

PA 622: PROGRAM EVALUATION

University of Kentucky
Martin School of Public Policy and Administration
Spring 2015
Monday 6:30-9:00PM
Classroom: CB 231

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Office Hours: By appointment
Office: POT 429

This course teaches students how to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of public programs and policies. The focus will be on identifying and measuring the goals of a program, monitoring outcomes, and identifying causal effects from the program. Though quantitative methods are featured prominently in this course (and mastery of the material in PA 621 is assumed), it is not primarily a course on regression methods. Instead, we will focus on how to plan an evaluation to ensure that the results can be used to give sound advice to decision-makers.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this course, students should be well-prepared to do the following:

1. Identify theoretically important objectives of policies and public programs, devise valid measures of those objectives, and monitor performance by gathering relevant data
2. Recognize and articulate the strengths and weaknesses of causal arguments about policies and public programs
3. Estimate causal effects of programs using qualitative or quantitative data analysis

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

TEXTBOOKS

There are two textbooks for this course:

- Angrist, J. D. and Pischke, J.-S. (2008). *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*. Princeton University Press, 1st ed. (A&P)
- Posavac, Emil J. *Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Pearson Education, 2011. Print. 8th ed. (Posavac)

ASSIGNMENTS

There are four major graded components of the course (percent contributions to the final course grade are in parentheses next to each assignment):

- *Participation (25%)*: Participation consists of completing reading assignments before coming to class, being engaged in any in-class exercises, and actively contributing to in-class discussions. In addition, each student will be assigned one “applied reading” and be asked to lead discussion on that reading. Leading discussion will account for three fifths of the participation grade. Obviously, participation also implies that students attend class.
- *Exams (50%)*: There will be a midterm exam and a final exam, each worth 25% of the grade. These exams will be in-class and they will be cumulative. The final exam will occur on May 4 at our normal meeting time.
- *Research Design (25%)*: Students are expected to produce an executable research design utilizing a technique covered in the course. The research design should have the following components: (1) a brief statement of the main research question and justification of its importance (\approx one page), (2) a review of some relevant literature on the topic (1-2 pages), (3) a careful discussion of the theory (2-3 pages) (4) an overview of the data and measurements (how theoretical concepts will be measured, where you would find the data, and a description of the data including the units of analysis and available variables) (2-3 pages), (5) a description of your causal identification strategy, methods for analyzing the data, and how you will interpret the results (2-3 pages). This paper should be 12 pages or less. Research designs will be due at 6:30PM on May 4.

GRADING SCALE

The course will follow a standard grading scale:

97-100	A+	77-79	C+
93-96	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-

LIST OF TOPICS

OVERVIEW OF EVALUATION

An introduction to the class and to the topic of evaluation.

Textbook Readings: Posavac Ch 1-2

No Additional Readings.

THEORIZING ABOUT YOUR PROGRAM

Developing a theory about how the program should work and what effects should be expected in order to inform outcome monitoring, measurement, and causal identification.

Textbook Readings: Posavac Ch 3

Applied Readings:

- Anzia, Sarah F., and Molly C. Jackman. “Legislative Organization and the Second Face of Power: Evidence from US State Legislatures.” *The Journal of Politics* 75.01 (2013): 210-224.
- Erikson, Robert S., and Thomas R. Palfrey. “Equilibria in campaign spending games: Theory and data.” *American Political Science Review* (2000): 595-609.”

MEASUREMENT, SURVEYS, AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Devising valid measures of theoretical concepts, collecting data using survey instruments, assessing reliability and validity of measures.

Textbook Readings: Posavac Ch 4 and Ch 7

Applied Readings:

- Smith, Tom W. “That which we call welfare by any other name would smell sweeter an analysis of the impact of question wording on response patterns.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51.1 (1987): 75-83.
- Huber, Gregory A., and Celia Paris. “Assessing the programmatic equivalence assumption in question wording experiments understanding why americans like assistance to the poor more than welfare.” *Public opinion quarterly* (2013).
- Gibson, James L. “Challenges to the impartiality of state supreme courts: Legitimacy theory and ‘new-style’ judicial campaigns.” *American Political Science Review* 102.01 (2008): 59-75.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Collecting data relevant for identifying problems to be solved through public policies and programs.

