**ALCE 5204: Evaluation of Extension and Outreach Programs**

*Prerequisite: Graduate standing*

*3 Credits*

**Dr. Thomas Archibald** Offered Fall Semesters

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***I - Catalogue Description***

Theory and practice of program evaluation in community education settings such as extension and outreach programs. Evaluation concepts and methods to plan and execute well-constructed program evaluations. Major traditions, current controversies, and new directions in evaluation. Pre: *Graduate standing. (3H, 3C)*

***II - Course Overview & Justification***

This course provides an introduction to the theory and practice of program evaluation—a field that has steadily gained importance in recent decades—paying special attention to non-formal, community-based education settings such as extension and outreach programs. Although it has many definitions, the term “program evaluation” generally describes a discipline and profession that uses formal methodologies to systematically provide useful empirical evidence about a program for the purposes of learning, program improvement, and accountability.

Increasingly, individuals and organizations charged with planning and implementing non-formal education programs in a diverse array of contexts find themselves in need of better program evaluation knowledge and skills. Often, evaluation is required for accountability purposes mandated by a funding agency. Also, program administrators and implementers are often intrinsically motivated to evaluate their programs for purposes of continuous program improvement and learning. In this environment characterized by a heightened emphasis on evaluation, having knowledge of and experience with program evaluation has become a tangible, marketable skill that can help graduates stand out in a competitive job market. This course will help students grasp the theoretical underpinnings and the practical, technical skills (including quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches) necessary to be informed commissioners, consumers, and authors of high-quality evaluation studies. We will focus both on U.S. and international programmatic contexts, and will derive examples from diverse fields where non-formal, community-based educational initiatives are common, such as youth development, agriculture, community development, health promotion, and more.

This course applies advanced, in-depth knowledge, building on students’ undergraduate learning in critical thinking and inquiry, as well as on their accumulated practical experience with extension and outreach programs. Students will demonstrate their ability to work independently to analyze and apply complex theoretical and practical aspects of program evaluation. In addition, this class requires that students demonstrate the capacity to integrate the two, meaningfully synthesizing conceptually difficult theoretical perspectives on program evaluation with the field’s technical processes and practices. Quality of written products in the class should be similar in quality to that of a manuscript prepared for submission to a professional or scholarly journal.

***III - Learning Objectives***

Having successfully completed this course, the student will be able to:

* Summarize the principles and practices central to the field of program evaluation
* Practice evaluative thinking
* Classify the major epistemological and methodological branches of program evaluation
* Apply the technical processes involved in planning and implementing an evaluation in an extension, outreach, or community education context, including:
  + Entering the system
  + Stakeholder analysis
  + Logic modeling
  + Evaluation questions
  + Data collection
  + Sampling and design
  + Analysis and interpretation
  + Reporting and use
* Articulate and justify personal epistemological and methodological evaluation stances
* Analyze at least one controversy or emerging trend in evaluation

***IV – Syllabus: Schedule of Topics, Readings, Activities, & Assignments***

**Note:** Details are subject to change. Readings, and assignments, are due on the day they are listed. Readings marked “M&W” refer to the text by Mertens and Wilson. Readings marked with “RMKB” refer to the website published by Trochim (Research Methods Knowledge Base). Readings marked “SEP” refer to the Systems Evaluation Protocol. Additional reference information on all readings is included in this syllabus, below.

