

**Georgia State University  
Andrew Young School of Policy Studies**

**Spring 2014**

**PMAP 4051: Evaluating Public Policy**

**Course Syllabus**

**Administrative Information**

Instructor: Ric Kolenda  
Time: Wednesday 4:30-7:00 p.m.  
Location: Langdale Hall 318  
Office Hours: MW 2:30-4:00 p.m. or by appointment  
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**Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce students to research methods used in the social sciences to evaluate public programs. We begin with an overview of evaluation, understanding why we do evaluations and theories impacting evaluations. Next, we move to research design – how to pose questions, collect and analyze data. You will be responsible for doing the reading before coming to class. The class will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, and activities. Finally, this course is a designated critical thinking and writing (CTW) course.

***What does Critical Thinking through Writing mean?***

*CTW courses are designed to develop students' ability to think critically in the major area they have chosen to study. CTW courses require that a significant portion of the course grade be derived from brief and frequent written assignments aimed at capturing evidence of critical thinking. These assignments challenge students to explore the course content in a new light and encourage them to think like members of their disciplines (<http://www.gsu.edu/ctw/about.html>).*

**Learning Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Explain the basic components of evaluation research
- Understand the importance of real-world constraints on evaluation research
- Define the link between theory and evaluation research.
- Describe the advantages and disadvantages of different assessment designs
- Select appropriate methods for a given assessment design and need, i.e. interviews, experiments, survey research, qualitative, document reviews.
- To equip students with the skills to design a competent and comprehensive evaluation proposal.

**Course Materials**

**Required Text:**

Bamberger, M.; Rugh, J. & Mabry, L. (2012). *RealWorld Evaluation: Working Under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications. This text will hereafter be referred to as “**RWE**.”

Digital edition here: [http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/4695979/9781412979627?\\_hdv=6.8](http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/4695979/9781412979627?_hdv=6.8)

Other readings will be available online and/or posted on **Desire2Learn** .

**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Class sessions will be a mixture of lectures and class discussions. Additional readings and course materials will be provided on Desire2Learn. Course grades will be determined as follows:

1. “Real World Evaluation” Essay	10%
2. Evaluation Plan I: Program Description	10%
3. Evaluation Plan II: Logic Model	10%
4. Evaluation Plan III: Research Questions	10%
5. Evaluation Plan IV: Effectiveness Measures	10%
6. Evaluation Plan V: Research Design	10%
7. Evaluation Plan: Complete Evaluation Plan	10%
8. Final Exam	20%
9. Class Participation & Assignments	10%

Grades are calculated on a 100-point scale:

<b>A+</b>	> 98	<b>C+</b>	77-79.99
<b>A</b>	93-97.99	<b>C</b>	73-76.99
<b>A-</b>	90-92.99	<b>C-</b>	70-72.99
<b>B+</b>	87-89.99	<b>D</b>	60-69.99
<b>B</b>	83-86.99	<b>F</b>	< 60
<b>B-</b>	80-82.99		

**CTW Writing Assignments**

All writing assignments, including the five segments of the evaluation plan, will graded and returned, and students will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit assignments at least once if they wish to raise their grade. Revisions must be submitted no later than **two (2) weeks** from the original due date. The evaluation plan segments will also be assembled, revised, and submitted together at the end of the semester for a separate grade, so that students have one last chance to revise and improve their writing. To help facilitate your writing, a CTW consultant has been provided for the class. See the CTW website for more information

[http://cii.gsu.edu/critical-thinking-through-writing/student-resources/#My\\_class\\_has\\_a\\_CTW\\_consultant\\_How\\_can\\_the\\_consultant\\_help\\_me](http://cii.gsu.edu/critical-thinking-through-writing/student-resources/#My_class_has_a_CTW_consultant_How_can_the_consultant_help_me)).

The “**RealWorld Evaluation**” **Essay** is a short essay on what we mean by “real world evaluation” and why it is important. More details will be provided on Desire2Learn. It is worth 10% of the total grade.

The **Evaluation Plan** consists of five (5) individual segments, due throughout the semester, and a final complete plan at the end of the semester.

**Final Examination** will consist of 3-4 essay questions. It will draw on the class lectures and readings, and require students to assimilate materials learned throughout the course. It is worth 20% of the total grade.

