Evaluating Educational Programs
E27.2132.001
Spring 2010
Wed. 12:20 – 1:55 PM, Silver 720

Instructor:
Robert Tobias (212) 998-5497; rjt3@nyu.edu
Pless Building, Room 783  Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:00 – 5:00 PM and by appointment.

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the design and implementation of evaluations of educational programs. Students will be introduced to the theory and practice of educational evaluation by reviewing evaluation reports and papers, preparing evaluation designs, and developing evaluation instruments. For heuristic purposes, the work is contextualized in key issues in K – 12 and higher education, including assessment of the educational performance of students, schools, and teachers, the impact of educational policies, measurement of the efficacy of specific instructional programs and materials, and exploration of the relationships between teacher education and teacher quality. Topics focus on all aspects of the design and implementation of educational evaluations, including considering the audience and purposes for evaluations, developing an evaluation plan, preparing the evaluation design, designing evaluation instruments and measures, collecting, analyzing, and reporting evaluation data, and adhering to professional ethical principles. Because of its centrality as an outcome measure in current evaluations, the topic of standardized testing will receive focused attention. Although students are not expected to master complex statistical procedures, the course will cover the basics of quantitative analysis with a particular focus on some of the more common statistical techniques used in evaluations, such as regression-discontinuity analysis. Students will be expected to conduct some data analysis using Microsoft Excel, SPSS, or other statistical software to complete some assignments. The class format will combine lecture and class discussion. There will be six short written assignments and a final project that requires each student to design an evaluation proposal on an educational
topic of personal and/or professional interest. In addition, students will give an in-class presentation of their final project. Students are expected to read the assignments and be prepared to discuss them for the designated class session.

**About the Instructor:**

Professor Bob Tobias came to NYU in 2002, after serving for over 13 years as the Executive Director of Assessment and Accountability for the New York City public schools. His prior experience with the New York City schools includes 16 years of service as research analyst and Administrator of Program Evaluations. Professor Tobias is the founding Director of the Steinhardt School’s Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, which conducts ongoing research and evaluation of NYU’s teacher education programs. He has expertise in psychometrics, multivariate statistical analysis, research design, and program evaluation; has conducted numerous evaluations of educational interventions and professional development and teacher education programs; and has authored more than 150 evaluation and research reports. Professor Tobias has been a frequent presenter at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association and has also presented at the Large Scale Assessment Conference sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers. Recently, Professor Tobias has completed major research and evaluation projects for the Charter School Institute of the State University of New York, Polytechnic University and the City Council’s Commission on the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and has testified on standardized testing before the City Council’s Education Committee.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To develop knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles of evaluating educational programs.
2. To provide practical experience in the development of plans and designs to evaluate major policy initiatives, programs, and interventions in education.
3. To provide hands-on experience in developing quantitative and qualitative instruments to collect data for the evaluation of educational programs.
4. To become acquainted with the basic skills for analysis and presentation of data.
5. To develop an understanding of the basic principles of standardized assessments.
6. To enhance skills of critical analysis by discussing the evidence provided by evaluation reports concerning important issues in educational policy and practice.
7. To gain an appreciation of the practical exigencies of conducting educational evaluations.

**Textbook:**

Readings/Assignments:

**January 27**
Weiss: Chapters 1 – 3

**February 3**
Weiss: Chapters 4 & 5
Assignment 1 due

**February 10**
Weiss: Chapter 8 & 9

**February 17**
PowerPoint on Assessment
Assignment 2 due

**February 24**
School Progress Reports on NYCDOE website (links on Blackboard).

**March 3**
Web resources for Assignment 3
Assignment 3 due

**March 10**

**March 24**
Web Sources for Assignment 4
NYC Department of Education Website: Promotion policy (see documents for URL)
Assignment 4 due
March 31
Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) website (link on Blackboard)
Brief History of TEAC (Blackboard)
DRSTOS-R (Blackboard)
Section on DRSTOS-R from NYU’s TEAC Inquiry Brief

