

SPRING 2003  
AJ203  
Wed 5:30-8:00pm  
MacQuarrie Hall Rm.526

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## AJ 203 JUSTICE POLICY ANALYSIS

**Course Description:** An analysis of justice system policies and procedures, with an emphasis on how policies are formulated, evaluated and interpreted. Pre-requisites are Stat 95(or equivalent), AJ 105, and AJ 202.

**Course Objectives:** The major objective of the course is to provide a basic understanding of the program evaluation and policy analysis process. Sub-goals are to a) gain entree into a criminal justice agency; b) identify an operational program; c) design a formative and outcome evaluation of the program; and d) evaluate the program and suggest policy implications for program improvement.

**Course Structure:** This is a seminar style course, where both students and instructor share responsibility for learning. Participation in the class is required. This means more than attendance: it includes reading the assigned materials prior to each class meeting, taking turns in leading class discussion, and actively participating by asking probing questions, offering suggestions and critiquing the readings and each others' work.

**Course Requirements and Grading:** Students may work alone or in small teams of two or three persons of mutual choice. With the help of the instructor, they will divide up the task into manageable pieces so that *each will have individual responsibility for one component of the final group product*. The task for the group is to prepare a group oral presentation and a group written paper describing the evaluation of an ongoing criminal justice program, and a discussion of the policy implications resulting from the evaluation.

Individual grades will be based upon each student's contribution to class discussion and oral presentation of report (20%), the individual component of the final paper (40%), and the final group paper as a whole (40%).

Each small group is expected to meet with the instructor at the beginning to define the topic and to assign individual responsibility for component pieces, and again prior to the group presentation to ensure a high-quality, well-coordinated delivery.

**Required Texts:**

Weiss, C.H. (1998). *Evaluation*. Second Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Patton, M.Q. (1997). *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

### **Paper Format:**

The paper should be approximately 20 typewritten, double-spaced pages, font-size about 12, not including references, figures, tables and appendices. It should be written in APA editorial style, especially the format for references and footnotes. Attention should be paid to punctuation, spelling and grammar in order to present a professional product. The paper should be organized under the following headings:

1. Executive Summary (to be written last but placed at the front of the paper). This is a 1-2 page succinct summary of the research in a non-technical manner describing the program, why it was important to study, a summary of the methodology you used to analyze the program, the findings and limitations of the research, and the social policy recommendations for changing or developing the program.
2. Introduction: This will be an opening introduction to the criminal justice program that you have chosen to study, a brief description of its historical development, its goals and objectives.
3. Literature Review: Here you will survey previous research studies and policy articles that have investigated this topic, making sure that you cover all of the important ones in the last ten years. A minimum of 6 studies should be examined, and more if there is little direct research on this subject and you need to draw upon more tangential prior research.

The literature review may be organized historically, or in terms of different theoretical or strategic approaches to dealing with the criminal justice problem that the program aims to ameliorate. Each previous research study should be briefly summarized in terms of the research design, sample, methods, and findings. Each policy article needs to be summarized in terms of its theoretical approach, policy principles, and specific guidelines for program formation.

The literature review should conclude with a brief summary of what has been found in previous studies, what are the controversial or null findings, what are the gaps in knowledge, and what methodological flaws plague prior work. (If possible, identify and evaluate alternative programs or policies that may be compared to the criminal justice program you have chosen to evaluate). All of this should lead into a statement of the purpose of your research and help justify the approach you take in your research design and policy analysis.

4. Design of the Evaluation: Describe *both a formative and an outcome evaluation research design* and give the rationale for choosing it. List the goals and the strategies (or operations) of the program and choose corresponding measures for each important process variable and outcome variable. Describe any informants or subjects, criteria for selection, and how they were recruited. Describe the methods of data collection in detail (e.g. focus groups, survey, documents, observation). Justify the reliability and validity of the measures that are used.

5. Data Analysis and Findings: Using data you have collected, *undertake one piece of the evaluation (e.g. either the formative or the outcome evaluation or part thereof.)*. A formative evaluation involves describing the number and demographic characteristics of the clients and the providers of the program and the extent to which the program operated according to plan (e.g. break downs by race, age, gender, criminal history etc.; variation in how the program was delivered in various settings, by different staff members; attendance and drop-out rates etc.) A formative evaluation can include qualitative descriptions of how the program operates from the point of view of various stakeholders or clients. An outcome evaluation means assessing the extent to which the program achieved the results that it was aiming to achieve (i.e. with reference to its goals). The outcome evaluation might include its cost-effectiveness. You may also undertake post-hoc analysis examining who seemed to benefit from what, and other, non-intended effects of the program (both beneficial and deleterious). If you have significant amounts of missing data, attempt to assess how your results have been biased by the missing data.

6. Discussion and Policy Implications: Summarize, discuss and interpret the principle findings, speculating how these data are similar or dissimilar to previous studies and why. Note the limitations of the research and caution about the possible misuse or over generalization of the findings. Most importantly, discuss the policy implications for how the program could be better implemented or redesigned, for whom it works best and for whom it does not seem to be suited. Evaluate the manpower and budgetary implications of the changes and redesigns that you are proposing. In making proposals, be realistic and aware of what is ethically sound, economically feasible and politically acceptable.

7. References

8. Figures and Tables referred to in the text of the report.

9. Appendix. This should include your evaluation measures, and any supporting documents from the agency that describe the goals, philosophy and operations of the program that are too lengthy to include in the text.

## **Course Outline and Required Reading:**

- Jan 29 Introduction, overview and course expectations;  
program & policy options discussed.  
Weiss Chpts 1-3.
- Feb 5 Types of evaluations  
Gaining access and dealing with stakeholders.  
Patton Part 1.
- Feb 12 Identifying program goals and measures of process.  
Teams formed and final selection of program for evaluation.  
Weiss Chpts 4-6.
- Feb 19 Research designs  
Weiss Chpts 8-10.
- Feb 26 Data collection - choosing methods and triangulating data  
Weiss, Chpt 7. Patton Part 2.
- Mar 5 Data analysis and presentation  
Weiss, Chpt 12-13
- Mar 12 Interpretation of findings and policy implications.  
Patton, Part 3.
- Mar 19 Ethics & politics .  
Weiss, Chpt 14. Patton, Part 4.
- Mar 26 SPRING RECESS
- Apr 2 Research Day – First draft outline of introduction & literature review due.  
(team meetings)
- Apr 9 Research Day – First draft outline of evaluation design due.  
(team meetings)
- Apr 16 Research Day – First draft outline of data analysis & findings due.  
(team meetings)
- Apr 23 Research Day – First draft outline of discussion & policy implications due.  
(team meetings)
- Apr 30 Presentations Begin  
First draft of executive summary due.
- May 7 Presentations Continue  
Final Papers due for early review
- May 14 Presentations Complete (optional class meeting if needed)  
Early review papers returned

**FINAL PAPERS DUE ON DAY OF EXAM SCHEDULED FOR THIS CLASS**  
Wednesday, May 21st. at 5:30pm.