

EDPL 621
Policy/Program Evaluation and Organizational Improvement
Fall, 2005

Instructor: Betty Malen, 2110 Benjamin Building

Time and Place: Tuesday, 4:15-7:00; Room 2102 Benjamin Building

Consultations: Call 301-405-3587; email malen@wam.umd.edu

General Description: This course examines (a) alternative perspectives on the purposes, parameters, forms and uses (or misuses) of policy/program evaluations; (b) alternative methods of acquiring, interpreting and communicating information throughout the evaluation process; and (c) various substantive, political and ethical issues embedded in efforts to conduct thoughtful, "disciplined" evaluations. The course considers what different approaches to policy/program evaluation might conceal as well as reveal, how evaluators might enhance the quality and utility of their work and how evaluation rituals and results may be used (or misused) to influence judgments about the worth of education policies/programs. It also provides opportunities for students to conduct a small-scale evaluation of a policy/program of special interest to them, to evaluate evaluations of prominent policies/programs of interest to them and to develop ideas that may be incorporated in their masters seminar papers and/or doctoral dissertations.

Major Objectives: This course seeks to help students:

a) develop an understanding of the justifications for and limitations of policy/program evaluation as a means of informing individual judgments and/or collective decisions about alternative courses of action,

b) develop an understanding of different approaches to evaluation and different ways of addressing the knotty issues embedded in efforts to systematically examine/assess the aims, operations and effects of education policies/programs,

c) identify, inspect and assess the types of arguments offered and the basis of claims made about policy/program alternatives,

d) work through the complicated, often controversial issues and trade-offs involved in constructing and conducting "disciplined" policy/program evaluations,

e) develop an awareness of the many ways policy/program evaluations can be used (and abused) at any/all levels of the education policy system.

Course Content and Approach: The course content is summarized on the attached outline and will be addressed through readings, presentations, discussions, written assignments and small group exchanges. The reading load is eased from mid-term on, to provide more time for students to wrestle with issues raised in readings and confronted in "designing" or "doing" evaluations.

* Developed in consultation with Pat Galvin (University of Utah), Jerome Murphy (Harvard University), and Stephanie Shea (University of Washington).

Course Requirements:

1. **Reading Assignments.** Each student is responsible for all assigned readings. Required readings include a book entitled Evaluation (second edition), by Carol Weiss and other materials available on line (university library reserve) and in print (from the instructor). The readings include classic and contemporary writings on approaches to evaluation as well as sample evaluations. These materials should help students develop an appreciation for the complexity of the enterprise and acquire a foundational understanding of the field. The readings may be adjusted as the instructor gets a clearer understanding of students' backgrounds and interests. Students are encouraged to bring in readings of special interest to them.

2. **Class Participation.** Each student is expected to make contributions to the issues being addressed in class sessions through questions, critiques, illustrations, suggestions, presentations and comments that add to the quality and clarity of the class discourse.

3. **Major Project.** Since students learn in different ways, the major course project can take the form of (a) an actual policy/program evaluation or (b) a set of related papers that require students to grapple with major issues embedded in designing, conducting and appraising evaluations.

Option A: Policy/program Evaluation. Students may elect to develop a written evaluation of a policy/program. This paper will be developed in installments that are submitted to the instructor for feedback throughout the semester. Where appropriate, installments may be reviewed by students and/or stakeholders. In brief, the five installments will focus on a description of the policy/program to be examined, the design of the evaluation to be conducted, the report of major findings, the implications of the findings for organizational decisionmaking and an evaluation of the evaluation that was carried out. A synopsis of each installment is provided on the "Program/policy Evaluation" attachment. More detailed instructions for each installment will be provided in class sessions.