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| **Week** | **Topics** | **Readings, Activities, & Assignments** |
| **Part I – Introduction: Evaluation basics** | | |
| 1  *Aug. 30* | * Welcome, overview and definitions * Introduction to evaluative thinking | **ACTIVITY:** 1. Seeing like an evaluator |
| 2  *Sept. 6* | * Professional standards and ethical principles for evaluators * Key terminology * Introduction to evaluative challenges in non-formal education | **READINGS *(Note – First CRR due)*:**   * RMKB, “[Introduction to Evaluation](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intreval.php)” & “[Ethics in Research](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/ethics.php)” * American Evaluation Association (AEA), “[Guiding Principles for Evaluators](http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51)” * Schwandt (2015)—prologue and Ch. 1 |
| **Part II – Major traditions of evaluation** | | |
| 3  *Sept. 13* | * Paradigms, branches, and theories * Philosophical assumptions | **READINGS:**   * M&W, Ch. 1 and 2 * Alkin & Christie (2005)   **ACTIVITY:** 2. “This I Believe,” part 1 |
| 4  *Sept. 20* | * Methods-driven * Theory-driven * Utilization-focused | **READINGS:**   * M&W, Ch. 3 and 4 * Claremont Graduate University, “[Utilization-focused evaluation: Its Promise (Patton) and Pitfalls (Scriven)](http://ccdl.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/lap/id/70)” *(video; transcript also available)*   **ACTIVITY**: 3. Evaluating evaluation branches |
| 5  *Sept. 27* | * Collaborative, Participatory, and Empowerment * Transformative and values-based | **READINGS:**   * M&W, Ch. 5 and 6 * Claremont Graduate University, “[Empowerment evaluation: Its promise (Fetterman) and Pitfalls (Scriven & Patton)](http://ccdl.libraries.claremont.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/lap/id/69)” *(video; transcript also available)* |
| **Part III – Evaluation planning, implementation, and use** | | |
| 6  *Oct. 4* | * Entering the system * Negotiating the plan of work * Stakeholder analysis | **READINGS:**   * M&W, Ch. 7 (through p. 242) * Skolits, Morrow, & Burr (2009) * Bryson, Patton, & Bowman (2011) * OXFAM, “[Quick Guide to Power Analysis](http://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/quick_guide_to_power_analysis_external_final.pdf)”   **ACTIVITY:** 4. Do a stakeholder analysis  **DUE:** PRACTICUM PROPOSAL |
| 7  *Oct. 11* | * Logic models * Pathway models | **READINGS:**   * SEP, pp. 27-38 * M&W, Ch. 7 (continued; pp. 243-260) * McLaughlin & Jordan (2010)   **ACTIVITY:** 5. Create a logic model |
| 8  *Oct. 18* | * Evaluation purposes and designs * Identifying key outcomes * Creating good evaluation questions | **READINGS:**   * M&W, Ch. 8 and 9   **ACTIVITY:** 6. Write an EQ |
| 9  *Oct. 25* | * Data collection   + Beyond the survey   + Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods * Finding, adapting, and creating tools | **READINGS:**   * M&W, Ch. 10 * Newcomer & Triplett (2010)   **ACTIVITY:** 7. Craft a data collection approach |
| 10  *Nov. 1* | * Sampling, analysis, and use   + Random and purposive sampling   + Analysis and interpretation * Promoting utilization | **READINGS:**   * M&W, Ch. 11 and 12 * Baughman, Boyd, & Franz (2012)   **ACTIVITY:** 8. Sampling strategies |
| **Part IV – Controversies and new directions** | | |
| 11  *Nov. 8* | * New approaches & issues   + The “gold standard” debates   + Contribution analysis and collective impact | **READINGS:**   * Donaldson (2009) * Scriven (2008) * AEA/BetterEvaluation, “[Understand Causes of Outcomes and Impacts](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6Vrw9BNTwQ&list=UU9iZZMqq8E0P9v-4D0exBpw&index=54)” *(video)* * Mayne (2012)   **ACTIVITY:** 9. Role-play debate  **DUE:** PRACTICUM REPORT |
| 12  *Nov. 15* | * New approaches & issues   + Systems evaluation and developmental evaluation   + Reporting creatively and “data viz” | **READINGS:**   * Patton (2010) * Azzam, Evergreen, Germuth, & Kistler (2013) * “[Connecting Aboriginals to Manufacturing](http://cam.wem.mb.ca/#Page_1)” Report   **ACTIVITY:** 10. Data visualization |
| *Nov. 22* | *No Class Meeting* – Thanksgiving break | |
| 13  *Nov. 29* | * New approaches & issues   + Evaluation capacity building and evaluative thinking   + Culturally responsive evaluation | **READINGS:**   * Preskill & Boyle (2008) * Labin et al. (2013) * AEA (2011) |
| 14  *Dec. 6* | * Class presentations/dialogue | **READINGS:**   * M&W, Ch. 15   **ACTIVITY:** 11. “This I Believe,” part 2  **DUE:** RESEARCH BRIEF |

***V – Texts and Teaching Aids***

**Required Text:**

Mertens, D. M., & Wilson, A. T. (2012). *Program evaluation theory and practice: A comprehensive guide*. New York: Guilford Press.

