

CSUS 429

Program Evaluation for Community Sustainability

Fall 2016

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:20-11:40 p.m.

001 Natural Resources Building

Instructor: Dr. Dan McCole
Department: Community Sustainability
Office: 137 Natural Resources Building
Phone Number: 432-0295
Email: mccoleda@msu.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 11:40 – 12:40. Anytime my door is open or ajar, feel free to stop in (I really enjoy student visits). If you are traveling from across campus, try calling first to see if I'm available. Otherwise feel free to contact me to schedule an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Concepts, theories, and procedures in program evaluation. Practical methods and skills to plan and implement evaluations of programs related to community sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Whether government, business or non-profit, our world is filled with organizations that develop and operate programs that aim to address some type of problem. Billions of dollars and hours of effort are invested in these programs, but how do we know if the resources put into these programs are having the intended impact? How do we know whether changes should be made to the programs? How do we know whether investing program resources in other ways would better address the problems? The best answer to these questions is to evaluate the programs in some way. A properly conducted program evaluation can provide valuable information to those who manage programs, and can make programs more accountable to taxpayers, investors, donors, and the beneficiaries of the programs themselves.

Program evaluation is rapidly becoming a necessary part of most organizations, however, it is neither simple nor something any untrained person can do. Rather, evaluation is a rigorous research method that requires, among other things, logic, effective communication skills, critical thinking and the ability to analyze data. This course is meant to introduce students to the discipline of program evaluation and allow them to begin to develop their skills in this area. Whether they eventually help to evaluate programs or are "consumers" of them, students in this course will better understand the characteristics of effective and ineffective program evaluations.

READINGS

There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, readings will be assigned throughout the course of the semester and will either be found online, posted on D2L, or distributed in class. Students enrolled in this class are expected to complete all assigned readings by the assigned dates. Although class time will occasionally be spent covering subject matter from the readings, much of class time will be used to introduce new concepts and engage in activities not directly relevant to the assigned readings. This does not mean that the readings are unimportant. This class is meant to be much more than just the readings, but the assigned readings are an important part of the course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. develop a basic understanding of the relationship between the program development and evaluation processes;
2. understand the major concepts and methods of program evaluation for community sustainability;
3. read evaluation research critically;
4. understand how to use evaluation findings to improve program performance;
5. differentiate between formative, process, impact and outcome evaluation;
6. choose relevant theories and operationalize relevant constructs;
7. assess the "evaluability" of a program;
8. outline the steps of planning, conducting, and reporting of a program evaluation;
9. understand the basic elements, strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluation;
10. discuss, critique, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various evaluation models;
11. identify appropriate data sources for program assessment;
12. identify stakeholders and their role in evaluation;
13. understand implications of social and cultural factors for program evaluation;
14. develop and propose an appropriate evaluation plan to assess programs;
15. have a critical grasp of ethical issues at each stage of the evaluation process.

The above course objectives support the Department of Community Sustainability undergraduate program competencies of critical thinking, systems thinking, civic engagement, initiative and practical skills, ethics, and community. Successful completion of this course provides students with the background needed to frame complex problems and address them systemically in order to successfully complete additional courses in the major. Students can learn more about the Department of Community Sustainability undergraduate program competencies at http://www.csus.msu.edu/undergraduate/sustainability_core. In addition, this course supports Michigan State University's Undergraduate Learning Goals of analytical thinking, cultural understanding, and integrated reasoning. More information about MSU's Undergraduate Learning Goals is available at <http://undergrad.msu.edu/msu-goals>.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- To learn, challenge, be challenged, have fun, and build relationships
- To strike a balance of actively listening and verbally contributing
- To attend class and remain for its entirety, which includes refraining from loading backpacks until the class time is complete (see Attendance section in Course Policies).
- To complete all readings as assigned.
- To be on time. Students who are late show disrespect to their peers and instructor.
- To attend class mentally as well as physically. Students who use their cell phones, text, listen to iPods, work on assignments for other classes or in any other way engage in activities not part of the class, may be asked to leave and will not be given credit for being present for class.
- To complete assignments with honesty and integrity (see the *Academic Integrity* section in Course Policies)

COURSE POLICIES

Class attendance – Students are expected to attend class and to be on time. Absences will be noted. If you are sick, please stay at home and get better. Though there are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences, students are encouraged to notify the instructor beforehand for anticipated absences or email the instructor as soon as possible for unexpected absences. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain lecture notes and assignments from a fellow student.