Option B: Set of three related papers on Alternative Approaches to Evaluation, Standards for Evaluating Evaluations, and Individualized Applications. Students may elect to develop a set of papers that address (a) the range of evaluation options that they can draw upon to frame their work, (b) the criteria that they will employ to determine the "value" of evaluations they might produce or consumer, and (c) the implications of select class concepts/understandings for advancing their own research agendas. The first two papers are described more fully on the "Option B" attachment. Since the third paper must be tailored to each student's program of study, the focus and parameters of the third paper will be developed through individual conferences with the instructor.

Course Grades: The course grades will be based on assessments of class participation (20% of course grade) and written assignments (80% of course grade).

Class participation grades will be based on the ability to make informed and insightful contributions to the topic/issues being addressed. Criteria relate to the quality (versus the number)

of comments made.

Written assignments will be graded on substance and style. Option A Paper grades will be based on the ability to articulate the logic that links the major purposes and central questions of the evaluation with the data acquired, the methods employed, the findings reported and the conclusions drawn; the ability to explicate the basis of judgments, to develop cogent lines of argument, and to keep the content and confidence of the claims commensurate with the nature of the data and the limits of the design. Option B Paper grades are based on the ability to frame ideas in a cogent manner, to develop well-reasoned lines of argument, to ground the papers in relevant literatures, to make nuanced claims, and to build a convincing case for the positions taken in the papers. All paper grades will reflect the ability to express ideas clearly and to use language appropriately. Rewrites are permitted; in some cases, rewrites may be required.

If students have questions or concerns about the grades they receive, they should speak with the instructor. Per university policy, students may also appeal grades. The procedures for doing so are contained in the graduate studies handbook. The department has an academic appeal's committee that students may contact for information and assistance.

Academic Integrity: Students are to abide by the university's code of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty, including fabrication and plagiarism will be reported to the Student Honor Council. The text of the honor code is on the web, www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/jpo/codeacinteg.html.

Disability-based Accommodations: Any class member who has a documented disability and wishes to discuss academic accommodations should contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Religious Observances: Students will not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs. Whenever possible, students will be given reasonable time to make up any academic assignment that is missed due to participation in a religious observance. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances.

Invitations/Suggestions:

a) Conversations and conferences re: the written assignments or other matters can be initiated at any time during the term.

b) In preparing for class, try to (i) "map" the readings, to make notes regarding the purpose, thesis, major lines of arguments and quality of evidence used to develop the ideas; (ii) "step back" and ask what the readings say about the session topics identified on the syllabus and then (iii) "step back" again and ask how the readings relate to the course aims (e.g., what they say about the nature of policy evaluation and its role in organizational decisionmaking). Following each class, students are encouraged to re-read or otherwise review the articles or chapters to clarify ideas, "clinch" insights, generate additional questions, etc. As the course calendar indicates, "mapping" or revisiting readings is part of the "homework" for some sessions. If talking about the readings with others helps, consider forming an "in person" or "by phone or email" study group. These strategies may not work for everyone since people learn in different ways. Try them; see

what works for you.

c) In developing the written assignments, consider the following process: keep a record of ideas/insights/issues; put the ideas in outline form (sentence outline if possible, but a phrase outline can also be helpful): talk through the ideas with another person; write a draft; interrogate your script; share a draft and invite candid reaction; weigh the feedback; rewrite.

Course Qualifiers: The course addresses a complex, contested terrain. The topics illustrate but they do not exhaust the full range of issues that could (arguably should) be examined. The topics included are complicated and controversial; they warrant more attention than can be given in a semester course. Therefore, students should view this course as a "tip of the iceberg" as opposed to a complete view of policy/program evaluation.

Course Outline and Proposed Calendar

9/6/05 Introduction to Course

Overview of Alternative Conceptions of Evaluation Development of "Boundary Definitions"

This session addresses the particulars of the course (e.g., its focus, emphasis, requirements), introduces a range of views regarding policy analysis/evaluation and its role in collective decisionmaking in governmental and organizational arenas and develops boundary or working definitions of key terms and concepts. Since a course on evaluation begs many questions, this session invites students to consider such basic questions as:

What's policy/program evaluation? How are evaluations carried out?

