

Master of Science in Political Analytics

POANK5050 Program Evaluation

Wednesdays 6:10 pm - 8:00 pm

2 credits

Core course

Instructor:

Office Hours:

Response Policy:

Facilitator/Teaching Assistant:

Office Hours:

Response Policy:

Course Overview

This course provides a comprehensive exploration of the critical role of program evaluation in the political arena. The term "programs" refers to organized and planned interventions, initiatives, or activities designed to achieve specific goals or outcomes. These programs can take various forms, such as educational programs, social interventions, healthcare initiatives, community development projects, or any systematic effort aimed at producing certain results. Designed for political campaign managers, policymakers, lobbying firms, advocacy organizations, and professionals operating in the dynamic realm of politics, it equips students with the essential skills to distinguish effective programs from ineffectual ones. In a world where electoral campaigns, policy-making initiatives, advocacy efforts, lobbying operations, social movements, and media investigations are pivotal, program evaluation becomes indispensable for informed decision-making. This course focuses on the intricate methods for evaluating program designs, evidence collection, analysis, and interpretation. It also delves into decision-making frameworks of suggestions for better policies and effective reporting and communication of the findings and recommendations. Students will acquire foundational knowledge and develop practical skills essential for success in the realm of political analytics.

This course integrates with the broader programmatic goals of our political analytics program, serving as a cornerstone for professionals seeking to excel in the political arena. It aligns with the primary concepts and principles of political analytics by emphasizing data-driven decision-making. By mastering program evaluation, students can assess and discern the effectiveness of electoral campaigns, policy initiatives, advocacy efforts, and more. This course is a vital component of the program curriculum, bridging theory with real-world applications, and empowering students to design and develop effective political initiatives. Additionally, it hones students' presentation skills, a critical competency for effective communication in politics.

This is a required course for the Political Analytics degree with no prerequisites that is delivered in an online modality over a seven-week partial semester period.

Learning Objectives

- L1. Apply learned elements of program effectiveness to assess various program types.
- L2. Design experiments and measurement tools for comprehensive data collection and analysis of programs.
- L3. Recommend data-driven initiatives based on the analysis of existing program efforts.

L4. Discuss the rationale for choosing a specific methodological approach over alternatives.

Readings

Required Readings:

Abadie, A. (2005). Semiparametric difference-in-differences estimators. *The review of economic studies*, 72(1), 1-19. (19 pages)

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J. S. (2009). *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion* (Chapter 4, pp. 113-138). Princeton University Press. (26 pages)

Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J. S. (2009). *Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion* (Chapter 5, pp. 221-243). Princeton University Press. (23 pages)

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (Chapter 4, pp. 53-85) Sage publications. (32 pages)

Dunning, T. (2008). Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 282-293. (12 pages)

Gerber, A. S., & Green, D. P. (2012). *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. (Chapter 2, 21-46). W. W. Norton. (26 pages)

Green, D. P., Gerber, A. S., & Nickerson, D. W. (2003). Getting out the vote in local elections: Results from six door-to-door canvassing experiments. *The Journal of Politics*, 65(4), 1083-1096. (14 pages)

Golder, S. A., & Macy, M. W. (2011). Diurnal and seasonal mood vary with work, sleep, and daylength across diverse cultures. *Science*, 333(6051), 1878-1881. (4 pages)

Hyde, A., Howlett, E., Brady, D., & Drennan, J. (2005). The focus group method: Insights from focus group interviews on sexual health with adolescents. *Social science & medicine*, 61(12), 2588-2599. (12 pages)

Krueger, A. B. (2004, October 14). Turning Out the Vote. *The New York Times*. (2 pages)

Krugman, P. (2021, October 11). Doing Economics as if Evidence Matters. *The New York Times*. (2 pages)

Picciotto, R. (2020). Evaluation and the big data challenge. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 41(2), 166-181. (16 pages)

Sovey, A. J., & Green, D. P. (2011). Instrumental variables estimation in political science: A readers' guide. *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(1), 188-200. (13 pages)

York, P., & Bamberger, M. (2020). Measuring results and impact in the age of big data: The nexus of evaluation, analytics, and digital technology. (Chapter 1-3, pp. 1-27). The Rockefeller Foundation (27 pages)

Young, C., & Hagerty, R. (2007, February). Blending qualitative and quantitative methods for program evaluation: The application and insights of the exit interview. In 4th Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference, Charlotte. (19 pages)

Suggested Readings:

Card, D., & Krueger, A. B. (1994). Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. *The American Economic Review*, 84(4), 772-793. (22 pages)

Duflo, E., & Kremer, M. (2003). Use of Randomization in the Evaluation of Development Effectiveness¹. *Evaluating development effectiveness*, 7, 205. (37 pages)

