



EVAL 6970: Research on Evaluation

Spring 2013 Course Syllabus

# Contents

---

General Information	1
Required Readings	2
Course Components	3
Course Schedule	6
Accommodation, Diversity, and Integrity	7

# General Information

## Course Description

Evaluators use research methods to evaluate and often improve programs. Rarely, though, are research methods applied to evaluate and improve evaluation practice and training. For the evaluation discipline to grow and earn credibility, scholars and evaluation practitioners must create a culture of empirical research on evaluation.

Historically, research on evaluation was frequently conducted, carving and shaping practice to emphasize among other topics, use and quality. However, several decades of stagnate efforts to conduct research on evaluation has limited evaluation innovation. Only in recent years have attempts to define and encourage more research on evaluation sparked new efforts.

This course is designed to expose students to the many different types of research on evaluation by engaging them in a systematic review of the research on evaluation literature. Currently, no such comprehensive source for research on evaluation literature exists.

In this project-based course, students will be expected to develop an awareness of the research on evaluation landscape and to identify and plan opportunities for contributing to it. Students will be required to locate, read, critique, summarize, present, and discuss a broad spectrum of recent published studies of research on evaluation from the past decade. Additionally, students will be expected to formulate a detailed proposal, including a problem statement and methodology section, for conducting their own research on evaluation study and present the proposal for critique.

## Credit and Course Hours

The course is 3 credit hours.

The class meets from 5:30 PM – 8:00 PM on Thursdays beginning January 10, 2013 and ending April 25, 2013.

The course meets in Sangren Hall, room 3520.

## Instructor

Chris L. S. Coryn, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Evaluation, Measurement, and Research  
Director of the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation  
E-mail: [chris.coryn@wmich.edu](mailto:chris.coryn@wmich.edu)

## Course Website

The website for this course is located at <http://www.wmich.edu/evalphd/courses/eval-6970-research-on-evaluation/>.

## Office and Office Hours

3863 Sangren Hall.

By appointment.

# Required Readings

These papers will serve as the topics for class discussion, and students are expected to read and be prepared for in-depth discussion regarding these articles with each other as well as the guest presenters/discussants. In addition, approximately 12 yet-to-be-determined readings across six weeks will be assigned by student presenters. These papers will be chosen as 'exemplars' from the individual domains by the students working within each domain. All students in the class will be expected to familiarize themselves with these readings prior to the student-led presentations.

- Christie, C. A. (2003). What guides evaluation? A study of how evaluation practice maps onto evaluation theory. In C. A. Christie (Ed.), *The practice-theory relationship. New Directions for Evaluation, 97*, 7–36.
- Christie, C. A. (2011). Advancing empirical scholarship to further develop evaluation theory and practice. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, 26*(1), 1-18.
- Cooksy, L. J. & Caracelli, V. J. (2005). Quality, context, and use: Issues in achieving the goals of metaevaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation, 26*(1), 31-42.
- Cooksy, L. J. & Caracelli, V. J. (2009). Metaevaluation in practice: Selection and application of criteria. *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation, 6*(11), 1-15.
- Cooksy, L. J. & Mark, M. M. (2012). Influences on evaluation quality. *American Journal of Evaluation, 33*(1), 79-87.
- Gargani, J. (2011). More than 25 years of the American Journal of Evaluation: Recollections of past editors in their own words. *American Journal of Evaluation, 32*(3), 428-447.
- Gargani, J. (2012). *The future of evaluation: 10 predictions*. Available at <http://evalblog.com/2012/01/30/the-future-of-evaluation-10-predictions/>
- Gargani, J. (In press). What can practitioners learn from theorists' logic models? *Evaluation and Program Planning*.
- Gargani, J., & Donaldson, S. I. (2011). What works for whom, where, why, for what, and when? Using evaluation evidence to take action in local contexts. In H. T. Chen, S. I. Donaldson, & M. M. Mark (Eds.), *Advancing validity in outcome evaluation: Theory and practice. New Directions for Evaluation, 130*, 17–30.
- Henry, G. T. & Mark, M. M. (2003). Toward an agenda for research on evaluation. In C. A. Christie (Ed.), *The practice-theory relationship. New Directions for Evaluation, 97*, 69–80.
- Mark, M. M. (2001). Evaluation's future: Furor, futile, or fertile? *American Journal of Evaluation, 22*(3), 457-479.
- Mark, M. M. (2008). Building a better evidence base for evaluation theory. In N. L. Smith (Ed.) *Fundamental Issues in Evaluation* (pp. 11-134). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Mark, M. M. (2011). Toward better research on—and thinking about—evaluation influence, especially in multisite evaluations. In J. A. King & F. Lorenz (Eds.), *Multisite evaluation practice: Lessons and reflections from four cases. New Directions for Evaluation, 129*, 107-119.
- Miller, R. L. (2010). Developing standards for empirical examinations of evaluation theory. *American Journal of Evaluation, 31*(3), 390-399.
- Miller, R. L. & Campbell, R. (2006). Taking stock of empowerment evaluation: An empirical review. *American Journal of Evaluation, 27*(3), 296-319.
- Skoltis, G. J., Morrow, J. A., & Burr, E. M. (2009). Reconceptualizing evaluator roles. *American Journal of Evaluation, 30*(3), 275-295.
- Smith, N. L., Brandon, P. R., Hwalek, M., Kistler, S. J., Labin, S. N., Rugh, J., Thomas, V. & Yarnall, L. (2010). Looking ahead: The future of evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation, 32*(4), 565-599.
- Szanyi, M., Azzam T., & Galen, M. (In press). Research on evaluation: A needs assessment. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*.