Why bother? If rational decisionmaking in organizations is more myth than reality, is it not foolhardy to try to examine, systematically and empirically, alternative courses of action, to formulate and explicate well-reasoned, well-evidenced, carefully measured judgments about the merit or worth of alternative courses of action?

Since policy choices are value-laden decisions, is it necessary or appropriate to draw upon research to work through these normative matters?

Since research is inevitably inconclusive, often contradictory, easily misconstrued and intermittently, if not frequently misused, is it prudent for policy makers and educational leaders to conduct (or consume) policy evaluations? Put differently, is systematically acquired evidence on aims, operations and affects a stronger basis for making public policy decisions than casual appraisals, anecdotal testimonials, personal preferences, individual experiences or prominent sentiments?

9/13/05 Overview of Alternative Conceptions of Evaluation Implications for the Design/Conduct of Evaluations

This session revisits questions posed in the first class. Since each reading provides a

different, albeit not necessarily incompatible set of responses to these (and other) questions, the session will develop a matrix of diverse views, then derive implications for the design of policy evaluations. For example, we will consider how the readings address the following types of questions:

Is evaluation an ongoing process? a summative document? a mechanism for managing dilemmas and uncertainties? a mechanism for solving problems? discovering problems? testing hypotheses? forging consensus? fueling conflicts? clarifying issues? obscuring issues?

What is to be evaluated? by whom? how? with whom is the evaluation to be shared? how are evaluations to be used? what questions (or whose questions) will be addressed? why?
how?

In preparing for class, students should "map" each reading along the dimensions adapted from Pat Galvin's program evaluation syllabus and noted below. This exercise should reveal how various "models" of evaluation address some of the common issues/critical choices one makes as one selects (or combines) approaches to evaluation. This exercise should also demonstrate that decisions about what to evaluate, when and how are not clear-cut, neutral choices. Decisions about "models" and methods direct attention to some aspects of policies/programs and neglect others. They have multiple consequences that affect the integrity, quality, and utility of the evaluation. For these and other reasons, it is important to understand how different models and methods shape the questions asked, the data sought and the interpretations offered.

Matrix for Mapping Evaluation "Models"

Definition of policy/program evaluation employed/implied
Purpose of policy/program evaluation (e.g., describe operations; "improve" existing programs; assess options; critique aims as well as means)
Foci of evaluation (e.g., unit of analysis, key questions, criteria for judgments)
Audience for whom evaluation is prepared (e.g., organizational members, program participants, government officials, other stakeholders, broad publics)
Roles assumed (e.g., by evaluator, sponsor, participants, constituents, broad publics)
Methods employed (e.g., types of information sought, procedures to secure/analyze information; degree to which methods can be adjusted as evaluation proceeds)
Resources
required (e.g., time, money, expertise)
Uses advocated/implied (e.g., how is "use" defined? gauged?)
Values emphasized (or neglected)
Assumptions made (e.g., about the nature of policy/program, the role of "research" as a basis for improving social services, the interplay of "facts" and "values" in social policy research; the relationship of "rational" analysis and political processes)
Questions raised (e.g., what do you think about what is said?)

Required Readings (continued on next page):

Fitzpatrick, Jody L., Sanders, James R., & Worthen, Blaine, R. (2004). Comparative analysis of characteristics of alternative evaluation approaches," in Authors, Program evaluation, Third edition, pp. 159-162. Boston: Pearson.

Nevo, David. (1986). The conceptualization of educational evaluation, in Ernest R. House (Ed.) New directions in educational evaluation, 15-29. London: Falmer Press.

Weiss, Carol H. (1998). "Setting the scene," "Purposes of evaluation," "Understanding the program," "Planning the evaluations, and "Roles for the evaluator" in Author, Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies, 2nd edition, pp. 1-113. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Scriven, Michael (1983). "Evaluation ideologies," pp. 229-260, in G. Madaus, et.al. Evaluation models. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff.

