Course Information

Instructor: Lecia Barker  
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Classroom: UTA 1.502  
Day and Time: Monday 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
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Phone: 512-232-8364  
Office Hours: Monday afternoons; other times by appointment or drop in

Best way to contact me: email, SMS but tell me who you are © 720.352.7167

Rationale

INF 387E: Evaluating Information Programs is a service learning course, in which students learn while providing a genuine service to a local non-profit organization. The nonprofit Whatever your area of professional expertise or position, you will benefit by knowing how to systematically collect, analyze, and report on data that permits assessment of the actual or intended impact of an organization’s programs on those who receive services, those who provide services, and/or the larger context within which those programs operate. Program evaluation is the systematic investigation of a project or program to determine its worth or merit. An evaluation is useful if it supports decision making about reasonable courses of action for an organization. Examples of program evaluation related to information studies include (but are not limited to):

- An assessment determining the information needs for clients/patrons of an organization
- A cost/benefit analysis to determine the most cost-effective way of getting information to people either within an organization or to clients
- A comparison of the effectiveness of different delivery methods for helping the largest number of people in the shortest time
- An outcomes evaluation to determine how many people were helped with information over the past five years
- A formative evaluation to understand how information can be used to help an organization to accomplish its goals

This introductory course will support students in learning the basic practices, theories, ethical, social, and cultural issues related to conducting program evaluation in organizations as related to the use or provision of information.

Program evaluation can be done at different times in the life of a program and have different foci -- it could ask "how well did we do it?" "how are we doing?" "how should we do it?" or a number of other questions. To answer these questions, an evaluator becomes familiar with the program, identifies the best sources and types of information, collects data (e.g., through interviews, observation, document review, questionnaires, etc.), synthesizes and analyzes the data, and reports to stakeholders and decision makers. The evaluation helps people make evidence-based decisions about how to allocate scarce resources to best reach their goals.
Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

- Understand basic models and principles of program evaluation and apply these principles to the evaluation of a real organization
- Know how to use qualitative data collection and analytical techniques in support of program evaluation
- Understand basic features and structures of non-profit organizations as related to information uses, needs, and provision
- Be able to write a readable evaluation report that meets stakeholder information and decision-making needs
- Understand ethical, social, political, and cultural issues confronted by program evaluators

Class Format

This class will be taught in seminar format. There will be very little lecture. Class will be taught interactively through discussion and exploration of subject matter, theory, methodology/methods, and hands-on collaborative learning and projects. Students are expected to read all assigned readings before class, write summaries, and be prepared to discuss them in class. When students have interaction with clients and stakeholders, they will write journal entries and we will discuss these journal entries as a group in class.

Grade Components

Participation in Class (20%)

- Discussing key concepts by engaging in discussion with other students and professor
- Giving and getting feedback on skills practice and client-student experiences
- Collaboratively learning with other students and being a good group member

Reading Summaries and Journal Entries (20%)

- All reading summaries and journal entries due by email at 12 pm (noon), Sunday before class
- Reading summaries briefly summarize key points and include reflection of their implications for working with your client
- Journals summarize your interactions with client and reflect on issues of relationship, difficulties, etc. We will use Blackboard for journals.

Assignments (60%)

- Separate documents will describe the following assignments: informal “sector” report, evaluation plan and revisions, data collection instruments, final written report, final presentation
- You will also be evaluated on successful project management and relationship with client

IRB Certification

All students must complete the human participant training here: http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/training/index.html
(or: search irb + training within utexas.edu)
Readings

The following three books from the University of California Center for the Study of Evaluation are available new or used on Amazon.com. The parenthesized abbreviation is how these titles are referenced in the course schedule. In addition to the books and articles below, students are expected to seek high-quality information and/or research about his or her nonprofit sector and specific nonprofit organization (as a group).


The readings below are available on Blackboard. The course schedule refers to them by author name.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics, Class Activities</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 31</td>
<td>Introduction to Course, Each Other, Evaluation, and Information</td>
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<td>September 7</td>
<td>No class: Labor Day Holiday</td>
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<td>September 14</td>
<td>Being “Businesslike” as a Nonprofit Role of Founder in Orgs Fundamentals of Evaluation</td>
<td>Dart; Schein; EH: Introduction, 1</td>
<td>Reading summaries</td>
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<td>September 21</td>
<td>Project management: Ron Pollock</td>
<td>Project management reading TBA</td>
<td>Reading summaries</td>
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<td>September 28</td>
<td>Role of evaluator Nonprofit clients’ presentations; selection of project, groups</td>
<td>EH: 2, 3</td>
<td>Research organizations’ socio-political climate/sector, stakeholder groups Reading summaries</td>
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<td>October 5</td>
<td>Focusing an Evaluation Introducing Qualitative Methods Discuss evaluation goals of client</td>
<td>F: 1-2; QM 1</td>
<td>Set client meeting to articulate goals Reading summaries; Journals</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 12</td>
<td>Nonprofits’ Use of Information and IT Developing an Evaluation Plan</td>
<td>Klemz, Simon, &amp; Kumar; Hackler &amp; Saxton; QM: 2-3</td>
<td>Reading summaries; Journals</td>
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<td>October 19</td>
<td>Qualitative Evaluation Planning for Data Collection</td>
<td>F: 3-4; Stufflebeam</td>
<td>Reading summaries; Journals Draft Evaluation Plan</td>
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<td>October 26</td>
<td>Data Collection &amp; Interpretation Methods Practice interviewing, observing</td>
<td>QM: 4-6</td>
<td>Reading summaries; Journals Final Evaluation Plan</td>
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<td>November 2</td>
<td>Project management checkpoint Discussion</td>
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<td>November 9</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td>Scriven</td>
<td>Reading summaries; Journals</td>
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## INF 387E: Evaluating Information Programs Fall 2009

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<th>Topics, Class Activities</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>November 16</td>
<td>Nonprofit management, values</td>
<td>Helmig, Jegers, &amp; Lapsley; Bruce</td>
<td>Reading summaries; Journals</td>
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<td>November 23</td>
<td>Project management checkpoint</td>
<td>Morris &amp; Fitz-Gibbon</td>
<td>Reading summaries; Journals</td>
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<td>Writing evaluation results</td>
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<td>November 30</td>
<td>Practice presentation</td>
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<td>Journals; Draft report; Draft presentation</td>
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<td>December 8</td>
<td>Outcomes of semester’s work</td>
<td>Presentations to clients, faculty, interested students</td>
<td>Final report</td>
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<td>(Tuesday) at</td>
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<td>3:15 pm (place TBA)</td>
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### Stock Content Below

**Academic Integrity**

This course will depend on collaborative learning, shown in decades of research to increase student learning and feeling of belonging to an academic community. It is assumed that students will produce original work in collaboration and not submit someone else’s work as if it were their own. It is also assumed that students are taking this course because they want to work at learning and not only because they want a grade.

Here is the University of Texas’ Statement on Academic Integrity:

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissable cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e mail, an e mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy. Should copying occur, both the student who copied work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). This letter should be presented to the instructor in each course at the beginning of the semester and accommodations needed should be discussed at that time. Five business days before an exam the student should remind the instructor of any testing accommodations that will be needed. See website below for more information: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssp/providing.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssp/providing.php)
**University Electronic Mail Notification Policy: Check your Email**

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at [http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html](http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.html).

**This Course Uses Blackboard**

This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. Student enrollments in each course are updated each evening. Blackboard can be used to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to take online quizzes and surveys. You will be responsible for checking the Blackboard course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Blackboard login page. Scheduled downtimes are not an excuse for late work. However, if there is an unscheduled downtime for a significant period of time, I will make an adjustment if it occurs close to the due date. Blackboard is available at [http://courses.utexas.edu](http://courses.utexas.edu). Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm, so plan accordingly.