

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### RMTD 407: INTRODUCTION TO EVALUATION THEORY

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 (best means to contact)

Office hours Mondays 10-11am via course  
 zoom link or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:** This course introduces students to program evaluation theory in the social sciences, including historical development of the field, various conceptualizations of evaluation, and social and political contexts of evaluation practice. Students will engage major theoretical concepts of the field—methods, use, values, politics and policy making, and practice—from the perspectives of various evaluation theorists. Throughout course readings, discussion and assignments, students will have the opportunity to reflect critically on understandings of social justice, implicitly and explicitly, evident in the evaluation theories. The goals of the course are that students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast major theories of program evaluation (Conceptual Framework 1),
- Understand how evaluation theories relate to evaluation practice (Conceptual Framework 2)
- Understand the issues of social justice and inequity within the field of evaluation (Conceptual Framework 3)
- Understand the ethical, political, and social aspects of program evaluation practice (Conceptual Framework 4).

#### Required Text

Schwandt, T. (2015). *Evaluation Foundations Revisited: Cultivating a Life of the Mind for Practice*. Stanford University Press. ISBN: 0804786550. [Available as Ebook through LUC library](#)

#### Selected Readings From:

[Christi, C. & Alkin, M. \(2019\). \*New Directions for Evaluation\*, 2019\(163\).](#)  
 Stufflebeam, D., & Coryn, C. (2014). *Evaluation theory, models, and applications* (2nd ed., Research methods for the social sciences ; 50). Jossey-Bass. [Available as Ebook through LUC library](#)

Supplemental readings posted in Sakai

<b>Grading</b>	95-100 pts.	A
	90-94 pts.	A-
	86-89 pts.	B+
	83-85 pts.	B
	80-82 pts.	B-
	75-79 pts.	C+
	70-74 pts.	C
< 70 pts.	F	

### Weekly schedule with Course Readings and Assignments

Refer to Units posted in Sakai. See links on left-hand side of course.

Unit/ Week	Topic Area	Readings*^	Assignment due**
1 5/18	Relationship between Evaluation Theory & Practice	Schwandt Ch. 1 & 2; Alkin & Christie (2012); Dillman, Scott & Kinarsky (2019)	
2 5/25	Values & Valuing	Bledsoe & Graham (2005); Schwandt Ch. 3; Scriven (2019)	Learning Plan
3 6/1	Social Justice	Mertens & Wilson (2012); House (2019)	
4 6/8	Reasoning, Evidence, & Argument	Schwandt Ch. 4; Boruch, Allen & Gerstner (2019)	Final paper outline
5 6/15	Politics & Policy Making	Schwandt Ch. 5; Dahler-Larsen, P. (2011)	Final paper draft
6 6/22	Use	Schwandt Ch. 6 & 7; Patton (2019)	
6/29			Final Paper

\*Course readings that are not from a course textbook will be posted as a PDF in Sakai or as an article in an e-journal available through the library.

^Each week you may also have in-depth theorist readings related to your presentations and/or final paper.

\*\*Each week you will also be required to do a Forum Post and Blog Post. You will also have 2—4 In-depth theorist presentations during the course on various weeks.

#### Additional Readings

Alkin, M. C. (Ed.). (2004). *Evaluation roots*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 3—55).

[Bledsoe, K. L., & Graham, J. A. \(2005\). The use of multiple evaluation approaches in program evaluation. \*American Journal of Evaluation\*, 26\(3\), 302-319.](#)

[Boruch, R., Allen, P. C., & Gerstner, C. \(2019\). To Randomize or Not to Randomize? That is the Question. \*New Directions for Evaluation\*, 2019\(163\), 73–82. <https://doi-org.flagship.luc.edu/10.1002/ev.20373>](#)

[Dahler-Larsen, P. \(2011\). \*The Evaluation Society\*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Introduction \(pp. 1-29\).](#)

