



## **Program Evaluation and Applied Policy Analysis**

Preliminary Syllabus

*Summer 2019*

### ***Instructors***

Douglas J. Besharov  
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### ***Guest Instructors***

Neil Gilbert  
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This course is designed to help students learn the concepts of program evaluation while they apply them to projects with real-world clients. Course topics include the preparation of policy analyses, evaluation methodologies for identifying the counterfactual, assessment of causal validity in research publications, and methods of synthesizing research.

Students will prepare either a policy analysis or research synthesis for the OECD or a similar agency or organization located in or near Paris. The students will work with their clients while in Paris, but they will plan their projects with their clients beforehand and complete their project after having left Paris.

The project topics will initially be identified by the clients and the UMD faculty, with the final details to be worked out between the clients and the students. Possible topic areas include (but are not limited to) aging and pensions, child welfare, criminal justice, education, employment and the labor market programs, the environment, families and children, health, housing, migration, and social welfare generally.

Prior to arriving in Paris, students will be matched to clients and will work with them to

create an initial project description, which will include a delineation of the policy question to be addressed and the scope of the project. While in Paris, besides attending classes, students will prepare and present project plans to their clients (and others) and make site visits to international organizations that conduct similar policy-oriented research. After leaving Paris, students will complete their projects, interacting with their clients as needed. Final projects will be due at the end of August.

## **Classroom procedures**

All students are expected to come to class prepared, having read and digested the readings. (Supplemental readings are optional.) If some unavoidable circumstance prevents you from being prepared, please inform the instructors. If you have not done so before class begins, we will assume that you are affirming that you are fully prepared to participate in that day's class discussion.

## **Assignments**

For their final products, Students will prepare either policy analyses or research reviews for their clients, depending on the preference of the clients. All other assignments in the course are for the purpose of assisting students in the process of finishing their projects.

***Initial project description.*** In consultation with their clients, students will prepare two paragraph initial project descriptions. These project descriptions should summarize the topic and scope of the project, including research questions and definitions of key terms. Students should submit their project descriptions to their clients and receive approval for the project descriptions before they submit them to the instructors. Project descriptions will be due to the instructors on ***Friday, June 29 by 5:00 p.m.*** however, students are encouraged to complete and submit them as soon as possible. The project descriptions will be used intensively for discussion on the first day of class in Paris.

***Project research proposal.*** Students will prepare five-to-seven page project research proposals that provided detailed plans of how the students will complete their policy analysis or their research reviews.

For students who are conducting policy analyses, the project proposals should include the following elements: a discussion of the problem that the policy analysis intends to address, assessment criteria for the various selected options, and a discussion of the methodology that will be used to identify the various selected options.

For students who are conducting research reviews, the project proposals should include the following elements: a detailed search strategy, including search terms and possible databases; the inclusion criteria for determining which literature will be included in the research review; the method for assessing the quality of the research that will be included in the research review; and

the type of synthesis that will be used.

The project research proposals should be developed in consultation with the clients during the time that students are in Paris. The project research proposals will be due to the instructors on **Thursday, July 11 by 5:00 p.m.**

**Presentation of research proposal.** Students will prepare and deliver fifteen minute presentations to the instructors and their clients that describes the students' project research proposals. It is strongly recommended that students present using PowerPoint, but this is not required. The presentations should contain all the elements of the project research proposal. After each presentation, the instructors, clients, and other students will ask questions and provide feedback on the research proposal. The presentations will take place on **Friday, July 12** from about 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Final paper.** As the final product for the course, students will prepare either policy analyses or research reviews for their clients and the instructors, using the elements of their research proposals as the sections of the paper. The final papers should be a minimum of twenty-five pages of text, not counting appendixes and should also include a executive summaries.

Students should include in appendixes all supplementary materials such as evidence gap maps, annotated bibliographies, protocols for applying inclusion criteria, and references. The methods that students applied should be clearly detailed so that the method could be easily replicated.

Draft papers will be due on **Friday, August 2.**

Final papers will be submitted via email to the instructors and the clients by **Friday, August 31.**

## Grading

Initial project description	10%
Project research proposal	10%
Presentation of research proposal	20%
Class participation	10%
Draft paper	10%
Final paper	40%

All late assignments will received a deduction of *one-third* a letter grade for each day that the assignment is late.

## **Required texts and assigned readings**

Douglas J. Besharov, *Program Evaluation in a Nutshell* (College Park, MD: Center for International Policy Exchanges, 2018).

Additional assigned readings are available on Canvas (elms.umd.edu).

## **CLASS MEETINGS AND TOPICS**

*Note:* This is a tentative schedule and some class sessions may be moved on-site with clients.

### **Monday, July 1. Introduction to the Course and Problem Identification**

*Note:* This class will be held at the OECD.

### **Tuesday, July 2. Program Theory and Framing a Research Strategy**

*Note:* This class will be held at the OECD.

### **Wednesday, July 3. Policy Analysis: Criteria and Options Identification and Options Assessment**

*Note:* This class will be held at the OECD.

### **Thursday, July 4. Types of Research Reviews, Screening Strategy and Evidence-Gap Maps**

### **Friday, July 5. Process Evaluations.**

### **Monday-Wednesday, July 8-10. Assessment of Research Studies (Validity of Impact Evaluations) and Methods for Identifying the Counterfactual**

### **Thursday, July 11. Planning and Conducting the Search, Organizing the Results, and Synthesizing findings**

### **Friday, July 12. Presentations to Clients**

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### **Friday, August 30. Final Papers are due**