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PUBH 550.50: Program Evaluation & Research Methods

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PUBH 550: Program Evaluation and Research Methods

Fall 2022

Course Syllabus Revised August 15, 2022

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Course Description

This course is designed for graduate students and practitioners in public health and related fields. Evaluation is central to understanding and improving public health initiatives. Through course activities students will be able to plan and conduct activities along the evaluation continuum that includes formative, process, and outcome assessments. Topics will include responsible conduct of research, planning needs assessments, creating logic models and causal loop diagrams, designing qualitative and quantitative evaluations, conducting qualitative and quantitative analyses, and putting it all together to create an evaluation plan.

Students will select a program that will be the focus of the course activities. Programs can be found through the published literature, described on the internet, or ones students are familiar with through their work or personal experience. It is possible that some students are involved with real programs that need to be evaluated. I view those authentic needs as the best learning opportunities, plus it's possible that students' plans will actually be put into practice. Students are welcome to work together in teams of two, or on their own. Early in the semester students will have the opportunity to get to know their classmates and their interests. I hope some students will decide to work together because it creates the opportunity for enhanced interaction and integration of the material. Plus it will be more fun!

Students in the MPH-CHPS program will work as a team. More information will be provided to those students.

Readings, assignments, and student-lead class discussions form the basis for student learning.

Textbook

1. Required: Evaluating Public and Community Health Programs By Muriel Harris (Second Edition), ISBN: 9781119151050.
2. Additional material will be posted on Moodle.

Course Format

This course is offered in an online-only format using Moodle. [UMOnline](#) has made available an interactive tutorial for using Moodle as a student, Moodle 101 for Students. The course is organized in weekly modules that may consist of readings, class discussions, course activities, and assignments. The weeks start on Monday and end on Sundays.

Competencies and Assessment Activities

MPH Program competencies	Assessment activities
Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context	Specify data collection methods appropriate for a public health program evaluation in final project
Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using biostatistics, informatics, compute-based programming and software, as appropriate.	Conduct a content analysis of qualitative data Conduct descriptive data analysis
Assess population needs, assets, and capacities that affect communities' health	Create a community needs assessment plan
Select methods to evaluate public health programs	Create a plan to evaluate a public health program in final project
Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue	Draw a causal loop diagram to visualize the system of a public health problem

Course Guidelines and Policies

1. **Logging In:** You are expected to log in every day to read current announcements that have been posted. You may do this at any time of day.
2. **Announcements:** Class announcements will be posted by the instructor. Moodle system administrators will sometimes post announcements about the Moodle system.
3. **Communication:** Communication will take place using e-mail, discussion boards, and Zoom e-meetings. E-mail should be used for "private" communication with the instructor or other students. Any questions regarding grades or communication about more personal issues should be handled via email. Please include "PUBH 550" in the subject line for e-mail communication with the instructor. Discussion boards are appropriate for questions or discussions that would normally occur in the classroom. Remember that the discussion board is public and your classmates can read what you post there. **PLEASE ALWAYS BE RESPECTFUL.**

Grades

This course will use the traditional letter grades with the use of pluses or minuses. Students can view their grades online through the Gradebook. Weights will be assigned to course components:

1. Assignments, 50%
2. Leading discussion, 10%
3. Discussion participation and peer feedback, 30%
4. Final Project, 10%

Grades will be calculated based on the percentage of total points available using the formula:

93 to 100 percent = A; 90 to 92 percent = A-minus; 87 to 89 percent = B-plus; 83 to 86 percent = B; 80 to 82 percent = B-minus; 77 to 79 percent = C-plus; 73 to 76 percent = C; 70 to 72 percent = C-minus; 67 to 69 percent = D-plus; 63 to 66 percent = D; 60 to 62 percent = D-minus; below 60 percent = F.

Late work: Late work will be graded zero unless there are serious and verifiable extenuating circumstances.

Homework Assignments occur throughout the semester

Additional assignments will be described in the online class. It is very important that you click into the assignment submission area for the assignment details. Assignments are generally due on Sunday before midnight. The assignments are:

1. Complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Training Course
2. Describe a program evaluation in the published literature
3. Design a community assessment plan
4. Construct a logic model and causal loop diagram
5. Write interview questions, conduct short interviews, transcribe responses from questions
6. Conduct a qualitative analysis of interview transcripts

7. Write survey questions, construct a survey, and administer the survey
8. Perform descriptive analyses

Discussion Forums (Weeks: 4, 6, 15 only)

Leading Discussion: Writing discussion questions and moderating the discussion

Students will take turns preparing discussion questions and moderating the discussion during part of the class. During the assigned week, discussion leaders will prepare 1 discussion questions based on the week's readings. Discussion questions must be posted by Sunday by midnight the week before the discussion begins.

Note that in this class there will be multiple discussion leaders during the weeks with discussion. Students should check in with the other discussion leaders to be sure there is variety in the discussion topics. Students generally will moderate (or lead) the discussion for the question they posted. Discussion leaders are not required to participate in discussion of other questions, but they are free to do so.

When you are the discussion leader, check in on the discussion multiple times per day. Respond, encourage, prompt, provoke, and ask follow up questions to your classmates in the discussion forum to make the discussion as productive and thought-provoking as possible. Part of your job is to help keep the conversation focused and the quality of interaction high.

The following principles should guide students in writing discussion questions. Write open-ended questions that encourage students to talk with each other about what we've read; write questions that encourage further research outside of assigned reading; write questions that encourage application of course material, such as applying specific concepts. Avoid writing questions that are too broad and require multiple part responses as those types of questions tend to require students to write long essays off line rather than engage in discussion.