Patton, Michael Quinn (2000). Utilization-focused evaluation, in Daniel L. Stufflebeam, George F. Madaus & Thomas Kellaghan (Eds.) Evaluation models: Viewpoints on educational and human services evaluation, pp. 425-438. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Patton, Michael Q. (1986). "Focusing evaluation questions," pp. 61-82, in author, Utilization-focused Evaluation. Beverley Hills: Sage.

Malen, Betty (1988). "Review: Utilization-focused evaluation by Michael Quinn Patton," Journal of Education Finance, 13, 512-519.

Sebring, Penny A. & Bryk, Anthony S. (1993). "Charting reform in Chicago schools: Pluralistic policy research," New Directions for Program Evaluation, 13-28.

9/20/05 Overview of Alternative Approaches, Continued

This session continues the analysis of alternative approaches to evaluation and illustrates some of the major contests that surround the evaluation enterprise.

Required Readings (continued on next page):

Weiss, Carol H. (1991). Evaluation in the political context: Sixteen years and four administrations later, in Milbrey McLaughlin & Dennis C. Phillips (Eds.) Evaluation and education at quarter century. NSSE Yearbook, 211-232. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Fetterman, David M. (2000). Steps of empowerment evaluation: From California to Cape Town, in Daniel L. Stufflebeam, George F. Madaus & Thomas Kellaghan (Eds.) Evaluation models: Viewpoints on educational and human services evaluation, 395- 408.
Boston: Kluwer Academic

Rein, Martin (1976). "Policy analysis: A personal approach" (pp. 19-36); "The fact-

value dilemma" (pp. 37-95), and "Values, social science and social policy," (pp. 96-135) from Rein's classic Social Science and Public Policy. New York: Penguin.

One of the two Sirotnik pieces and one of the two House pieces:

Sirotnik, Kenneth A. & Oakes, Jeannie (1990, Spring). "Evaluation as critical inquiry: School improvement as a case in point," New Directions for Program Evaluation, 37-59.

Sirotnik, Kenneth A. (1987). Evaluation in the ecology of schooling, in John I. Goodlad (Ed.), The ecology of school renewal, Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 41-60. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

House, Ernest R. (1990). "Methodology and justice," New Directions for Program Evaluation, 45, 23-36.

House, Ernest R. (1991). Evaluation and social justice: Where are we? in Milbrey McLaughlin & D. C. Phillips (Eds.) Evaluation and education at quarter century. NSSE Yearbook, 233-247. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

9/27/05 A Closer Look: Goal-Oriented, Theory-based Evaluations

This class continues the conversation about alternative approaches to policy and program evaluation by focusing on an increasingly popular and potentially powerful approach termed "theory-based" evaluations. In preparation for this session, students should "map" this approach to evaluation along the dimensions noted in previous sessions and be prepared to articulate the "theory of action" embedded in the policy/program they are evaluating or in a policy/program of special interest.

Required Readings (continued on next page):

Fitzpatrick, Jody L., Sanders, James R., & Worthen, Blaine, R. (2004). "Objectives-oriented evaluation approach," in Authors, Program evaluation, 71-87. Boston: Pearson.

Scriven, Michael (1973). Goal-free evaluation, in Ernest House (Ed.), School evaluation: The politics and process, pp. 319-328. Berkeley, McCutchan.

Murphy, Jerome (1980). Getting the facts.

Weiss, Carol H. (1995). "Nothing as practical as good theory: Exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families," in J.P. Connell, A.C. Kubisch, L.B. Schorr & C. H. Weiss, (Eds.) New approaches to evaluating community initiatives, pp. 65-92. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute.

Review Weiss, "How the program works" section in text, pp. 55-71.

Malen, Betty, Croninger, Robert, Muncey, Donna & Jones, Donna Redmond (2002).

"Reconstituting schools: Testing the theory of action," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24 (2), 113-132.

