EVAL 6000: Foundations of Evaluation

2014 Course Syllabus
General Information

Course Description
With an emphasis on constructing a sound foundational knowledge base, this course is designed to provide an overview of both past and contemporary perspectives on evaluation theory, method, and practice. Course topics include, but are not limited to, basic evaluation concepts and definitions, evaluation as a cognitive activity, the view of evaluation as a transdisciplinary, the general and working logic of evaluation, an overview of the history of the field, distinctions between evaluation and basic and applied social science research, evaluation-specific methods (e.g., needs assessment, stakeholder analysis, identifying evaluative criteria, standard setting), reasons and motives for conducting evaluation, central types and purposes of evaluation, objectivity, bias, and validity, the function of program theory in evaluation, evaluator roles, core competencies required for conducting high quality, professional evaluation, audiences and users of evaluation, alternative evaluation models and approaches, the political nature of evaluation and its implications for practice, professional standards and codes of conduct, and emerging and enduring issues in evaluation theory, method, and practice. Although the major focus of the course is program evaluation in multiple settings (e.g., education, criminal justice, health and medicine, human and social services, international development, science and technology), examples from personnel evaluation, policy analysis, and product evaluation also will be used to illustrate foundational concepts. Throughout the course, critical thinking and active learning are emphasized and therefore, the instructional format consists of instructor-led presentations, discussions, and application exercises.

Credit and Course Hours
The course is 3 credit hours.

The class meets from 5:30 PM – 8:00 PM on Mondays in 4410 Ellsworth Hall beginning September 8, 2014 and ending December 15, 2014.

Instructor
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Course Website
The website for this course is located at http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/idpe/courses/eval-6000-foundations-of-evaluation/.

Office and Office Hours
4445 Ellsworth Hall.
By appointment.
Learning Objectives

Course Learning Objectives

This course has multiple student learning objectives. Students will be expected to develop the following knowledge, skills, and abilities:

1. A deep understanding of a wide array of evaluation theory and practice perspectives

2. An in-depth understanding of the origins and history of evaluation as well as its evolution toward an independent discipline and where it is headed—its past, present, and future

3. A clear understanding of key evaluation concepts/vocabulary/terminology

4. A clear understanding of the nature and purpose of evaluation, and the distinctions between evaluation, basic and applied research, and related terms such as assessment and diagnosis

5. A clear understanding of evaluation standards, codes of conduct, and ethics, and their importance to evaluation practice

6. An ability to describe, distinguish among, and critically evaluate the usefulness and validity of selected models and approaches to evaluation, and to identify the conditions under which each should be used

7. A firm grasp of the fundamental logic and methodology of evaluation

8. A basic understanding of how to integrate traditional methodologies (e.g., social science research methods) with evaluation-specific methodologies (e.g., standard setting, synthesis)

9. An evaluative and critical thinking mindset, in general

Throughout the course students also will work on improving their communication and interpersonal skills, which are vitally important in evaluation, including but not limited to:

1. Conveying constructive criticism in a professional, balanced, and tactful manner

2. Facilitating discussion to engage others in dialogue about evaluation theory, method, and practice

3. Writing clearly and concisely for both academic and non-academic audiences

4. Giving high quality, professional oral presentations for both academic and non-academic audiences
Textbooks and Readings

Required Textbooks

Three textbooks are required for this course.


Required Readings


Supplemental Readings


Course Components

General Components of the Course

Course grades will be based on (1) class attendance and participation, (2) three critical reading papers, (3) one thought paper and presentation, (4) an application paper, and (5) performance on a final examination.

Students should not put their names on assignments or examinations, but rather only use their WIN numbers, so that assignments and examinations can be graded blind to student identity. Detailed instructions and grading criteria and standards for all assignments are available from the course website.

In addition, unannounced and ungraded quizzes and content mastery tests will be administered during certain class sessions. Their purpose will be to keep students and the instructor apprised as to the students’ progress in mastering course content and, as needed, to provide direction for reteaching and learning previously covered content. These quizzes and mastery tests may be either verbal or written.

No late assignments will be accepted. All assignments must be e-mailed to the instructor and teaching assistant with EVAL 6000 in the subject line by 5:00 PM on the day they are due. Failure to submit an assignment on time will result in an immediate “F” (scored as 0%) for the assignment.

Class Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend class regularly, participate in class discussions, and provide constructive feedback for others in the course. Thus, your overall class participation grade will be based on (1) voicing your reflections on the readings (e.g., by noting positive contributions and constructive criticisms), (2) getting others in the class involved (e.g., by asking questions, having stimulating discussion/debate), (3) contributing information and experiences that supplement the readings, (4) providing fair and balanced feedback to others, and obviously (5) attending class and being on time. Combined, attendance and participation constitute 5% of the course grade.

Critical Reading Papers

Each student will prepare three critical reading papers. Each of the papers should be no more than 2 single-spaced pages in length. Each paper constitutes 10% of the course grade (30% total).

- Critical Reading Paper #1. Choose one article from the list of required readings. Create an argument for why you agree or disagree with the material presented. Support your argument by using other sources of information from your field or the evaluation literature.

- Critical Reading Paper #2. Choose one article from the list of required readings. Create an argument for why you agree or disagree with the material presented. Support your argument by using other sources of information from your field or the evaluation literature.

- Critical Reading Paper #3. Choose one article from the list of required readings. Create an argument for why you agree or disagree with the material presented. Support your argument by using other sources of information from your field or the evaluation literature.
Thought Paper and Paper Presentation

Each student will prepare and present a major thought paper. The paper should not exceed 15 single-spaced pages in length. The thought paper constitutes 15% of the course grade and the presentation constitutes 5% (20% total).