Participating in Discussion

Students should consistently use the assigned readings as reference points for posing, responding to questions, discussing, and presenting their ideas. As the discussion evolves, all students can extend the dialogue by posting additional questions that may be relevant to the issues and themes under discussion.

Since there will be multiple discussion leaders who will be posting questions, over the course of the week please respond to each discussion question.

All students are required to participate in discussions when a discussion forum is listed in the online class. Discussions will occur from Monday through Friday. All postings must be complete by 6:00pm MST Friday of each week. Please note that the week's discussion board will become unavailable on Friday at 6:00pm, but will reappear the next week. While some students initially find the "disappearing discussion board" a surprise, most report that they appreciate it as it allows them to focus on the topic for the upcoming week.

To avoid a flurry of last-minute postings, please begin posting early during in the week. Posting four times per week is the minimum requirement for full credit. Generally, you should plan to post twice between Monday and Wednesday and twice again between Thursday and Friday at 6:00pm. This format necessitates completion of readings before the weekly discussion (generally you will want to do all the reading on the weekend).

Two posts per week must make a substantial and unique contribution to class discussion. Discussion-related activities will be graded according to these dimensions: (1) content of posting, (2) specific references to class materials, (3) use of external material to extend the content of the discussion, (4) quality of interaction, and (5) frequency and responsiveness of interactions.

While the instructor will remain active in reading the discussion forum throughout the entire course, when the discussion is going well, she may opt to “listen” rather than “talk.”

Final Project (due 12/16)

Details will be posted in the Moodle class.

Additional Notes

1. **Changes:** This syllabus is subject to change by the instructor. Any changes will be announced in the announcement section of Moodle.
2. **Disability Equity/Accessibility:** The Office for Disability Equity (ODE) is the campus resource for disability-related information. They provide consultation, training, and academic services to advance accessibility and inclusion by taking an intersectional approach to disability. For more information, please visit their website: <https://www.umt.edu/disability/>.

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations in this online course. To request course modifications, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. The instructor will work with you and Disability Services in the accommodation process.

3. **Student conduct code:** The University of Montana Student Code of Conduct (<https://bit.ly/3SMNkft>) embodies and promotes honesty, integrity, accountability, and duties associated with citizenship as a student in our community at the University of Montana. This Code exists to protect the interests of the community and dignity of its members, and to challenge those behaviors which are not in accordance with our policies. This Code describes expected standards of behavior for all students, including academic conduct and general conduct, and it outlines students’ rights, responsibilities, and the campus processes for adjudicating alleged violations.
4. **Professionalism and College of Health’s Student Conduct Code:** All students must adhere to the highest standards of professionalism and exhibit professional behavior in all educational settings. The College’s policy on professional and code of student conduct is available on the program’s website here: <https://www.umt.edu/public-community-health-sciences/graduate/resources/code-of-conduct.php>
5. **Library resources:** Some assignments will require library resources. While off campus, the library resources are greatly enhanced by logging in using your NetID and password. This is the same ID and password that you use to login to Moodle and use for your official UM e-mail address.

If you need assistance with library resources, please contact a librarian. You can chat with a librarian while online, or [contact them directly](#). The toll-free number for the reference desk is 1-800-240-4939.

Course Schedule (subject to change, the current information will always be posted online)

Week	Start Dates	Topic	Reading	Course Activities	Assignments Due
1	8/29 class begins	Course Introduction Ethics & responsibilities	Issel/Wells Ch 16 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Training Course UM IRB websites	Introductions Sign up to lead a discussion	Complete CITI training Submit training Certificate
2	9/5 Mon & Thursday are holidays	Public and community health evaluation	Harris Ch 1 Issel/Wells Ch 1	Class discussion-share information about a program (2 postings required by Friday)	Identify an article in the published literature 1 page summary
3	9/12	Select a program/project	Work week—no additional readings		Describe the program/project
4	9/19	Community assessments	Harris Ch 2 Community Tool Box	Class discussions	Community assessment
5	9/26	Logic models Systems thinking	Harris Ch 3 & 5 Animation of systems thinking vs. linear approaches Example of stock/flow map Example of causal loop diagram		Create a logic model of the program Create a causal loop diagram of the problem addressed
6	10/3	Planning the evaluation Process evaluation	Harris Ch 4 Harris Ch 6 & 13	Class discussions	
7	10/10	Qualitative Methods	Harris Ch 9 Issel & Wells Ch 15 K Harris CAP manuscript	Live class 10/10, 12:00-12:50 pm	Plan an interview or focus group/write questions

Week	Start Dates	Topic	Reading	Course Activities	Assignments Due
8	10/17	Qualitative data collection	Optional: Creswell Ch 9 on Qualitative Methods Optional: K Harris Mixed Methods Article Work week	Conduct Interviews	Leave feedback on students' focus group questions
9	10/24	Qualitative data analysis	Work week	Transcribe data	Transcripts due
10	10/31	Qualitative data summary	M Pedersen Example article using qualitative methods Work week	Code data	Codes and coding tables
11	10/7 Tues & Friday are holidays	Outcome evaluations	Harris Ch 7, 8	Survey project	2 Survey questions
12	11/14	Quantitative data collection	Resources posted online	Survey project	Create survey, start survey administration
13	11/21 W, Th, F holiday	Quantitative data collection	Work week	Survey project	
14	11/28	Quantitative data analysis	Harris Ch 10 (Part 1), Instructions	Survey project	Surveys completed by Sunday
15	12/5 F last day of class	Putting it all together: Evaluation Plan	Harris Ch 11, Ch 12	Class discussions	Data summary
Finals	12/12-16	Final project due 12/16		Final Project	Final due at 6pm