Bryk, A. S. et al. (1993) A view from the elementary schools: The state of reform in Chicago, A Report of the Steering Committee Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Malen, B. (1994). Enhancing the information base on Chicago school reform: A commentary on the consortia's "Governance Streams" of research.

Commentary on Charting reform: Chicago teachers take stock, pp.68-71. University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Recommended Readings:

Turner, Bridget (2001). Women's racial identity development: College student perceptions of an antiracism intervention. (Available from instructor).

10/4/05 A Closer Look: Cost-based designs

Tammy Kolbe, Research Associate, AERA-IES Post Doc, Guest Discussant

This class extends the analysis of alternative approaches to policy and program evaluation by focusing on a long-standing and broadly endorsed tradition of cost-based analyses. We will look at different types of cost analyses and discuss key conceptual and methodological issues involved in carrying out various types of cost studies. In preparation for this session, students should "map" this approach to evaluation along the dimensions noted in previous sessions and be prepared to talk about the various costs associated with policies/programs they are evaluating.

Required Readings:

Rice, Jennifer K. (1997). "Cost analysis in education: Paradox and possibility," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 19, (4), 309-317.

Hummel-Rossi, Barbara & Ashdown, Jane (2002). "The state of cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses in education," Review of Educational Research, 72, (1), 1-30.

King, Jennifer A. (1994). "Meeting the educational needs of at-risk students: A cost analysis of three models," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 16, 1-19. (An example of a comparative cost analysis, a requisite to a cost-benefit or cost effectiveness assessment).

Rice, Jennifer King & Malen, Betty (2003), "The human cost of education reform: The case of school reconstitution," Educational Administration Quarterly, 39 (5), 635-666.

10/11/05 Developing the Evaluation Design: Recognizing and Coping with Multiple Sources of Bias and Error

This session concentrates on recognizing the numerous sources of bias and error inherent in research generally and evaluation particularly, understanding their consequences for the quality and integrity of an evaluation, and identifying ways one might address these matters. The session

includes opportunities for students to detect "sources of bias and error" in evaluation designs and to generate ideas for how those matters might be attended. (Readings on next page.)

Required Readings:

Shulman, L. (2005). Seek simplicity...and distrust it, Education Week, June 8, 2005 (to be distributed).

Piven, Francis Fox (2004). The politics of policy science, in I. Shapiro, R. M. Smith & T.E. Masoud (Eds.), Problems and methods in the study of politics, 83-105. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Weiss, Carol H. (1998). "Developing measures-Evaluating with integrity," in Author, Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies, 2nd edition, pp. 114-326. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Patton, Michael Quinn (1990). "Critical trade-offs in evaluation design," in author, Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods, second edition, pp. 162-186.

Campbell, Donald T. (1972). "Reforms as experiments," in Amitai Etzioni & Carol H. Weiss, Evaluating Action Programs. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Concentrate on pp. 187-192;217-220.

Katzer, Jeffrey, Cook, Kenneth H., & Crouch, Wayne W. (1998). "Control: Rival explanation...is something else at work?" pp. 130-145, in Authors, Evaluating Information, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Chatterji, Madhabi (2004). "Evidence on `what works': An argument for extended-term, mixed-method (ETMM) evaluation designs, Educational Researcher, 33, (9), 3-13.

Recommended Readings:

Patton, Michael Q. (1990). "The content of interviews," pp. 290-330, in author, Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods. Second Edition. Newbury Park: Sage.

Review Murphy, J. T. (1980). "Coping with bias and error," pp. 57-72, "Intensive interviewing," and "Transient observation and document analysis," pp, 75-107; 111-128, in author, Getting the facts. Santa Monica: Goodyear.

10/18/05 Revisiting Design Issues

The Work Life of Professional Evaluators

Molly Hershey-Arista, Jeanine Hildreth & Kirk Walters, Guests

This session uses writings on the evaluation of cultural programs as a window for reexamining the substantive dilemmas embedded in developing robust evaluation designs. The session also draws on the insights of "early-career" policy analysts/evaluators to illustrate what "designing and doing evaluations" as an employee of a research organization might entail.