- **Thought Paper.** The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation program is designed not only to develop highly skilled evaluation practitioners, but also “thought leaders.” As such, the goal of this assignment is to give students an opportunity to explore an area in which they are interested, to which they can make a unique contribution, and with applicability to evaluation. Students will submit a brief, one-paragraph summary of the conceptual idea for the thought paper for instructor approval and feedback no later than October 20th. For examples of thought papers see the Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation (JMDE) “Ideas to Consider” section at http://jmde.com/.

- **Thought Paper Presentation.** Each student will give a PowerPoint-facilitated presentation on the thought papers above. Students should prepare presentations as if for a professional audience, allotting 15 minutes for presentation and an additional 5 minutes for audience questions.

Application Paper

Each student will prepare one application paper. The paper should be no more than 15 single-spaced pages in length. The paper constitutes 20% of the course grade.

- **Application Paper.** Each student will select either an evaluation model or approach from Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014), and either a real or hypothetical evaluand (e.g., program, project, policy, product) from their field of interest (e.g., education, public health, international development). In detail, each student will describe how an evaluation of the selected evaluand would be conducted using the selected model/approach.

Final Examination

One examination will be given in this class. This examination constitutes 25% of the course grade. The final examination is comprehensive and covers material presented for the entire semester.

- **Final Examination.** This exam is based on factual knowledge of evaluation vocabulary, history, theories and theorists, and models and approaches from the readings.

Grading and Weighting of Course Components

- Attendance & class participation: 5%
- Critical readings papers (10% each): 30%
- Application paper: 20%
- Thought paper (15%) and presentation (5%): 20%
- Final examination: 25%

Where:

- 100% – 95% = A
- 94% – 90% = BA
- 89% – 85% = B
- 84% – 80% = CB
- 79% – 75% = C
- < 75% = F
Teaching Philosophy

Philosophical Approach

Cognitive science suggests that students learn most effectively when they actively construct the meaning of material by articulating and applying the information. Consequently, this course emphasizes active learning.

• Before class, students will need to read material to be applied in class, and in particular they should learn the key terms and concepts for the assigned reading.

• In the first half of the class, the instructor will lecture on the assigned material and related material, but not always on the assigned material.

• Students will do well in this course if they come prepared to ask questions about the material during this time.

• In the second half of the class, students will engage in structured class discussions and activities.

Suggestions for Succeeding in this Course

There is an extensive amount of reading and several major work products required for this course and many related and unrelated topics will be covered, with which students may or may not be familiar. Therefore, in order to succeed in this course it is imperative that students do not fall behind. Therefore, students are encouraged to:

1. Carefully study and repeatedly read the books and other assigned readings. The concepts in this class are often complex, and learning to apply them is a crucial skill to acquire. Reading the book and assigned readings helps with both problems.

2. Organize and participate in a study group. Such groups can help students check their understanding of concepts and their application.
Course Schedule

Schedule of Meetings, Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Topics, readings, and assignments tentatively follow the schedule below. Due dates for class assignments (i.e., assessments) will not change, but dates for seminar topics might. All assignments are due by 5:00 PM on the date indicated in the course schedule. In the Readings column ETM&A = Evaluation theory, models, & applications, EoE = Encyclopedia of evaluation (Entries from EoE will be assigned at the end of each class session), and ER = Evaluation roots. Due to the amount of material covered, lectures will predominately focus on ETM&A.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 8</td>
<td>Course introduction</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
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<td>October 13</td>
<td>American Evaluation Association conference</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<td>October 27</td>
<td>Evaluation tasks, procedures, and tools: Part I</td>
<td>ER Chapters 27 - 30&lt;br&gt;ETM&amp;A Chapters 17 - 19</td>
<td>Critical reading paper #3</td>
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<td>October 3</td>
<td>Evaluation tasks, procedures, and tools: Part II</td>
<td>ER Chapters 31 - 32&lt;br&gt;ETM&amp;A Chapters 20 - 22</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>November 10</td>
<td>Evaluation tasks, procedures, and tools: Part III</td>
<td>ETM&amp;A Chapters 23 - 24</td>
<td>Thought paper</td>
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<td>November 17</td>
<td>Metaevaluation and institutionalizing evaluation</td>
<td>ETM&amp;A Chapters 25 - 26 Stufflebeam (2001)</td>
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<td>November 24</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
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<td>Thought paper presentations</td>
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<td>December 1</td>
<td>Student presentations &amp; course review</td>
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<td>December 8</td>
<td>Final examination</td>
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*Note: Even if assigned readings and entries from EoE are not discussed in class sessions, students are expected to have read and carefully studied the assigned material as it will likely be part of the final examination.*
Accommodation, Diversity, and Integrity

Need for Accommodation

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the professor and the appropriate Disability Services office at the beginning of the semester. The two disability service offices on campus are: Disabled Student Resources and Services (269-387-2116) and the Office of Services for Students with Learning Disabilities (269-387-4411).

Diversity Statement

The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation (IDPE) and Evaluation, Measurement, and Research (EMR) programs maintain a strong and sustained commitment to the diverse and unique nature of all learners and high expectations for each student.

Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for making themselves aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. [The policies can be found at http://www.wmich.edu/catalog under Academic Policies, Student Rights and Responsibilities.] If there is reason to believe a student have been involved in academic dishonesty, the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. The student will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If the student believes she/he is not responsible, she/he will have the opportunity for a hearing. Students should consult with their instructors if they are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

To access the Western Michigan University Code of Honor and general academic policies on such issues as diversity, religious observance, and student disabilities please visit http://osc.wmich.edu/ and www.wmich.edu/registrar.