Kalla, J. L., & Broockman, D. E. (2022). “Outside Lobbying” over the Airwaves: A Randomized Field Experiment on Televised Issue Ads. *American Political Science Review*, 116(3), 1126-1132. (7 pages)

Snyder Jr, J. M., & Strömberg, D. (2010). Press coverage and political accountability. *Journal of political Economy*, 118(2), 355-408. (54 pages)

York, P., & Bamberger, M. (2020). Measuring results and impact in the age of big data: The nexus of evaluation, analytics, and digital technology. (Chapter 4-5, pp. 29-54). The Rockefeller Foundation (26 pages)

Assignments and Assessments

Assignments include all required work to be produced by students and evaluated by the instructor, including:

1. Participation and Attendance (Aligned to L1-L4)

Student evaluations will take into account class attendance, active engagement with course materials, and active participation in class discussions and group activities.

2. Written Assignments/Problem sets (Aligned to L1, L2)

Students will have 2 written assignments and 2 problem sets during the course, each of them covering a section of the syllabus – Randomized Control Trials (RCTs), Differences in differences (DID), Instrumental variables (IV) and Big Data. The submissions will consist of short research design challenges as well as simplified replication of papers utilizing the methodology learned. For the RCT and IV writing assignments, no analytics software is needed but submissions should address all elements of the rubric provided on the course site and include appropriate citations. For the DID and Big Data problem sets, instructional videos and clean data sets will be provided. These can be solved with any relevant software, the default is R, and all code should be submitted with a written report of the findings. For both the writing assignments and the problem sets, students will be graded based on data analysis, interpretation of results, clarity of explanations, use of relevant literature, and ability to communicate findings.

3. Group Policy Cases & Presentation (Aligned to L3, L4)

The students will be divided into groups and assigned to a subtopic related to either electoral campaigns, policy-making initiatives, advocacy efforts, lobbying operations, social movement activities, or media investigations. The students will determine an appropriate program within the topic of interest and thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of the program and suggest either a new program or improvements to the existing program based on the findings. Prior to the presentation, the team will have to share their program selection and propose a way to evaluate their program. The outcome of the group policy case will be a presentation in class which will be graded based on a provided rubric. Students will be graded based on their ability to illustrate content knowledge, the rationale and validity of their program recommendations as well as their presentations structure, engagement with peers, delivery & involvement and team collaboration.

4. Discussion Forum (Aligned to L1-L4)

Students are expected to participate in a weekly online forum via Canvas. Each week's forum will include a discussion prompt related to the content of that week's module. Initial submissions should be around 150-300 words and students are encouraged to reply to at least two of their peers' posts. Students will be graded based on their posts' depth of understanding, critical thinking, peer engagement and citation selection and format.

5. Final Exam (Aligned to L1-L4)

The final examination will be conducted under closed-book and closed-notes conditions. It will encompass a comprehensive assessment, featuring both multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Your performance will be evaluated based on your depth of understanding and your capacity to apply your knowledge of various methodological approaches to program evaluations across diverse scenarios.

Grading

The final grade will be calculated as described below:

FINAL GRADING SCALE

Grade	Percentage
A+	98–100 %
A	93–97.9 %
A-	90–92.9 %
B+	87–89.9 %
B	83–86.9 %
B-	80–82.9 %
C+	77–79.9 %
C	73–76.9 %
C-	70–72.9 %
D	60–69.9 %
F	59.9% and below

The grading for this course is based on Class Participation and Attendance (10%), Writing Assignments/Problem Sets (20%), Discussion Forum (15%), a Group Policy Case Project (25%) and a Final Exam (30%).

Assignment/Assessment	% Weight	Individual or Group Grade
Class Participation and Attendance	10%	Individual
Written Assignment/Problem Sets	20%	Individual
Discussion Forum	15%	Individual
Group Policy Case & Presentation	25%	Group
Final Exam	30%	Individual

Course Schedule/Course Calendar

Module/Week & Topic	Topic	Readings	Activities/Assignments for this module
Module 1 1/17/24 Introduction to Program Evaluation	Overview of program evaluation in political analytics and the importance of data collection.	<p>Krugman, P. (2021, October 11). Doing Economics as if Evidence Matters. <i>The New York Times</i>. (2 pages)</p> <p>Dunning, T. (2008). Improving causal inference: Strengths and limitations of natural experiments. <i>Political Research Quarterly</i>, 61(2), 282-293. (12 pages)</p> <p>Young, C., & Hagerty, R. (2007, February). Blending qualitative and quantitative methods for program evaluation: The application and insights of the exit interview. In 4th Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference, Charlotte. (19 pages)</p>	Complete readings and participate in Discussion Forum 1 prior to the Module week beginning.