[Dillman, L., Scott, C., & Kinarsky, A. R. \(2019\). The Case Study: The Women Affirming Motherhood Program. \*New Directions for Evaluation\*, 2019\(163\), 19–26. <https://doi-org.flagship.luc.edu/10.1002/ev.20376>](#)

[House, E. R. \(2019\). Evaluation With a Focus on Justice. \*New Directions for Evaluation\*, 2019\(163\), 61–72. <https://doi-org.flagship.luc.edu/10.1002/ev.20378>](#)

Mertens, D.M., & Wilson, A.T. (2012). *Program Evaluation Theory and Practice: A Comprehensive Guide*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press. ISBN: 1462503152 Excerpt from Ch. 6: Transformative paradigm and Social Justice Branch (p. 161-217).

[Patton, M. Q. \(2019\). Proposal for Evaluation of Women Affirming Motherhood. \*New Directions for Evaluation\*, 2019\(163\), 27–47.](https://doi-org.flagship.luc.edu/10.1002/ev.20375) <https://doi-org.flagship.luc.edu/10.1002/ev.20375>

[Scriven, M. \(2019\). The Checklist Imperative. \*New Directions for Evaluation\*, 2019\(163\), 49–60.](https://doi-org.flagship.luc.edu/10.1002/ev.20374) <https://doi-org.flagship.luc.edu/10.1002/ev.20374>

Shadish, W.R., Cook, T.D., & Leviton, L.C. (1990). *Foundations of Program Evaluation: Theories of Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 19–67). (Optional, Week 1)

### Assignments and Evaluation

Class Attendance & Participation	6 pts
Forum Posts on Readings	12 pts
In-Depth Study and Presentation of Evaluation Theorists	24 pts
Peer Feedback	6 pts
Blog Posts on Readings and Final Project	12 pts
Final Paper	40 pts

### Assignment Descriptions

#### Learning Plan

I want you to develop an individualized plan to facilitate your learning for this course. Be sure to review the other assignments in this course carefully prior to completing this learning plan. In this 1-2 page plan, please include the following:

1. In your past, current, and/or anticipated future contexts, what encounters have you had with evaluation? What are your perceptions of evaluation? How do you envision evaluation being beneficial in your professional role? (Please note: I will use your response to this part to 1) provide input on the choices that you propose below, and 2) help me identify and develop relevant evaluation scenarios.)
2. For your final project, which option would you like to do? In 150 words or less, describe your initial topic for the paper. Please note that you can still change topics during the course, but I would like you to pick an area of focus.
3. For the In-Depth Study and Presentations on Evaluation Theorists, please indicate who you intend to work with and, if working with others, what time you will be meeting each week to prepare your presentations. Please also indicate your top choices for evaluation theories/theorists. Although I strongly encourage you to choose only one theorist a week, you may choose two in a week.

Completion of this plan will contribute to your participation grade in the course.

## Class Attendance and Participation

Students will receive a point for each week that they actively participate in the course, including synchronous and asynchronous contributions. Please notify the instructor via email should you need to be absent from a synchronous session or find yourself falling behind in your work.

Weekly participation typically includes the following:

- Participate in weekly synchronous sessions on Wednesdays from 5—7pm via zoom link in the Sakai Course
- Participate in approximately an hour of week of additional synchronous interaction with peers through preparation of presentations and providing peer feedback on final projects. Students will determine these times.
- Watch videos and complete readings to constructively participate in synchronous and asynchronous discussions
- Submit all assignments

It is important to note that *how* a student participates is often a function of their particular learning style. Therefore, participation is less about the frequency with which a student engages in class discussion and more about the quality of the contributions. For the purposes of this course, participation ought to reflect dispositions of professionalism, inquiry, and social justice. Participation is valued in which students build upon one another's comments, provide meaningful connections to practice, share critical observations and insights on a topic, and generally increase the complexity and richness of the discussion. Students are also discouraged to act as gatekeepers to the conversation and encourage the participation of others as well as pose questions to one another. To achieve this, a variety of pedagogical approaches are used to ensure that each individual's preferred learning style is addressed over the course of the semester.