Participation – Student participation includes quality of verbal responses, group interaction, comments and questions, as well as attentiveness in class and in all activities.

Professionalism – One aim of this class is to develop the skills students need to be successful in a professional setting. Students are expected to show respect to the professor and to one another. This is demonstrated in numerous ways including being on time, giving full attention in class, engaging in discussion and problem-solving, working collaboratively in groups, and taking responsibility for learning the material. Assignments must be neat with no grammatical and spelling errors, and they must indicate a serious effort to do a good job. All students are encouraged to express their points of view and opinions in this class. Disagreement, whether it is with the professor, another student or guest speaker, is a natural part of the learning process and all present can benefit from an informed debate. However, all participants in this class are expected to be respectful of others’ opinions and professional in such discussions. Being respectful, interested, attentive, and participatory will reflect well on your grade.

Email – Electronic communication has become a critical tool in our society. For this reason, you will be required to check your **MSU-assigned email** on a daily basis. Throughout the semester, I will be corresponding with students via email and the information in these emails are considered official course communication for which students are responsible. If you regularly check a different email account than your “msu.edu” account, be sure to forward your MSU account to your other account. However, if you email me using such an account, beware that I may not receive it. MSU’s SPAM identification software often tags emails from public accounts as SPAM and I never receive them. For this reason it is recommended that students check their MSU accounts on a daily basis and use this account for all communication with me.

Assignments – Because poor presentation can reduce the credibility of otherwise good content, all assignments must be typed / word-processed (unless otherwise specified) and presented in a professional manner. Grammar and spelling must be correct on all submitted assignments. Proof-read your work! If you feel you need assistance in this area, see the instructor or any of a number of university resources so that help can be provided and your grade will not be diminished. Unless approved in advance, I will only accept hard copies of all assignments.

Communication with Instructor – You are encouraged to ask questions in and/or outside of class. If you would like to communicate with the instructor anonymously, simply leave an unsigned note in my mailbox in the faculty mailroom (Natural Resources Building Rm. 151). Your suggestions and comments about the class structure, content, and rigor are welcome. You can leave a voice mail or e-mail message for me 24 hours a day. (Phone 432-0295; e-mail mccoleda@msu.edu)

Accommodations

If you need accommodations in this class related to a disability or religious holidays, please make an appointment with me to discuss as soon as possible.

COURSE POLICIES (CONT.)

Academic Integrity

[Article 2.III.B.2](#) of the Academic Freedom Report states: “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the Department of Sustainability adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, [Protection of Scholarship and Grades](#); the all-University Policy on [Integrity of Scholarship and Grades](#); and [Ordinance 17.00](#), Examinations.

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment.

Faculty are required to report all instances in which a penalty grade is given for academic dishonesty. Students reported for academic dishonesty are required to take an online course about the integrity of scholarship and grades. A hold will be placed on the student's account until such time as the student completes the course. This course is overseen by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education.

Consistent with MSU's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool called Turnitin to compare a student's work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student's work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a 'similarity score'. The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student's work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool.

If requested by the instructor, students should submit papers to Turnitin Dropboxes without identifying information included in the paper (e.g. name or student number). The system will automatically show this info to faculty in your course when viewing the submission, but the information will not be retained by Turnitin.