**Optional Texts:**

Wholey, J. S., Hatry, H. P., & Newcomer, K. E. (2010). *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

**Additional Teaching Aids:**

Trochim, W. M. (2006). The Research Methods Knowledge Base, ii. Available online at: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/>.

Trochim, W., Urban, J. B., Hargraves, M., Hebbard, C., Buckley, J., Archibald, T., Johnson, M., & Burgermaster, M. (2012). *The Guide to the Systems Evaluation Protocol* (V2.2). Ithaca, NY. Available online at: <https://core.human.cornell.edu/research/systems/protocol/index.cfm>.

Additional readings pertaining to specific topics are drawn primarily from three leading evaluation journals: *The American Journal of Evaluation*, *New Directions for Evaluation*, and *Evaluation and Program Planning*. Additional readings, as well as optional supplementary materials, will be made available on the course Canvas site.

***VI – Overview of Assignments & Student Assessment***

**1. Participation in Activities & Discussions**: Over the course of the semester, there will be a number of activities associated with each week’s Module. In total, there are 11 activities. These activities do not require advance preparation. Rather, they are meant to represent “in-class” activities to help you engage meaningfully with the materials and ideas being discussed in that Module. However, activity will lead to a tangible product (e.g., a brief written response to a prompt, a draft logic model, etc.) that will be submitted via Canvas and graded with a plus (satisfactory) or a minus (unsatisfactory). As such, it is important that you thoughtfully complete each activity. *(20% of final grade)*

**2. Critical Reflection Responses (CRR)**: Starting with Week 2, you will be expected to develop weekly reflective responses regarding that week’s topic of discussion. These reflective responses should capture the main points of the readings. Additionally, you are strongly encouraged to bring in your own points of view, ideas, and commentary that represent what you are learning through your engagement with the course material. You are also encouraged to pose questions in your CRRs, which may be used to stimulate group dialogue. Each CRR should be one to two pages of typed, double-spaced text. The CRR for each week is due by 8:00am the day the next Module is posted (i.e., Wednesday of each week). ***You are expected to write at least 10 CRR over the course of the semester***. CRRs will be graded on a 1-5 scale with 5 being the highest. Please submit your CRRs via the course Canvas site as a word processing file (e.g., Microsoft Word) named in the following way: “Last name\_x,” where x is the number of the CRR. So, the first CRR I submit (which will be on the second week of class) would be named Archibald\_1.

*(30% of final grade)*

**3. Practicum Report**: As mentioned above, an important emphasis of this course is the practical “how-to” side of actually planning and implementing an evaluation in a non-formal education context. The best way to learn evaluation is to do it. So, throughout the semester, you will work on a practical project in which you select and work on a real-life non-formal education program that needs some evaluation help. However, especially because this project involves real-life programs and people, a “one size fits all” approach to this assignment cannot work. Rather, you must tailor your project to the organization or program you choose. You must present your choice of organization/program (including a description of it), and what type of project you will do, by Week 6—this practicum proposal should be roughly two to three pages of typed, doubled-spaced text (further instructions on writing the practicum proposal will be provided). Ideally, you will choose to work with a program with which you have some familiarity. The type of project that you will do should be chosen from the following options:

1. Prepare an evaluation plan for a non-formal education program.

2. Conduct data collection and analysis for a non-formal education program.

3. Propose an evaluation capacity building approach to meet the needs of a non-formal education organization.

The nature of the practicum report will vary based on which of the options you select, but regardless, it should be eight to ten pages of typed, double-spaced text. It should be prepared in a professional manner and should meet the needs of your “client” (whether or not you choose to actually share it with them). More specific guidelines on successfully completing and reporting on the practicum experience will be provided. The practicum report is due on Week 11. *(25 % of final grade)*