Should you miss an online session, arrive late, leave early, or fail to complete a unit in the timeframe indicated, you are responsible for identifying and obtaining missed material from your peers and your classroom participation grade will be affected.

## Forum Posts on Readings

For each week in the course, post one **question/comment that you would like to discuss** in the synchronous section from the course readings. Be sure to post questions by 2pm each Wednesday, so that I can review them prior to our synchronous session.

## Blog Posts on Final Project

For each week in the course, make one blog post of 250 words in response to the following questions: **How might what you are learning in this unit be relevant (or not) to your final project?** I will be checking and providing feedback on blog posts every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. You must post in your blog by Sunday evening following a unit. For

example, the Week 1 Blog must be posted by Sunday May 24. You may also use the blogs to provide feedback and input to peers.

### In-Depth Study and Presentations on Evaluation Theorists

You will present on evaluation theorists for 10-15 minutes during our synchronous sessions. Utilizing a presentation template that we develop as a class in Week 1, you will create your presentations *individually* or in a *group with up to four members* based on your in-depth study, which is completed asynchronously. I *strongly recommend* that you complete these presentations in groups to facilitate your learning (although I respect that this may not be feasible for everyone). Should you choose to do the presentations in a group, to alleviate scheduling hassles, you will work with the *same* partner/group for the entire course. You will work with your group to develop the presentation collaboratively through an agreed upon plan. I strongly recommend setting a meeting time for 30-60 minutes to develop a presentation. You may also choose to use OneDrive or Google Drive to work collaboratively asynchronously.

The number of presentations you complete will be based on the following:

- Completed individually      2
- Completed in partners      3
- Completed in group of 3-4    4

If you are working in a group or with a partner, I recommend that you assign roles, such as the following. You may switch roles each week or keep them the same:

- Facilitator—schedules meetings, keeps group on task, manages time, ensures opportunity for perspectives of all members
- Note-taker—develops slide content based on group discussion, integrates perspectives of multiple members
- Editor—completes final editing, ensures quality presentation, submits presentation
- Presenter—presents during the synchronous session (NOTE: This can also be a shared responsibility)

Points will be determined as follows for each presentation:

Rubric Elements	Individually	Pairs	Group of 3+
Studied one theorist in-depth and be prepared with thoughtful contributions to share with class	2	1.5	1
Provides an overview of the theorist's approach based on the template provided	4	3	2
Provides a response to the evaluation scenario based on the theoretical approach	4	3	2
Discuss benefits and limitations of approach	2	1.5	1

## Final Paper

Please note that you may choose to do the final paper *individually* or with a *partner* from one of the three topics below. When writing your paper, be sure to integrate two to four evaluation theories/theorists, and justify why you have included them. Note that the goal is not to incorporate all or most theories that we have addressed this course, but to apply strategically selected theorists. A central element of justifying the selection of theories is to describe the context that is relevant to your paper topic. All papers must be 5000-6000 words and include extensive citations from course readings and other sources. You may use whatever citation style you prefer (e.g., APA, MLA).

### Theory and Practice: What theor(ies) or theorist(s) most influence your practice? (Aligned with Course Objective 2)

This semester we have studied numerous evaluation theorists that had varying approaches to their understandings of program evaluation and its practice. For your final paper, draw from relevant theorists that we have studied to illustrate what has most influenced your thinking about program evaluation, and/or what you anticipate integrating into any future opportunities to practice evaluation. In other words, what evaluation theory or theories most influence your evaluation practice? And, why? To help you do so, consider the following questions to stimulate your thinking (In your paper you do not necessarily have to address all of these questions, but some combination of the questions.):