Required Readings (continued on next page):

Finkelstein, Barbara (2000). "The dilemmas of cultural education program evaluation," and "Evaluating cultural education programs," and "Evaluating cultural education leadership," in Author, Cultural Evaluation. Washington, DC: Eric Clearinghouse-Evaluation/Assessment

Rudner, Lawrence M. (2000). "Dilemmas of cultural education assessment," in book noted above.

Recommended Readings:

Heineman, R. A., Bluhm, W. T., Peterson, S. A., & Kearny, E. N. (1997). The world of the policy analyst: Rationality, values & politics, second edition. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, Inc.

Rich, A. (2004). Think tanks, public policy, and the politics of expertise. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, J. A. (1991). The idea brokers. New York: The Free Press.

Abelson, D. E. (2002). Do think tanks matter? Assessing the impact of public policy institutes. Montreal, CA: McGill-Queens University Press.

10/25/05 Evaluating Evaluations

This session examines standards for appraising research, including evaluation research and examines evaluations that incorporate (or combine) different models of evaluation and different approaches to research. The aim is to identify the approaches taken, inspect the care with which they are applied and critique evaluations in light of explicit standards of "disciplined" inquiry and in light of the logic and the limitations of the designs. **Other readings may be used or substituted, depending on student interests and backgrounds.**

Required Readings (continued on next page):

Warwick, Donald P. & Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1983). Toward ethical guidelines for social science research in public policy, in Daniel Callahan & Bruce Jennings (Eds.), Ethics, social sciences and policy analysis, 335-368. New York: Plenum Press.

Stufflebeam, Daniel L. (2000). Professional standards and principles for evaluation, in Daniel L. Stufflebeam, George F. Madaus & Thomas Kellaghan (Eds.) Evaluation models: Viewpoints on educational and human services evaluation, 339-455. Boston: Kluwer Academic Press.

National Research Council (2002). "Guiding principles for scientific inquiry," in Scientific research in education, edited by Richard Shavelson & Lisa Towne, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, pp. 50-79.

Haller, Emil J. & Kleine, Paul F. (2001). "Evaluating research" in Authors, Using

educational research, New York: Longman. pp. 83-112.

Odden, Allan & Archibald, Sarah (2000, March). A Case Study of Resource Allocation to Reduce Class Size, Enhance Teacher Planning Time and Strengthen Literacy: Clayton Elementary School. Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

Roderick, Melissa, Nagaoka, Jenny, & Allensworth, Elaine (2005). Is the glass half full or mostly empty? Ending social promotion in Chicago, in Joan Herman & Edward H. Haertel (Eds.) Uses and misuses of data for educational accountability and improvement, pp. 223-259. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Booher-Jennings, Jennifer (2005). "Below the bubble: `Educational triage and the Texas accountability system,'" American Educational Research Journal, 42 (2), 231-268.

Roy, Joydeep & Mishel, Lawrence. (Downloaded, 2005). Advantage none: re-examining Hoxby's finding of charter school benefits. Briefing paper. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute. <http://epinet.org>.

11/08/05 No Class, Award Lecture.

11/15/05 Presenting "in progress" Work: Securing Collegial Reviews

1/22/05 Presenting "in progress" Work: Securing Collegial Reviews

Students will have the opportunity to share their work and secure feedback from class members. The format of these sessions will be developed with students.

**11/29/05 Revisiting the Search for Reasoned Arguments in Political Contests
Guest Presenters/Discussants to be confirmed.**

This session reconsiders the multiple purposes/uses of policy evaluation, the ethical, "technical" and political complexities embedded in policy/program evaluation, the "educative" dimension of policy evaluation and the ways in which (or conditions under which) evaluation might inform/improve collective decisionmaking. It puts the focus on how we might use our understanding of evaluation to create and conduct studies that warrant attention and hold promise for improving decisions and actions in governmental settings and educational arenas. Hopefully we will be able to capitalize on the insights of guests whose leadership roles and related responsibilities require them to be initiators, gatekeepers, coordinators and/or consumers of evaluation research.