ASSIGNMENTS

Program Description

(Due October 27)

This semester you will choose a program for which you will create an evaluation plan. For this assignment you will describe your chosen program including descriptions of the problem to be addressed by the intervention; the intended target/beneficiaries of the program; the intended benefits of program; the logic/causal model; and (where appropriate) program theory.

Evaluation Plan

(Due on the day of group presentation)

For this assignment you will describe your evaluation plan including: an evaluation goal statement; research questions; sampling design; description of indicators; a description of how you would disseminate results; and pros and cons of this plan (all evaluations have pros and cons).

HRPP/IRB Certification

(Due any time before October 20)

For this assignment you will complete the online required training program about the protection of human research subjects. This online training program can be found on the website of MSU's Human Research Protection Program (<https://hrpp.msu.edu/>). When you get to this site, follow the links for "required training" (Under Training and Education).

Evaluation Plan Group Presentation

(Due November 17 or 22)

For this assignment, students will work in groups where they will read about and critique a program evaluation that has been conducted. More information about this assignment will be provided on the course D2L page.

Analysis Assignment

(Due December 8)

For this assignment, you will use SPSS to analyze a dataset and make conclusions about the meaning of your findings. Additional information will be provided later in the semester.

COURSE EVALUATION

Assignments & Grading	Points
Exam 1	200
Exam 2	200
HRPP/IRB Certification	50
Program Description	100
Evaluation Plan	200
Evaluation Plan Group Presentation	100
Analysis Assignment	150
Total Possible Points	1,000

Points	Grade
920 – 1,000 =	4.0
870 – 919 =	3.5
830 – 869 =	3.0
770 – 829 =	2.5
730 – 769 =	2.0
670 – 729 =	1.5
630 – 669 =	1.0
< 630 =	0.0

DEFINITION OF GRADES:

Because much of grading is subjective and every professor is different, I offer the following definitions of grades that will guide my grading decisions:

4.0: Outstanding achievement that significantly exceeds standards.

3.0: Commendable achievement that exceeds standards.

2.0: Acceptable achievement that meets standards in all aspects.

1.0: Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.

0.0: Failing; and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an incomplete.

CLASS SCHEDULE

*** Please note that the schedule is likely to change ***

Readings should be completed before the date in which they appear on the schedule.

Day	Date		DUE
September			
Thu	1	Intro to course, programs and evaluation	
Tue	6	Intro to program evaluation	Reading #1 (1-10); & Reading #2: (1-14)
Thu	8	Intro to program evaluation	
Tue	13	Why program evaluation?	Reading #3
Thu	15	Needs assessment and program development	Reading #4
Tue	20	Logic models	Reading #5 (1-26)
Thu	22	Role of theory in program evaluation	Reading #5 (27-48) & Reading #6
Tue	27	Identifying and formulating evaluation questions	Reading #1 (29-62)
Thu	29		
October			
Tue	4	Exam 1	Study for Exam
Thu	6	Designing the program evaluation	Reading #1 (63-72); Reading #2 (16-20)
Tue	11	Process evaluation	Reading #7 & Reading #8
Thu	13	Outcome evaluation	Reading #9 & Reading #10
Tue	18	Impact assessment	Reading #11
Thu	20	Research Concepts	HRPP/IRB Certification Due
Tue	25	Randomized control trials	Reading #12
Thu	27	Randomized control trials	Program Description Due
November			
Tue	1	Non-experimental methods	Reading #13
Thu	3	Sampling	Reading #14
Tue	8	Survey design and implementation	Reading #15 & Reading #16
Thu	10	Survey design and implementation	Reading #17
Tue	15	Qualitative program evaluation	Reading #18
Thu	17	Group Presentations	
Tue	22	Group Presentations	Evaluation Plan Due with Presentation
Thu	24	Thanksgiving No Class	
Tue	29	Data analysis	
December			
Thu	1	Data analysis	
Tue	6	Data analysis	
Thu	8	Final Class	Analysis Assignment Due
Fri	16	Final exam period 7:45 - 9:45	Study for Exam 2