ESM 228: Monitoring & Evaluation (F’23)

Instructors:
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Class meetings:
Mondays & Wednesdays 9:30-10:45 at Bren 1424

Office hours:
Buntaine (Bren 4422): Mondays 11-12 (booking link) or by appointment
Malagutti (Bonsai Room 4327): Thursdays 1-2 (booking link) or 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 class and that you will be prepared to engage in all discussions and activities.

Practicums: The course is organized around 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 can work in groups of up to three individuals. To promote team mixing, you can only work with any classmate once during the quarter in these groups. 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: Organizational M&E strategy (due: Wed 10/18 @ 5pm) 15%
P2: Theory of change (due: Mon 10/30 @ 5pm) 25%
P3: Measurement design (due: Mon 11/13 @ 5pm) 25%
P4: Impact evaluation design (due: Wed 12/13 @ 5pm) 25%

Course Policies

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

Re-grades: We 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

Course changes: 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: Evaluation Strategy

Session 1 (M 10/2) — Introduction & preliminaries

Session 2 (W 10/4) — Types of evaluations: formative, process, performance, impact


Session 3 (M 10/9) — Developing organizational M&E strategies
(No In-Person Class, Please Watch Recorded Lecture)

Skim these strategies for real-world examples:


Session 4 (W 10/11) — Organizational M&E strategy (practicum working day)


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.

Unit 2. Theory of Change

Session 5 (M 10/16) — Theory of change in practice (Guest speaker: Rachel Kenny)
Session 6 (W 10/18) — Theory of change (short lecture and practicum working day)

Examples of theories of change (read two):
- 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.

Session 7 (M 10/23) – Theory of change (practicum poster day)

**Assignment:** Create a poster from several sheets of normal sized paper displaying your theory of change. Come prepared to present the theory of change to colleagues and engage in discussion when they provide feedback.

**Unit 3: Measurement**

Session 8 (W 10/25) — From measurement to results framework


Example of indicator banks (skim one):


Session 9 (M 10/30) — Interviews, surveys, and human subjects


Session 10 (W 11/1) - Sampling


Session 11 (M 11/6) — Measurement strategy (practicum working day)

**Example results frameworks / measurement strategies**

- [Green Climate Fund](#)
- [CGIAR](#)
- [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)
Mark leads

Flavio leads

**Unit 4: Impact Evaluation**

**Session 12 (W 11/8) — Causal inference and counterfactuals**


**Session 13 (M 11/13) — Randomized evaluations**


**Session 14 (W 11/15) — Design principles for randomized evaluations**


**Session 15 (M 11/20) — Principles of power analysis**


Session 16 (W 11/22) — Power analysis problem-set (No class in-person, open office hours)

https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/Exercise-PowerCalcs_0.pdf

Power calculator Shiny app: https://egap.shinyapps.io/power-app/
DeclareDesign Wizard: https://eos.wzb.eu/ipi/DDWizard/

Session 17 (M 11/27) — Design challenges of randomized evaluations


Session 18 (W 11/29) — Mechanisms


Session 19 (M 12/4) — Quasi-experimental evaluations


Session 20 (W 12/6) — Impact evaluation (practicum working day)

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.

Syllabus change log
1 — original syllabus posted on first day of instruction (10/2/2023)