# Course Components

## General Components of the Course

Grading will be based on the following: (1) class attendance and participation; (2) three article reviews; (3) one article review presentation; (4) a proposal for conducting an empirical study on evaluation theory, method, or practice; and (5) a presentation of the research proposal. Students will be placed, or self-select, into small topical interest groups and these groups will be responsible for completing the major course components other than class attendance and participation.

No late assignments will be accepted. All assignments must be e-mailed to the instructor with EVAL 6970 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.

Each student will be expected to select a research domain, which they will work within for the duration of the semester. Ideally, the domain will serve as the foundation for the course components described below. Students will be spread across the domains so as to cover all domains adequately. The seven research on evaluation domains align with the six classifications set forth by Henry and Mark (2003) and an additional "other" category which is a catch-all of research on evaluation that does not fall into these domains:

- Research on Evaluation Outcomes
- Comparative Research on Evaluation Practice
- Metaevaluation
- Analog Studies
- Practice Component Studies
- Evaluation of Technical Assistance and Training
- Other

Due to the number of students enrolled in the course, it is expected that more than one student will need to work in the same domain. Since it is anticipated that some domains will contain more relevant literature than others, in these cases students should work as groups of two.

## 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 (a) voicing your reflections on the readings (e.g., by noting positive contributions and constructive criticisms), (b) getting others in the class involved (e.g., by asking questions, having stimulating discussion/debate), (c) contributing information and experiences that supplement the readings, (d) providing fair and balanced feedback to others, and obviously (e) attending class and being on time. Combined, attendance and participation constitute 30% of the course grade.

## Article Reviews and Presentations

Students are expected to prepare 3 article reviews (10% each). The product of the class will be a comprehensive literature review of research on evaluation. Therefore, relevant studies need to be clearly and consistently described. Article reviews should be brief (less than 250 words), and should describe the unique contribution of the article within the domain, method, findings, and a description of why the findings are important to the broader evaluation community. Care should be taken in drafting a clear and concise article review, as the reviews are expected to be woven into the broader publication. The first article review will be used to develop and begin calibration of students to a particular format, and expectations are that the review will be compensable, completed on time, and of appropriate length. The remaining two graded reviews will be judged against the developed standard, and will facilitate the calibration process.

All students will select one additional and unique article that they feel encapsulates the essence of their domain to present to the class. Over the course of the semester, students will build depth within their own domain, but will have limited exposure to the other domains. The purpose of the in-depth article presentations will be to teach the class about the other domains by selecting and discussing exemplars of the work being done within each domain.

Presentations should consist of the following:

#### Background, contribution, and discussion

- Background information about the domain (1%)
- A clear description of why this particular article was selected as an exemplar study (1%)
- Other related/similar articles (1%)
- Responding to discussion and raising two questions to engage the students in the class (2%)

#### Contribution of the article to the domain

- The unique contribution of the article to the domain (1%)
- A summary of the article's methods and findings (1%)
- A description of why the findings are important to the broader evaluation community (1%)
- Ideas for how the study could have been improved (1%)
- Ideas on how to build off the study in future work (1%)

All students in the class will be expected to familiarize themselves with the articles being presented prior to class, so the article presentations should limit the regurgitation of article contents, and instead emphasize the positioning and interpretation of the article's methods and contributions. Presenters should become experts on the article they choose to present, and be able to answer questions from the audience on the specifics of the article and speak intelligently on the broader domain. Grading

of the presentations will be based on the criteria outlined above.