Textbook Readings: Posavac Ch 6

Applied Readings:

- Hernández-plaza, S., C. Pozo, and E. Alonso-Morillejo. “The role of informal social support in needs assessment: Proposal and application of a model to assess immigrants’ needs in the south of Spain.” *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 14.4 (2004): 284-298.
- Lewis, M. Jane, et al. “Perceptions of service providers and community members on intimate partner violence within a Latino community.” *Health Education & Behavior* 32.1 (2005): 69-83.
- Finlayson, Marcia, et al. “The process and outcomes of a multimethod needs assessment at a homeless shelter.” *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 56.3 (2002): 313-321.

COUNTERFACTUALS AND CAUSAL INFERENCE

Establishing a theoretical framework for conceptualizing causal inference. Causal effects are defined using counterfactuals (i.e. how does the outcome under the program differ from what would have happened without the program?).

Textbook Readings: A& P Ch 2

Applied Readings:

- Holland, Paul W. "Statistics and causal inference." *Journal of the American statistical Association* 81.396 (1986): 945-960.
- West, Stephen G., Jeremy C. Biesanz, and Steven C. Pitts. "Causal inference and generalization in field settings: Experimental and quasi-experimental designs." *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology* (2000): 40-84.

QUALITATIVE EVALUATION METHODS

Analyzing data without statistics.

Textbook Readings: Posavac Ch 8

Applied Readings:

- Lijphart, Arend. "Comparative politics and the comparative method." *The American Political Science Review* (1971): 682-693.
- Krook, Mona Lena. "Women's representation in parliament: A qualitative comparative analysis." *Political Studies* 58.5 (2010): 886-908.
- Glynn, Adam N., and Nahomi Ichino. "Increasing Inferential Leverage in the Comparative Method Placebo Tests in Small-n Research." *Sociological Methods & Research* (2014)

SINGLE-GROUP DESIGNS

Quantitative research designs with no control group.

Textbook Readings: Posavac Ch 9

Applied Readings:

- Singer, Simon I., and David McDowall. "Criminalizing delinquency: The deterrent effects of the New York juvenile offender law." *Law and Society Review* (1988): 521-535.
- Bonham, Carl, et al. "The impact of the hotel room tax: an interrupted time series approach." *National Tax Journal* (1992): 433-441.
- Richards, Mark J., and Herbert M. Kritzer. "Jurisprudential regimes in Supreme Court decision making." *American Political Science Review* 96.02 (2002): 305-320.

EXPERIMENTAL EVALUATION

Randomized controlled evaluations as a tool for analyzing causal questions. Advantages over observational studies.

Textbook Readings: Posavac Ch 11

Applied Readings:

- LaLonde, Robert J. “Evaluating the econometric evaluations of training programs with experimental data.” *The American Economic Review* (1986): 604-620.
- Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. “The effects of canvassing, telephone calls, and direct mail on voter turnout: A field experiment.” *American Political Science Review* (2000): 653-663.
- King, Gary, et al. ”Public policy for the poor? A randomised assessment of the Mexican universal health insurance programme.” *The Lancet* 373.9673 (2009): 1447-1454.

PANEL DATA, DIFFERENCE IN DIFFERENCES

Using panel data (multiple cross-sectional units observed at at least two time points) to gain leverage on causal questions.

Textbook Readings: A&P Ch 5, Posavac Ch 10 (up to but not including the section on Regression Discontinuity)

Applied Readings:

- Card, David. “The Impact of the Mariel Boatlift on the Miami Labor Market.” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (1990): 245-257.
- Aaronson, Daniel. “Using sibling data to estimate the impact of neighborhoods on children’s educational outcomes.” *Journal of Human Resources* (1998): 915-946.
- Krueger, David Card Alan B. “Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.” *The American Economic Review* 84.4 (1994).
- James Alt, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Shanna Rose. “Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections: Evidence from US Term Limits.” *Journal of Politics*. 73 (1). (2011).
- Chris Berry, Jeffrey Grogger, and Will Howell. “Distributive Politics and Legislator Ideology.” Working paper. 2015.
- Ken Scheve and David Stasavage. “Institutions, Partisanship, and Inequality in the Long Run.” *World Politics*. 61 (2). 2009.

REGRESSION DISCONTINUITY

In some cases, an intervention is assigned to all units above a pre-specified threshold on a relevant variable. For instance, a scholarship may be given to all students above a specific cut-off score on a standardized test. It turns out this type of treatment assignment allows a unique causal identification strategy.