- We have learned that evaluation theories often developed in relation to or in reaction to previous theories. Considering what you have learned from the evaluation field this semester, what evaluation theories and approaches do you think will be most valuable to draw on in the future? What strengths and foundational elements of previous theories do you see as essential to maintain? What ideas do you have for integrating various theorists in order to compensate for limitations in previous theorists?
- Throughout the course we have learned that the evaluation approaches are often related to the program contexts in which they are used. What program contexts do you encounter and/or anticipate encountering in your future career opportunities? What evaluation approaches are most appropriate for these contexts?
- We have learned that educational training, professional experiences, values and beliefs, professional colleagues, and so on, influence a scholar's theoretical development. What theoretical approaches to evaluation are most consistent with your background, values, beliefs, experiences, etc.?
- We have learned that evaluation theories both implicitly and explicitly address social justice and have different conceptions of social justice. How does your theory of program evaluation integrate values of social justice?

Write a paper in which you discuss what has most influenced your thinking about evaluation, and what theoretical approaches you hope to draw upon in the future. Be sure to credit theorists and readings we have discussed in class appropriately. You are welcome to include figures, diagrams, case examples, etc. to illustrate your evaluation approach.

Social Justice Lens: How does a social justice lens inform evaluation practice in a particular substantive area? (Aligned with Course Objective 3)

This semester we have studied numerous evaluation theorists that had varying approaches to their understandings of program evaluation and its practice. We have also considered the extent to which and ways in which these theories represent and value social justice. We have also learned that there is much space for expanding and enhancing an understanding of social justice for evaluation practice. For your final project, choose a substantive area that you have interest in evaluating (e.g., STEM education, teacher professional development, preschool education, response-to-intervention, retention in higher education). Consider the following questions to stimulate your thinking about evaluation in this substantive area (In your paper you do not necessarily have to address all of these questions, but some combination of the questions.):

- Given this substantive area, what social injustices are evident?
- Consider existing examples of evaluations within this substantive area. To what extent do these evaluations name or work to eliminate social injustices? To what extent do the existing evaluation practices further perpetuate social injustices?
- How can evaluation be a means of naming and/or working to eliminate these injustices? What existing evaluation theories or approaches may most appropriately address these injustices?
- How might you re-imagine evaluation approaches to address social injustices?

Write a paper in which you discuss how to evaluate a program (real or hypothetical) in this substantive area in a way that is socially justice. Draw upon and cite theorists we have discussed in class, as well as go beyond these theorists and suggest new directions for evaluation practice that are socially just.

COVID-19 Pandemic: How might the COVID-19 pandemic encourage the field to innovate theoretical approaches to evaluation? (Aligned with Course Objective 4)

This semester we have studied how evaluation approaches are rooted in their historical and sociological contexts. Most notably, Dahler-Larsen (2011) made this argument in *The Evaluation Society*. We are currently experiencing substantial, widespread changes to daily life for a sustained time period. These disruptions may have lasting effects on society and its institutions. For your final project, consider the changes occurring in society, and how data and evaluation are being used in the midst of the pandemic. Consider the following questions to stimulate your thinking about evaluation during and after the pandemic (In your paper you do not necessarily have to address all of these questions, but some combination of the questions.):

- Consider the various ways data and evaluation are being used in the midst of the pandemic. Which evaluation theories or approaches are being enacted? Which evaluation theorists might raise objections to current practices? Why?
- What evaluation theories might be particularly relevant in our current context amidst the COVID-19 pandemic? Why?
- What innovations to evaluation do you anticipate are needed to respond to our current context?