***Make-up exams will only be given for extraordinary conditions, and only at the discretion of the instructor.***

***Assignments are due by the beginning of class or by the specified time via Desire2Learn. If you have materials that are hard-copy only, they must be turned in on time as well. Late assignments will be graded down substantially, and a passing grade will not be assigned unless all assignments are completed.***

Reports and exams are due by the beginning of class or by the specified time via Desire2Learn. If you have materials that are hard copy only, they must be turned in on time as well. Late assignments will be graded down substantially, and a passing grade will not be assigned unless all assignments are completed.

**Class participation:** students are expected to read materials before class, attend each class and to participate actively in class discussions. As part of your participation grade, you will be required to complete a brief self-assessment exercise in D2L on the readings before each class. These assessments must be completed before the class in which the readings are discussed, and cannot be made up later.

**Extra Credit:** From time to time, the instructor may offer the students opportunities to earn extra credit points on existing or for additional assignments. In addition, you are also encouraged to bring in newspaper and magazine articles related to evaluating public policy up to three (3) times a semester. These articles can be on issues from anywhere in the world, but it is important that during the course of the semester everyone gets a sense of how public policy evaluation works in the real world. Please indicate at the beginning of class your intention to present an article. No more than three (3) articles will be presented in each class, and will be chosen on a first-come first-served basis. Only one (1) article per person per class session will be accepted. Extra credit points will be granted as following:

- 1 Article = 4 percentage points toward your final grade
- 2 Articles = 7 percentage points toward your final grade
- 3 Articles = 9 percentage points toward your final grade

For example, if your other assignments add up to 88% of 100% of the final grade, and you present 2 articles during the semester, your final grade will be based on 95% of 100%. Extra credit is not guaranteed, however, and will be offered only at the discretion of the instructor.

***Student attendance is mandatory. It is recognized that students may be unable to attend class as a result of observance of recognized religious holidays of the student's faith, serious illness, or family emergencies. In such cases, students are responsible for the missed material, and are encouraged to obtain class notes from other students.***

**Course Policies**

- (1) Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of assigned Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which an accommodation is sought. Please advise the instructor if you have a documented disability that needs to be accommodated and provide documentation from [GSU Disability Services](#).
- (2) All students are responsible for knowing and adhering to [GSU's Policy on Academic Honesty](#).
- (3) The University has very specific policies on [Dropping Classes and Voluntary Withdrawal](#) from courses, with possible penalties for withdrawals after the first two weeks of courses. For the only exception to this policy, see the [Emergency Withdrawal](#) information on the Dean of Students web site.
- (4) This course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. Guest lectures and field trips might be scheduled along the way and students will be notified in advance.
- (5) Turn off cell phones and keep them off the desk during lectures. Text messaging during class is strictly prohibited and grounds for dismissal.
- (6) Laptops and tablets are allowed for instructional use only; any prohibited uses will be grounds for dismissal.
- (7) Final grades will not be posted or given out over the phone or via email.
- (8) Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

**Course Schedule\***

<b>Week #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic(s)</b>	<b>Reading (RWE)**</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
1	1/15	Introduction to Policy Evaluation in the Real World	Ch. 1	
2	1/22	Scoping the Evaluation	Ch. 2	
3	1/29	Budget & Time Constraints	Chs. 3 & 4	“Real World Evaluation” Essay; Evaluation Subject
4	2/5	Data & Political Constraints	Chs. 5 & 6	
5	2/12	Strengthening the Design & Validity	Ch. 7	Program Description
6	2/19	Presenting the Findings	Ch. 8	
7	2/26	Professional Standards & Ethics, & Theory-based Evaluation	Chs. 9 & 10	Logic Model
	3/4	<b><i>Last Day for Voluntary Withdrawal</i></b>		
8	3/5	Evaluation Designs	Ch. 11	
9	3/12	Quantitative Evaluation Approaches, Part 1	Ch. 12	Research Questions
	3/19	<b><i>Spring Break, no class</i></b>		
10	3/26	Quantitative Evaluation Approaches, Part 2	Ch. 12	
11	4/2	Qualitative Evaluation Approaches	Ch. 13	Effectiveness Measures
12	4/9	Mixed Method Evaluations	Ch. 14	
13	4/16	Sampling	Ch. 15	Research Design
14	4/23	Conclusions & Challenges	Ch. 19	
15	4/30	Final Exam, 4:15-6:45		Complete Evaluation Plan; Final Exam

\*The schedule is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

\*\* Additional readings and case studies will be added as necessary. Details will be announced in class and on Desire2Learn.