April 7
Weiss: Chapters 6 & 7
Assignment 5 due

April 14
Weiss: Chapters 10 - 14
Assignment 6 due
## Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. January 20</strong></td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction to course goals and objectives</td>
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<td>• Review of the course outline</td>
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<td>• Discussion of students’ and instructors’ areas of interest</td>
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<td>• Overview of the principles of evaluation</td>
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<td><strong>2. January 27</strong></td>
<td>Planning the evaluation</td>
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<td>• Audience and purposes</td>
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<td>• Program theory and expectations</td>
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<td>• Understanding the program</td>
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<td>• Evaluation resources &amp; timeline</td>
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<td>• The logic model</td>
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<td>• Evaluation questions</td>
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<td><strong>3. February 3</strong></td>
<td>Planning the evaluation (continued)</td>
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<td><strong>4. February 10</strong></td>
<td>Evaluating a program</td>
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<td>• Types of designs</td>
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<td>• Selecting participants</td>
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<td>• The importance of control</td>
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<td>• Drawing conclusions from data</td>
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<td><strong>5. February 17</strong></td>
<td>Standardized Tests</td>
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<td>• Types of test scores</td>
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<td>• Scaling</td>
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<td>• Classical Test Theory</td>
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<td>• Item Response Theory</td>
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<td><strong>6. February 24</strong></td>
<td>Assessing Schools: Do they make the grade?</td>
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<td>• NCLB</td>
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<td>• Ways to measure school performance</td>
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<td>• Cross-sectional vs. value-added</td>
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<td>• School report cards</td>
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<td><strong>7. March 3</strong></td>
<td>Assessing Schools: Do they make the grade? (Continued)</td>
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<td>• Discussion of comparative analyses</td>
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<td><strong>8. March 10</strong></td>
<td>Evaluation Design: Addressing the counter-factual</td>
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<td>• Addressing rival explanations</td>
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<td>• Experimental and quasi-experimental designs</td>
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<td>• Regression discontinuity</td>
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| March 24  | Evaluating a Policy: Social vs. Performance-Based Promotion           | • Theoretical foundations  
• Historical evidence of efficacy  
• Status of current promotion policy efforts.  
• The local scene |
| March 31  | Evaluating teacher education programs                                 | • Foundations in accountability  
• The evidence problem  
• Practicum in observation (DRSTOS) |
| April 7   | Developing Instruments                                               | • Constructing items  
• Sources for items  
• Assessing reliability & validity  
• Assessing response bias  
• Analyzing data |
| April 14  | Evaluating professional development (PD) programs                    | • Theoretical model for evaluating PD programs  
• Special considerations  
• Connecting outcomes to PD experiences |
| April 21  | Final project presentations                                          |                                                                        |
| April 28  | Final project presentations                                          |                                                                        |
| May 5     | Final project presentations                                          |                                                                        |

**Assignments:** Additional instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

**Assignment 1: Constructing logic models.** Design and construct a for a logic model that explains the theory of action for a program or policy in your area of interest. You can select a real program or policy or one that you devise. Examples of programs are a reading intervention for inner-city pupils or a behavior management program for emotionally-disturbed students; examples of policies include teacher pay for performance or reducing class size. First, give a brief narrative description of the program/policy including its components, actions or activities, the goals or expected outcomes, and the causal chain connecting the actions to the outcomes. Second, draw the diagram for the logic model. Third, generate two or three evaluation questions based on the logic model. (2 pages.) **Due February 3rd**
Assignment 2: Write a descriptive and critical analysis of the Molnar article. Describe the program being evaluated, including its activities, goals, and theory of action. Discuss the evaluation design, methods, results, and conclusions. Discuss whether the conclusions are warranted in terms of the internal and external validity of the evaluation. (3 pages.) Due February 17th

Assignment 3: Write a comparative analysis of two NYC public schools using the Schools Progress Report database (3 – 4 pages). Due March 3rd

Assignment 4. Prepare a proposal to evaluate the current performance-based grade promotion policy in the New York City public schools. Include a brief review of the evidence from previous evaluations of promotion policies (described in the articles by Roderick and House) and your expectations for the results of your proposed study (3 – 4 pages). Due March 24th

Assignment 5. Write a critique of the DRSTOS-R observation protocol used in class to assess the teacher quality. Include a discussion of reliability, validity, and sensitivity (4 – 5 pages). Due April 7th

Assignment 6. Write a paper on Onwuegbuzie article (3 – 5 pages). Due April 14th

Final Paper. Prepare an evaluation proposal (including anticipated results) for an educational policy or program in your area of interest. The specifications for the plan are as follows. (Due May 5th)

1. Approximate length is 15 pages, double-spaced (excluding bibliography and tables/figures/appendices)

2. Paper should consist of the following sections (approximate guidelines for length):
   - Title Page (title of proposed study, author, affiliation, running head) (1 page)
   - Abstract (maximum of 150 word summary of entire proposal) (1 page).
   - Background section, including a description of the policy or program, the goals and objectives of the program, the purpose of the evaluation, and the intended audience (2-3 pages).
   - Summary of the results of extant evaluations (2-3 pages).
   - Evaluation questions, including a diagram of the program’s theory of action. (1-2 pages).
   - Methodology (sample, groups, setting, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis) (2-3 pages).
   - Significance of the study (1 page).
   - Limitations (1 page).
   - Mock or real presentation of results (2-3 pages).
   - Conclusions and Recommendations (1-2 pages)
• Timeline and budget (1-2 pages).

Grading Criteria:
1. Quality of class participation (e.g., insightful/active participation) (10%)
2. Grades on six assignments (10% each, total = 60%)
3. Grade on the final paper, including the oral presentation (30%)