Write a paper in which you discuss what implications the COVID-19 pandemic may have on evaluation practice and theories. **Be sure to credit theorists and readings we have discussed in class appropriately.**

### **Grading Guidelines for Final Project**

#### **For Theory and Practice only**

- Paper includes a rationale or justification for the selection of each theorist that is included, which may be based on combining strengths and weaknesses of theories or approaches; current or future program contexts; professional training, background, experiences, values and beliefs, etc.; and/or intent to embody social justice (10 pts)

#### **For Social Justice Lens only**

- Paper demonstrates an understanding of social justice in relation to evaluation theory and practice.( 5 pt)
- Paper includes references from substantive area, as appropriate, to support the thesis of the paper (5 pts)

#### **For COVID-19 Pandemic only**

- Paper includes description of evaluation and data use in the context of COVID-19 to support the thesis of the paper (5 pts)
- Paper includes a description of societal changes in relation to evaluation practice and approaches to evaluation (5 pts)

#### **For All Options**

- Paper has a strong thesis; well-organized, including headings and subheadings; flows well; and has clear transitions (3 pts)
- Paper is based on a selected number of evaluation theorists or approaches. Two to four theorists are recommended. (3 pts)
- Paper demonstrates the professional setting, substantive area, or evaluation in COVID-19 context in which the student applies or might apply the evaluation theories (5 pts)
- Paper demonstrates that appropriate theorists were selected based on the argument of the paper. (5 pts)



- Paper represents and appropriately describes evaluation theor(ies) or approaches based on course readings (5 pt)
- Paper demonstrates creativity and innovation in the application of evaluation theories or approaches (3 pt)
- Paper is well-editted with minimal spelling and grammatical errors. (3 pts)
- Paper utilizes 6<sup>th</sup> Edition APA style (or another approach) for references (3 pts)

### **Additional Class Policies**

Communications and Technology Policies: Email will be used as the primary mode of correspondence for this course. As such, it is imperative that you activate your Loyola University account and check it multiple times a week. Please also check your Loyola spam mail and mail foundry to ensure course related messages are not misdirected. Additionally, Sakai will be used as a source of continual updates about course material. You can expect that all emails to the instructor will be responded to within 48 hours, not including weekends.

With online communications, please be clear, courteous and considerate. This includes observing adequate forms of address and signing off your message with your name. This is an important aspect of professional conduct in our field. I prefer being addressed as Leanne.

Recording Synchronous Sessions: In this class software MAY be used to record live class discussions, should students request this. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions MAY be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class when the Sakai course is unpublished (i.e. shortly after the course ends, per the Sakai administrative schedule). Students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. Please discuss this option with your instructor. The use of all video recordings will be in keeping with the University Privacy Statement shown below:

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#### Privacy Statement

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Students will be informed of such recordings by a statement in the syllabus for the course in which they will be recorded. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings including student activity that have been initiated by the instructor may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

**Loyola University Chicago  
School of Education  
Syllabus Addendum**

**Smart Evaluation**

Towards the end of the course, students will receive an email from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness reminding them to provide feedback on the course. They will receive consistent reminders throughout the period when the evaluation is open, and the reminders will stop once they have completed the evaluation.

- The evaluation is completely anonymous. When the results are released, instructors and departments will not be able to tell which student provided the individual feedback.
- Because it is anonymous and the results are not released to faculty or departments until after grades have been submitted, the feedback will not impact a student's grade.

**Dispositions**

All students are assessed on one or more dispositional areas of growth across our programs: ***Professionalism, Inquiry, and Social Justice***. The instructor in your course will identify the dispositions assessed in this course. Disposition data is reviewed by program faculty on a regular basis. This allows faculty to work with students to develop throughout their program and address any issues as they arise.

**Syllabus Addendum Link**

- [www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/](http://www.luc.edu/education/syllabus-addendum/)

**Center for Student Access and Assistance (CSAA)**

*Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE Referral for yourself or a peer in need of support: [www.LUC.edu/csaa](http://www.LUC.edu/csaa). If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf.*

This link directs students to statements on essential policies regarding *academic honesty, accessibility, ethics line reporting* and *electronic communication policies and guidelines*. We ask that you read each policy carefully.

This link will also bring you to the full text of our conceptual framework that guides the work of the School of Education – ***Social Action through Education***.