Required Readings:

Smith, Kevin (2005). "Data don't matter? Academic research and school choice," in Perspectives on Politics, 3 (2), 285-299.

Lindblom, Charles E. (1990). "Preface" and "Knowledge and social problems" in

Author, Inquiry and change: The troubled attempt to understand and shape society, vii-x, 1-13. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Floden, Robert E. & Weiner, Stephen S. (1978). "Rationality to ritual: The multiple roles of evaluation in governmental processes," Policy Sciences, 9, 9-18.

Weiss, Carol H. & Bucuvalas, M. J. (1980). "Truth tests and utility tests: Decision-makers' frames of reference for social science research," American Sociological Review, 45, (2), 302-313.

12/6/05 Improving Practice

This session continues the conversation launched in the previous session and invites students to crystallize their understanding of critical issues embedded in policy/program research and to identify ways that they might address those matters.

Readings: Review course readings, especially Warwick & Pettigrew. A treatise entitled "Who needs what social science research for policymaking" prepared by Charles Lindblom for an education policy seminar sponsored by the Rockefeller Institute in 1984 is available from the instructor and is highly recommended, but not required reading.

12/13/05 Appraising the Course - Highlighting Options for Further Study

This session "steps back" to assess the course, identify options for further study and arrange conferences, as needed, to complete required work. If students wish, this session can be held at my home in Annapolis. If any student would be inconvenienced by a "site switch," we will meet on campus, in our regular room.

Assignment Attachments

Option A: Policy/program Evaluation

Installment 1 Description of Policy (6-8 pp). Due 10/04/05

This installment identifies/describes the object of evaluation. Students are encouraged to select, in consultation with the instructor, a salient policy/program option, one they are curious about, can secure information about and can "evaluate" carefully, candidly and even-handedly.

This installment should include a description of the policy or program's stated aims, formal provisions and key components; a description of the organizational context in which the policy/program is being advocated or implemented; background information on current (or proposed) operations (e.g., participants, staff, resources, costs, reporting relationships); background information on the policy's evolution (e.g., how/when/why it was proposed/enacted/implemented; the impetus for it, the sentiments surrounding it); background information on key actors (e.g., individuals, organizations, agencies) that were/are actively involved in promoting or implementing (resisting or questioning) the policy and a general sketch of the information (e.g., documents, brochures, reports, "evaluations") presently available. Extant data can be helpful in describing aspects of the policy/program's purposes, provisions and operations, so start nosing around, start asking about the policy/program. This installment could also include your reasons for selecting this policy/program and your current impressions of/convictions about it.

The scope, format and detail of this installment will vary. A sensible, generic strategy is to just begin with a statement about the purpose of this section of the paper, give an overview of how you will describe the policy/program (e.g., the categories/headings that you will use), indicate the basis for your description (e.g., documents, casual observations, snippets of oral history, direct involvement, official documents and related readings) and then develop the description the best you can, given the information you have. Since this installment may be "sketchy" do not hesitate to acknowledge what you know (and don't know), what observations are loosely grounded (e.g., what is speculation, conjecture, surmise) and what observations are more firmly rooted and more confidently offered.

For ideas about how to "tame the tiger," consult sample policy evaluations and talk with others, including the professor. The description of alternative approaches to programs for "at-risk" students in the article by Jennifer King (Rice) may be especially helpful. It identifies dimensions along which educational programs can be described, then uses them to organize the description of three prominent programs.

Installment 2 "Design" of the Evaluation (7-10 pp) Due 10/25/05

This section articulates the approach you will use to evaluate the policy/program. It communicates the focus of the evaluation (aspects to be considered, questions to be addressed, criteria to be employed), the data sources/methods to be used to acquire/analyze evidence, the rationales for and the assumptions/limitations of the approach taken and the information secured.