Textbook Readings: A&P Ch 6, Posavac Ch 10 (rest of chapter)

Applied Readings:

- Eggers, Andrew C., and Jens Hainmueller. “MPs for sale? Returns to office in postwar British politics.” *American Political Science Review* 103.04 (2009): 513-533.
- Dobkin, Carlos and Ferreira Fernando. “Do school entry laws affect educational attainment and labor market outcomes?” *Economics of Education Review*. 29. 40-54. (2010)
- Jacob, Brian A., and Lars Lefgren. “Remedial education and student achievement: A regression-discontinuity analysis.” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 86.1 (2004): 226-244.

INSTRUMENTAL VARIABLES

If a variable that affects whether units receive an intervention is unrelated to the outcome of interest, we can sometimes use it to emulate random assignment for the purpose of estimating causal effects.

Textbook Readings: A&P Ch 4

Applied Readings:

- Aizer, Anna, and Joseph J. Doyle Jr. “Juvenile incarceration, human capital and future crime: Evidence from randomly-assigned judges.” No. w19102. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2013.
- Angrist, Joshua D. “Lifetime earnings and the Vietnam era draft lottery: evidence from social security administrative records.” *The American Economic Review* (1990): 313-336.
- Angrist, Joshua D., and Alan B. Krueger. “Does Compulsory School Attendance Affect Schooling and Earnings?.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 106.4 (1991): 979-1014.

USING YOUR RESULTS

Using causal estimates and information about the cost of the program to make good decisions about your policy or program, communicating your research and findings to your audience, and encouraging utilization.

Textbook Readings: Posavac Ch 12, Ch 13, Ch 14

COURSE POLICIES

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments should be submitted to me in hard copy on the day they are due.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This is a seminar class and attendance is required.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Students need to notify the professor of absences prior to class when possible. S.R. 5.2.4.2 defines the following as acceptable reasons for excused absences: (a) serious illness, (b) illness or death of family member, (c) University-related trips, (d) major religious holidays, and (e) other circumstances found to fit “reasonable cause for nonattendance” by the professor.

Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays no later than the last day in the semester to add a class. Information regarding dates of major religious holidays may be obtained through the religious liaison, Mr. Jake Karnes (859-257-2754).

Students are expected to withdraw from the class if more than 20% of the classes scheduled for the semester are missed (excused or unexcused) per university policy.

VERIFICATION OF ABSENCES

Students may be asked to verify their absences in order for them to be considered excused. Senate Rule 5.2.4.2 states that faculty have the right to request “appropriate verification” when students claim an excused absence because of illness or death in the family. Appropriate notification of absences due to university-related trips is required prior to the absence.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Per university policy, students shall not plagiarize, cheat, or falsify or misuse academic records. Students are expected to adhere to University policy on cheating and plagiarism in all courses. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a zero on the assignment on which the offense occurred. If the offense is considered severe or the student has other academic offenses on their record, more serious penalties, up to suspension from the university may be imposed.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic conduct. Each student is advised to become familiar with the various forms of academic dishonesty as explained in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Complete information can be found at the following website:

<http://www.uky.edu/Ombud>.

A plea of ignorance is not acceptable as a defense against the charge of academic dishonesty. It is important that you review this information as all ideas borrowed from others need to be properly credited.

Part II of Student Rights and Responsibilities, available online at

<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>

states that all academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by students to their instructors or other academic supervisors, is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. In cases where students feel unsure about the question of plagiarism involving their own work, they are obliged to consult their instructors on the matter before submission.

When students submit work purporting to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording or anything else from another source without appropriate acknowledgement of the fact, the students are guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes reproducing someone else's work, whether it be a published article, chapter of a book, a paper from a friend or some file, or something similar to this. Plagiarism also includes the practice of employing or allowing another person to alter or revise the work which a student submits as his/her own, whoever that other person may be.

Students may discuss assignments among themselves or with an instructor or tutor, but when the actual work is done, it must be done by the student, and the student alone. When a student's assignment involves research in outside sources of information, the student must carefully acknowledge exactly what, where and how he/she employed them. If the words of someone else are used, the student must put quotation marks around the passage in question and add an appropriate indication of its origin. Making simple changes while leaving the organization, content and phraseology intact is plagiaristic. However, nothing in these Rules shall apply to those ideas which are so generally and freely circulated as to be a part of the public domain (Section 6.3.1).

Please note: Any assignment you turn in may be submitted to an electronic database to check for plagiarism.

ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO DISABILITY

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-2754, email address: jkarnes@email.uky.edu) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities.