ESM 228: Monitoring & Evaluation (S’21)
Instructor: Mark Buntaine (buntaine@bren.ucsb.edu)
Class meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-10:45
Virtual classroom: https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/82007062595
Office hours: By Appointment

Course Description

Evidence-based programming and policy-making are now priorities for many non-profit organizations and public agencies, including organizations that work on energy, climate change, and natural resource management. At the heart of evidence-based decision-making are monitoring and evaluation systems, which focus on the prospective design of data collection procedures and evaluations to support decision-making. To generate datasets that are useful for decision-making, organizations often have to create plans to collect data in advance of implementing programs. Likewise, the ability to evaluate the impacts of programs depends in large part on the ways that programs are rolled out and the data collection systems that are in place, which requires advanced planning. This course provides an overview of the considerations and techniques involved in prospectively designing monitoring and evaluation systems within public and non-profit organizations to support decision-making and accountability. We will explore the advantages of advanced planning for monitoring and evaluation, as opposed to relying passively on available data.

Student Evaluation

Participation: Your active participation is important for the success of this course. I expect that you will closely read all of the assigned articles and documents before coming to (virtual) class and that you will be prepared to engage in all discussions and activities.

Practicums: The course is organized into four units, each of which culminates with a practicum where you will be asked to practice the skills discussed in that unit. The detailed instructions for the practicums will be laid out in separate documents. For each practicum, you will be randomly assigned to groups of three individuals. We will spend the practicum sessions on active work, group Q&A, and lightning presentations. For each practicum, your group will turn in a written product.

Grading:
Participation  10%
P1: Theory of change  15%
P2: Measurement design  30%
P3: Impact evaluation design  30%
P4: Organizational M&E strategy  15%
Course Policies

**Assignment completion policy:** You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

**Re-grades:** I take student evaluation seriously and do not entertain requests to re-grade assignments unless I receive a formal, written request for a re-grade that compellingly documents a serious oversight on my part. A serious oversight on my part indicates that the entire assignment should receive further attention. Your score may go up or down if I decide that an assignment needs this kind of attention, so plan accordingly. That being said, I strongly encourage you to meet with me to discuss my feedback on your assignments.

**Academic Honesty:** I expect you to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. This means only turning in work that is your own and properly citing all information and ideas that you draw from others. Any assignment that does not adhere to UCSB academic honesty guidelines will not receive credit and will be referred to campus judicial procedures. See: [http://studentconduct.sa.ucsb.edu/academic-integrity](http://studentconduct.sa.ucsb.edu/academic-integrity)

**Course changes:** Since the class is meeting virtually, it is possible that the order or content of the sessions will have to change. Pay attention to announcements and check back here often.

Reference Texts


Unit 1: Introduction

Session 1 (Tu 3/30) — Introduction & preliminaries


Session 2 (Th 4/1) — Goals of M&E


Session 3 (Tu 4/6) — Theory of change


Session 4 (Th 4/8) — Theory of change (practicum)

Examples of theories of change:
Alaska Conservation Foundation
Rare
Marine Stewardship Council
Ford Foundation
WASH Alliance International


Assignment: Pick a future-oriented program or strategy for an organization that is intended to have an impact on outcomes you care about. Sketch out and justify a detailed theory of change that links the input and activities of the organization to the targeted outcomes and impacts.

Unit 2: Measurement

Session 5 (Tu 4/13) — Results framework & indicators


Example of indicator bank

Session 6 (Th 4/15) — Interviews, surveys, and human subjects


Session 7 (Tu 4/20) - Sampling bias


Session 8 (Th 4/22) - Sampling techniques


Session 9 (Tu 4/27) — Measurement strategy (practicum)

**Example results frameworks / measurement strategies**
*Green Climate Fund*
*CGIAR*
*Canada National Energy Board*
*Food and Agriculture Organization*
*California Water*

**Assignment**: Pick a future-oriented program or strategy for an organization that it intended to have an impact on outcomes you care about. Sketch out a detailed results framework for the program. Additionally, design a data collection instrument that will be used to measure the outcomes in your results framework.

**Template** (Gates Foundation)
Unit 3: Impact Evaluation

Session 10 (Th 4/29) — Causal inference and counterfactuals


Session 11 (Tu 5/4) — Randomized evaluations


Session 12 (Th 5/6) — Design principles for randomized evaluations


Session 13 (Tu 5/11) - Power analysis


Session 14 (Th 5/13) — Design challenges of randomized evaluations


Session 15 (Tu 5/18) — Mechanisms


Session 16 (Th 5/20) — Quasi-experimental techniques


Session 17 (Tu 5/25) — Impact evaluation (practicum)

Reading: 3ie Impact Evaluation Database (read at least two impact evaluations of interest)

Assignment: Pick a program of interest that has yet to be implemented, but for which a full description or initial appraisal has been carefully documented. Design an impact evaluation for this program that can be used to estimate the impacts of the program. The impact evaluation should address: (1) treatment; (2) randomization; (3) sample; (4) power; (5) contingencies; and (6) mechanisms.

Unit 4: Building Monitoring & Evaluation Systems

Session 18 (Th 5/27) — Formative, process and performance evaluations


USAID. (n.d.) Rapid Feedback MERL. Project Webpage.


Session 19 (Tu 6/1) — Developing organizational M&E strategies

Skim these strategies for real-world examples:


Session 20 (Th 6/3) — Organizational M&E strategy (practicum)


Assignment: design an organizational M&E strategy for an organization that you might like to work for. Identify the key questions that an M&E strategy could answer and discuss how you will utilize scarce resources for achieving the learning or accountability objectives of the organization.

Syllabus change log
1 — original syllabus posted on first day of instruction (3/29/21)