Installment 3 Assessment of the Policy (15-20 pp) Due 11/29/05

This section reports and interprets the findings of the policy/program evaluation. It

"answers" the evaluation questions. It develops the lines of argument that support the judgments offered, acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of those judgments (given data considered, methods used, perspectives employed) and discusses the implications of the analysis.

Installment 4 Complete Policy Evaluation Due 12/13/05 (65% of course grade)

This installment puts all the pieces together in a cogent, credible written report. It includes an introduction to and overview of the entire paper, as well as revised, refined versions of all previous installments.

Installment 5 Addendum* (3-5 pp.) Due 12/13/05 (15% of course grade)

Adapted from Jerome Murphy's qualitative methods syllabus, this paper is, in essence, an evaluation of the evaluation. It should highlight what (if anything) you think has been learned (about the policy, about the process of doing policy evaluations, about the "utility" of the exercise), what you would do differently, or what you would do additionally--to be more confident of your judgments or to subject your conclusions to stronger scrutiny. The paper could "revisit" constraints, problems, dilemmas or insights encountered in "designing" the evaluation, acquiring/interpreting data, and developing an evaluation that might inform/improve decisionmaking (your own and/or the organizations). The paper should appraise the quality and the utility of the evaluation produced.

**Option B
Inter-related Papers**

Paper #1 Alternative Perspectives on Policy/program Evaluation (10-12 pages) Due 10/18/05 (25% of course grade)

This paper asks students to analyze different perspectives on or "models" of policy/program evaluation. At minimum, the paper should (a) provide an overview of the range of evaluation "models" that have been developed/advocated, (b) define, compare and contrast how different models address key aspects of evaluation research, and (c) discuss the relative strengths, limitations or trade-offs embedded in different approaches, the conditions under which some models of evaluation may be more or less appropriate, or the reasons you favor a particular orientation to evaluation. The introduction to the paper should include a clear statement of purpose and an overview of how ideas in the paper will unfold. In the body of the paper, students may wish to create a matrix so they can compare models on common dimensions of interest. However, the students may use the matrix only as an analytic tool, not as a substitute for a coherent narrative about the features, benefits and liabilities of different models. The closing section should summarize the major lines of argument offered. Students may wish to talk about how their understandings of evaluation research has been influenced by the various perspectives they have encountered, identify insights that an abbreviated but systematic consideration of alternative approaches can generate.

Paper #2 Critique of a Policy/program Evaluation (10-12 pages) Due 10/11/05 (part one) and

11/8/05 (complete review) (25% of course grade)

This paper requires students to select and critique a policy/program evaluation on a topic of interest to them. The evaluation may be reported in an article, a series of articles, a book, a dissertation and/or a technical report. On or before October 11, students should submit a copy of the evaluation they have selected for critique along with a one-page statement regarding why this evaluation warrants a careful review. On or before November 8, students should submit an essay review that includes (a) an introduction that specifies the purpose of the paper and provides an overview of how ideas will unfold; (b) a definition/discussion of the criteria that will be used to appraise the evaluation, (c) a section that uses those criteria to guide the evaluation of the evaluation, and (d) a "tie-up" that helps the reader see the point of the critique. Students should be sure to draw on course readings (or other independent readings) to ground their discussion of criteria. They should also provide reasons for the judgments they render and be explicit about the evidence that supports their assessments.

Paper #3 An Individualized Paper (15-20 pages, negotiable) Due 12/13/05. (30% of course grade)

This option permits students to propose a paper that would allow them to develop understandings and skills that they deem important at this time in their program. For example, students might wish to synthesize research on a particular policy or use course understandings to help frame future research or delve into some aspect of evaluation (or some particular approach to evaluation) in greater depth. Students are responsible for initiating a conversation about the purposes and parameters of this paper with the professor before November 15, 2005.