<p>Module 2 1/24/24 Qualitative Methodologies - In-depth interviews, Focus Groups & Survey Design</p>	<p>Exploration of design and qualitative insights in the realm of surveys and interviews while considering bias</p>	<p>Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.(Chapter 4, pp. 53-85) Sage publications. (32 pages) Hyde, A., Howlett, E., Brady, D., & Drennan, J. (2005). The focus group method: Insights from focus group interviews on sexual health with adolescents. Social science & medicine, 61(12), 2588-2599. (12 pages)</p>	<p>Participate in Discussion Forum 2 Meet with Project Group – Submit initial topic idea/program you wish to evaluate within your assigned groups</p>
<p>Module 3 1/31/24 Experiments - Randomized control trials (RCT)- and quantitative analysis</p>	<p>Discussion on the different typologies of RCT used in program evaluation. In particular, the focus will be on causal identification, examples, and threats (external validity, spillovers, etc.).</p>	<p>Gerber, A. S., & Green, D. P. (2012). Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation. (Chapter 2, 21-46). W. W. Norton. (26 pages) Krueger, A. B. (2004, October 14). Turning Out the Vote. The New York Times. (2 pages) Green, D. P., Gerber, A. S., & Nickerson, D. W. (2003). Getting out the vote in local elections: Results from six door-to-door canvassing experiments. The Journal of Politics, 65(4), 1083-1096. (14 pages) Suggested readings: Kalla, J. L., & Broockman, D. E. (2022). “Outside Lobbying” over the Airwaves: A Randomized Field Experiment on Televised Issue Ads. American Political Science Review, 116(3), 1126-1132. (7 pages) Duflo, E., & Kremer, M. (2003). Use of Randomization in the Evaluation of Development Effectiveness!</p>	<p>Complete Writing Assignment/Problem Set 1 Participate in Discussion Forum 3</p>

		Evaluating development effectiveness, 7, 205. (37 pages)	
<p>Module 4</p> <p>2/7/24</p> <p>Difference-in-Differences (DID) and Fixed Effects (FE)</p>	<p>DID and FE methodologies, key assumptions, and validity.</p>	<p>Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J. S. (2009). Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion (Chapter 5, pp. 221-243). Princeton University Press. (23 pages)</p> <p>Abadie, A. (2005). Semiparametric difference-in-differences estimators. The review of economic studies, 72(1), 1-19. (19 pages)</p> <p>Suggested readings:</p> <p>Card, D., & Krueger, A. B. (1994). Minimum Wages and Employment: A Case Study of the Fast-Food Industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The American Economic Review, 84(4), 772-793. (22 pages)</p>	<p>Complete Writing Assignment/Problem Set 2</p> <p>Participate in Discussion Forum 4</p>
<p>Module 5</p> <p>2/14/24</p> <p>Instrumental Variable (IV) Analysis</p>	<p>IV methodology, key assumptions, and validity.</p>	<p>Angrist, J. D., & Pischke, J. S. (2009). Mostly harmless econometrics: An empiricist's companion (Chapter 4, pp. 113-138). Princeton University Press. (26 pages)</p> <p>Sovey, A. J., & Green, D. P. (2011). Instrumental variables estimation in political science: A readers' guide. American Journal of Political Science, 55(1), 188-200. (13 pages)</p> <p>Suggested readings:</p> <p>Snyder Jr, J. M., & Strömberg, D. (2010). Press coverage and political accountability. Journal of political Economy, 118(2), 355-408. (54 pages)</p>	<p>Complete Writing Assignment/Problem Set 3</p> <p>Participate in Discussion Forum 5</p>

<p>Module 6 2/21/24</p> <p>Big Data- Text Content & Sentiment Analysis</p>	<p>Introduction to big data by utilizing open-ended questions, content analysis and sentiment analysis to harness big data text analysis for in-depth textual insights.</p>	<p>Picciotto, R. (2020). Evaluation and the big data challenge. <i>American Journal of Evaluation</i>, 41(2), 166-181. (16 pages)</p> <p>Golder, S. A., & Macy, M. W. (2011). Diurnal and seasonal mood vary with work, sleep, and daylength across diverse cultures. <i>Science</i>, 333(6051), 1878-1881. (4 pages)</p> <p>York, P., & Bamberger, M. (2020). Measuring results and impact in the age of big data: The nexus of evaluation, analytics, and digital technology. (Chapter 1-3, pp. 1-27). The Rockefeller Foundation (27 pages)</p> <p>Suggested readings:</p> <p>York, P., & Bamberger, M. (2020). Measuring results and impact in the age of big data: The nexus of evaluation, analytics, and digital technology. (Chapter 4-5, pp. 29-54). The Rockefeller Foundation (26 pages)</p>	<p>Complete Writing Assignment/Problem Set 4</p> <p>Participate in Discussion Forum 6</p>
<p>Module 7 2/28/24</p> <p>Project Presentations</p>			<p>Presentations for Group Policy Cases</p>
<p>Final Exam 3/6/24</p>			

Course Policies

Participation and Attendance

You are expected to complete all assigned readings, attend all class sessions, and engage with others in online discussions. Your participation will require that you answer questions, defend your point of view, and challenge the point of view of others. If you need to miss a class for any reason, please discuss the absence with me in advance.

