussion of student projects- literature review and troubleshooting
Readings: Berman and Wang, c.s 3, 4
Homework due: **Excel-based homework exercise,** students complete literature review draft

IV. Data Collection (May 31)
Review of Quiz 1
Quiz 2: Using Excel to do basic analysis and graphic presentation
SPSS walkthrough, setting up a database, Berman and Wang, c. 20, 126-40, and univariate descriptive statistics
Homework review: Student presentations of their research design and basic variables
Lecture: Data Collection
-Developing sources of data: assessing reliability, validity
-Prepping stakeholders, ensuring objectivity
-Preparing a survey
-Appropriate Criteria, Baseline analysis
-Evaluating sources of data and how they can contribute

Case 6: Survey design exercise
Homework: **Student literature review and data set feasibility memo**

V. Central Tendency and Dispersion (June 7)
Lecture: Central Tendency
-size of population
-normal curve
-mean, median, mode, standard deviation
-boxplots
-frequency distributions
Walkthrough workbook problems from chapters 5-7
Case 7: Smart Policy and School Vouchers
Case 8: Program monitoring, Terrorism study
Students present and defend their data collection instruments
Readings: Berman and Wang, 5-7, case study materials
Homework due: students should begin preparing causal relationships memo and preparing data collection

VI. Contingency Tables and Chi Square (June 14)
Review of HW on univariate statistical analysis
Lecture:
-hypothesis testing- type I/II errors
-bivariate analysis
-Contingency tables
-correlations
-scatterplots
-chi square
SPSS Walkthrough, pp.151-2
Walkthrough workbook applications c.s 8-10
Discussion of data gathering efforts and obstacles
Readings: Berman and Wang, c. 8-10
Homework due: **SPSS-based HW, univariate exercise**, students continue gathering data

VII. T-Tests and ANOVA (June 21)
Quiz 3: Univariate statistical analysis
HW: Students present chi square exercise
Lecture:
-Comparing Pre and Post Test Performance Means
-Using Benchmark comparisons
-dependent vs. independent samples
-Comparing means and proportions for significance
-ANOVA
Walkthrough: c.20, 152-4

Walkthrough: workbook applications, T-tests, c.12
-comparing multiple samples through ANOVA
Walkthrough on ANOVA workbook applications c.13
Walkthrough: regression, c.s 14-15, selected problems
Case 9: Higher education monitoring exercise
Peer Evaluation Pairings and Instructions
Readings: Berman and Wang c.12-15
Homework due: **SPSS-based contingency tables/correlations & Chi Square exercise,** students begin analyzing project data

VIII. Regression (June 28)
Review Quiz 3
Review HW on T-tests
What do we mean by modeling?
-When is regression appropriate?
-Using linear regression to understand policy problems
-Walkthrough Regression C.14, problems from that chapter
Case 10: Regression (mis)usage examples
Presentation of Student preliminary data analyses
Readings: Berman and Wang, c. 14, regression cases
Homework due: **T-test exercise**, **Preliminary Proposal memo, bring 2 copies, 1 for me and 1 for a peer**

IX. Evaluating the Results and Presenting Findings in a Final Report; Preliminary Data Analysis Review (July 5)
Quiz 4- Chi Square, Correlations & T-tests
Lecture:
-Types of Reports
-Know your audiences
-Presentation of findings
-Case 11: BC Wine industry report will be sent

X. Cost-Benefit Analysis, Environmental Impact Analysis and Participatory Evaluation (July 12)
Review Quiz 4
Lecture: CBAs, EIAs, and Participatory Evaluation, including Rapid Rural Appraisal
Exercises: CBA, EIA
Case 12: CBA
Case 13: EIA- BC's Site C Dam
Case 14: Participatory Evaluation
Readings: Hira, case study materials
Homework: Complete rough draft of report

XI. Student Presentations Round 1(July 19)

XII. Student Presentations Round 2 (July 26)
Homework due: **Final report**

XIII. Guest Speaker (Aug. 2)
Discussion and feedback on final reports
Guest speaker from public sector on evaluation practices

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER:

Plagiarism involves using another author's words without attribution or otherwise presenting another person's work as one's own. It is a fraudulent and serious academic offence that will result in a severe academic penalty. Also, close paraphrasing of another author's work & self-plagiarism, including submitting the same, or substantively the same, work for academic evaluation more than once, are unacceptable practices that will result in a severe academic penalty.

The university policies on academic honesty are available at:
http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student.html

The Department of Political Science's interpretation of this policy can be found at:
http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/politics/undergraduate%20docs/PLAGIARISM%20Policy%20-%20%20Pol%20Dept.%20Jan.pdf, and is available in hard copy format outside our General Office. All students are responsible for familiarising themselves with these policies.

A helpful SFU Library tutorial on plagiarism is at
http://www.lib.sfu.ca/researchhelp/tutorials/interactive/plagiarism/tutorial/introduction.htm

The DOs and DON'Ts of AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Do not:

- submit an entire paper or part(s) of a paper or papers that has been written or researched by any other person(s);
- submit a paper as an assignment that has been bought from another person or from a 'paper mill' or essay service;
- submit a paper or other written assignment that has been submitted at another time or for a different course by yourself or any other student or former student;
- submit material that has been downloaded from a website, without acknowledging (using appropriate citation style) that you have done so;
- take someone else's idea(s) and represent it/them as your own;
- copy any text verbatim, or with only slight variation from the original text, without using quotation marks and documenting the source with proper citation style;
- do not closely paraphrase another's material; either paraphrase completely in your own words, or cite as a direct quotation using quotation marks (in either case, give full credit and details regarding authorship and location of the original material);

Do:

- learn how to cite material properly (there are many good guides on this, including the departmental one);
- use a recognized citation style (eg. APA, MLA, Chicago), according to instructions given by the course instructor, and be consistent in the use of the style throughout any single piece of written work;
- carefully read and make sure you understand the university's policy on academic honesty;
- ask the instructor of this course or other faculty members if you have any questions about plagiarism.