**4. Research Brief:** This course emphasizes both the theory and the practice of program evaluation in non-formal education. The practicum project (described above) emphasizes practical skills that that course helps you gain. The research brief allows you to engage with important theoretical aspects of program evaluation. In form and content, it is like a traditional research paper on a specific topic. However, it will be slightly shorter in length (eight to ten pages of typed, double-spaced text). In the research brief, you will draw from assigned course readings and from any additional literature you find on your own to present and explicate one evaluation topic of your own choosing. For example, you could focus on:

1. Particular philosophical assumptions and/or questions relating to evaluation;

2. A particular branch or tradition of evaluation;

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| **Grading Scale** | |
| A | 100 - 93 |
| A- | 92 - 90 |
| B+ | 89 - 87 |
| B | 86 - 83 |
| B- | 82 -80 |
| C+ | 79 - 77 |
| C | 76 - 73 |
| C- | 72 - 70 |
| D+ | 69 - 67 |
| D | 66 - 63 |
| D- | 62 - 60 |
| F | ≤ 59 |

3. A methodological consideration (related to measurement, sampling, design, etc.); or

4. A contemporary controversy or new direction in evaluation.

Whatever topic you choose, it should be salient and insightful enough that your short paper could be expanded into a manuscript that would be publishable in a peer-reviewed journal (e.g., *not* a text book-like presentation of how to create a survey, but rather a presentation, review, and analysis of innovative on-line survey approaches). You are encouraged—but not required—to discuss your selected topic with an instructor before you begin your research and writing. The research brief is due on the last day of class. *(25% of final grade)*

Final grades will be based upon a percentage of total points out of a possible 100 points. Assignment guidelines and assessment criteria will be posted in Canvas. Assignments are due in class on the day stated on calendar unless otherwise noted. All items are subject to change.

**Summary of Student Assessment Schema:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Possible points** |
| Participation in Module Activities   * *Graded with +/-* | 20 |
| Critical Reflection Responses (CRR)   * *Must write at least ten* * *Graded with +/-* | 30 |
| Practicum Report | 25 |
| Research Brief | 25 |
| TOTAL | 100 |

Written work not submitted on time and/or not following the specified format will be marked down accordingly.

***VII – Additional Important Information***

***Written Work Policy***. The American Psychological Association’s *Publication Manual* (6th edition) is the recommended style manual for written work. Papers with minor grammar violations style requirements will be marked accordingly. Papers comprising serious composition and/or citation violations will not be reviewed. As part of Virginia Tech’s Principles of Community, participants should avoid using sexist, gender-exclusive, racially prejudiced, and other forms of discriminatory language in all written work.

***Policy on Academic Integrity*.** Each participant in this course is expected to abide by the *Virginia Tech Honor System*. It is a university-wide expectation that written work submitted by a participant in this course for academic credit will be the participant’s own work. For full information on the Undergraduate Honor System, please visit <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>. For the Graduate Honor System, please visit <http://ghs.grads.vt.edu/>.

***Learning Needs***. Any participants with special needs are encouraged to consult with us about those needs. Please consult with us as soon as possible so that we can work together to make the necessary accommodations. Anything you discuss with us will be held in strictest confidence. Additional information about assistance for special learning needs for all Virginia Tech students can be located at the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), 250 S. Main Street, Suite 300; Mail Code (0185); 540-231-0858 (V); 540-231-0853 (TTY); [www.ssd.vt.edu](http://www.ssd.vt.edu)

**Virginia Tech’s Principles of Community**

Students are to adhere to Virginia Tech’s Principles of Community in all aspects of the course. See Virginia Tech: Principles of Community: <http://vimeo.com/38666882>

*Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university, committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice the following principles as fundamental to our on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members:*

* ***We affirm*** the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.
* ***We affirm*** the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.
* ***We affirm*** the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.
* ***We reject*** all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.
* ***We pledge*** our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).