Late work

Work that is not submitted on the due date noted in the course syllabus without advance notice and permission from the instructor will be graded down 1/3 of a grade for every day it is late (e.g., from a B+ to a B).]

Citation & Submission

All written assignments must use APA standard citation format, cite sources, and be submitted to the course website (not via email).

School and University Policies and Resources

Copyright Policy

Please note—Due to copyright restrictions, online access to this material is limited to instructors and students currently registered for this course. Please be advised that by clicking the link to the electronic materials in this course, you have read and accept the following:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

Academic Integrity

Columbia University expects its students to act with honesty and propriety at all times and to respect the rights of others. It is fundamental University policy that academic dishonesty in any guise or personal conduct of any sort that disrupts the life of the University or denigrates or endangers members of the University community is unacceptable and will be dealt with severely. It is essential to the academic integrity and vitality of this community that individuals do their own work and properly acknowledge the circumstances, ideas, sources, and assistance upon which that work is based. Academic honesty in class assignments and exams is expected of all students at all times.

SPS holds each member of its community responsible for understanding and abiding by the SPS Academic Integrity and Community Standards posted at <https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/academic-integrity-community-standards>. You are required to read these standards within the first few days of class. Ignorance of the School's policy concerning academic dishonesty shall not be a defense in any disciplinary proceedings.

Diversity Statement

It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is our intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture.

Accessibility

Columbia is committed to providing equal access to qualified students with documented disabilities. A student's disability status and reasonable accommodations are individually determined based upon disability documentation and related information gathered through the intake process. For more information regarding this service, please visit the University's Health Services website: <https://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/support>.

Class Recordings

All or portions of the class may be recorded at the discretion of the Instructor to support your learning. At any point, the Instructor has the right to discontinue the recording if it is deemed obstructive to the learning process.

If the recording is posted, it is confidential and it is prohibited to share the recording outside of the class.

SPS Academic Resources

The Office of Student Affairs provides students with academic counseling and support services such as online tutoring and career coaching: <https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/student-support-resources>.

Columbia University Information Technology

[Columbia University Information Technology](#) (CUIT) provides Columbia University students, faculty and staff with central computing and communications services. Students, faculty and staff may access [University-provided and discounted software downloads](#).

Columbia University Library

[Columbia's extensive library system](#) ranks in the top five academic libraries in the nation, with many of its services and resources available online.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center provides writing support to undergraduate and graduate students through one-on-one consultations and workshops. They provide support at every stage of your writing, from brainstorming to final drafts. If you would like writing support, please visit the following site to learn about services offered and steps for scheduling an appointment. This resource is open to Columbia graduate students at no additional charge. Visit <http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>.

Career Design Lab

The Career Design Lab supports current students and alumni with individualized career coaching including career assessment, resume & cover letter writing, agile internship job search strategy, personal branding, interview skills, career transitions, salary negotiations, and much more. Wherever you are in your career journey, the Career Design Lab team is here to support you. Link to <https://careerdesignlab.sps.columbia.edu/>

Netiquette

Online sessions in this course will be offered through Zoom, accessible through Canvas. A reliable Internet connection and functioning webcam and microphone are required. It is your responsibility to resolve any known

technical issues prior to class. Your webcam should remain turned on for the duration of each class, and you should expect to be present the entire time. Avoid distractions and maintain professional etiquette.

Please note: Instructors may use Canvas or Zoom analytics in evaluating your online participation.

More guidance can be found at https://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.htm

Netiquette is a way of defining professionalism for collaborations and communication that take place in online environments. Here are some Student Guidelines for this class:

- Avoid using offensive language or language that is not appropriate for a professional setting.
- Do not criticize or mock someone's abilities or skills.
- Communicate in a way that is clear, accurate and easy for others to understand.
- Balance collegiality with academic honesty.
- Keep an open-mind and be willing to express your opinion.
- Reflect on your statements and how they might impact others.
- Do not hesitate to ask for feedback.
- When in doubt, always check with your instructor for clarification.

SAMPLE