## Proposal and Proposal Presentation

The research proposal will test your ability to internalize the research on evaluation literature, and conceptualize your own contribution to research on evaluation. By the end of the semester, each student will develop and defend a novel research on evaluation study. Students are NOT expected to conduct a research on evaluation study, but rather conceptualize and communicate a detailed proposal for carrying out the research both written and orally. The process is intended to expose students at a smaller scale to what is expected of them for a dissertation proposal.

Proposals should consist of the following information:

#### Context

- A description of the broader issue at hand (e.g., more examples of research on evaluation studies are needed in the area of metaevaluation in order to improve the quality of evaluation in the Advanced Technological Education) framed as a thorough review of the relevant literature (10%).

#### Study description

- The purpose of the study (1%)
- The specific research question(s) to be investigated (3%)
- A highly detailed methodology section (5%)
- A description of how the study contributes to evaluation (1%)

The presentation should outline the study in 15 minutes, and 15 minutes will be allotted to questioning (10%).

## The Literature Review Paper

It is expected that a literature review paper will be composed and eventually published using the products of this course. The final exam timeslot will be used as a way to gauge authorship on the literature review paper. All students in the course will be mentioned in the acknowledgements for the paper. Students interested in being co-authors on the final draft should plan to attend the final exam in order to discuss the logistics and assign responsibilities. It is expected that Carl Westine and Chris Coryn will take the lead in organizing the initial draft and facilitating the publication process. All students are invited to be co-authors, though some additional efforts beyond the length of the course will likely be required, the extent of which will depend on how many are interested in co-authorship, and the status of the work upon completion of the course

## Grading and Weighting of Course Components

- Attendance & class participation: 30%
- Article reviews (10% each): 30%
- Article presentation: 10%
- Research proposal and presentation of research proposal: 30%

### Where:

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

# Course Schedule

## Schedule of Meetings, Topics, 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.

Date	Topic	Discussant(s)	Readings	Assignment
January 10	Course intro, syllabus, design paper as systematic review of research on evaluation (ROE) since Christie	Westine & Coryn	Syllabus	
January 17	Intro to ROE, needs for ROE, new avenues for ROE	Christie	Christie (2003, 2011); Szanyi, Azzam, & Galen (In press)	
January 24	Revise paper design, define search criteria, discussion of proposal requirements	Westine & Coryn	Henry & Mark (2003); Mark (2001, 2008)	
January 31	Metaevaluation (2) and evaluation of training and technical assistance (1)	Three students	Three examples of students' choice	Student presentations of articles
February 7	The future of evaluation and how ROE can fit in	Gargani	Gargani (2011, 2012, in press); Gargani & Donaldson (2011); Smith et al. (2010)	
February 14	Metaevaluation research	Cooksy	Cooksy & Caracelli (2005, 2009); Cooksy & Mark (2012)	Article review #1
February 21	Comparative research on evaluation practice (2) and analog studies (1)	Three students	Three examples of students' choice	Student presentations of articles
February 28	Working day	Westine	Mark (2011); Skolits, Morrow, & Burr (2009)	Article review #2
March 7	<i>Spring recess</i>			
March 14	Practice component studies (2)	Two students	Two examples of students' choice	Student presentations of articles
March 21	Research on evaluation outcomes (2)	Two students	Two examples of students' choice	Student presentations of articles
March 28	Other: Systematic reviews	Miller	Miller & Campbell (2006); Miller (2010)	Article review #3
April 4	Other: Bibliometrics, more? (2)	Two students	Two examples of students' choice	Student presentations of articles
April 11	Present research proposals (15 minutes each, with 15 additional minutes for questions/comments)	Six students		Research proposal presentation
April 18	Present research proposals (15 minutes each, with 15 additional minutes for questions/comments)	Six students		Research proposal presentation
April 25	Final exam (7:15pm): working day to organize the paper, tasks to be done, and authorship			Research proposal



# 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).

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](http://www.wmich.edu/registrar).

## 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.