PUBPOL 636: PROGRAM EVALUATION
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan
Fall Course Information, 2003

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Meeting times:	T/TH 2:30-4:00pm
Location:	1518 CC Little
Instructor:	Bob Schoeni
Office Hours:	Tuesdays, 4:30-6pm in 3234 ISR. Phone: 763-5131.
E-mail:	bschoeni@umich.edu
Course webpage:	http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bschoeni/pubpol636
Teaching Assistant:	Pooja Patel. E-mail: patelpp@umich.edu. Office hours: Wednesdays, 1-2:30pm in 473 Lorch.

OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

The central objective of this course is to learn the tools that are used to determine whether programs and policies are achieving their goals. A great deal of money is spent on evaluations, and they are difficult to conduct successfully. All evaluations have weaknesses, and some have more weaknesses than others; you will learn to distinguish high from low quality evaluations. Policies and programs in a broad range of areas will be examined, including health, criminal justice, education, welfare and poverty, and development.

TEACHING STYLE

There are many ways to learn. And different styles are more effective for some students than others. Therefore, we will utilize several different approaches: straight lectures, guest lectures, debates, student presentations, classroom discussions, problem sets, and exam preparation. Although the lectures I will provide in the classroom are central to your learning, they are only one source of information. Moreover, one of the skills you must learn is to teach yourself: What information do I need to answer the question at hand? Where do I find the information I need? How do I learn to evaluate the information I do have? What don't I know to be able to answer the question. Therefore, during most of our class time I will lecture, but it will be assumed that you will be an active participant in the discussion by answering questions that your classmates and I pose during class.

Readings will be assigned for each class period, and the material in these readings will be discussed in class. Please complete all readings prior to the class in which they will be discussed. The lectures will also cover material not included in the readings. To a large degree, the readings and lectures are not substitutes – they are chosen and designed to complement each other.

PREREQUISITES

PUBPOL 529 (Statistics) or its equivalent is required for this course. If you have not fulfilled this requirement, please let me know.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments must be submitted at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. Assignments turned in late will be docked one-half of a letter grade for each day they are submitted past the due date. Exams and debates must be completed on the dates stipulated in the syllabus. Your grade will be determined by the following assignments/activities.

1. *Critique of evaluation based on report from popular press.* This exercise, which is described in detail below, consists of a 2-3 page memo assessing the findings of a recent evaluation study. The memo should consist of a snappy, concise summary and critique of a study that has recently been

described in the popular press (e.g., New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Time magazine, etc.). The critique should be based solely on the description contained in the newspaper or magazine article; I do not want you to read the original study. The memo is due on September 25th.

Percent of semester grade: Masters students 10%; PhD students not required.

2. *Problem Set I.* There will be a problem set handed out September 25th and due October 2nd. The focus of the problem set will be to enhance your knowledge of regression analysis and experimental evaluations.

   Percent of semester grade: Masters student 5%; PhD students 5%.

3. *Midterm exam.* The in-class midterm will be held on Thursday October 9th, just before the fall break.

   Percent of semester grade: Masters student 25%; PhD students 20%

4. *Problem Set II.* There will be a problem set handed out November 4th and due November 11th. The problem set will focus on quasi-experimental research designs.

   Percent of semester grade: Masters student 5%; PhD students not required.

5. *Class presentation.* PhD students will be required to choose one of the evaluation reports assigned on the syllabus and present the evaluation to the class on the day that it is scheduled to be discussed. The presentation will last 30 minutes, and will include a concise, clearly stated summary of the report (roughly 20 minutes) as well as a critique of the study's design or conclusions (roughly 10 minutes). The presentation should be of professional quality, using PowerPoint.

   Percent of semester grade: Masters students not required; PhD students 15%.

6. *Debate and report.* Each Masters student will participate in one debate. The performance during the debate and a 10-12 page report that is due at the time of the debate will constitute your overall grade on this assignment. The 10-12 page report will account for half your grade on the assignment (i.e., 10 percentage points of your grade for the semester), with the other half based on the debate itself. The debate and the report are described below. Each team will prepare one report. Therefore, you must learn to work collaboratively, which is typically the case in evaluation research. Your grade will be based on your team's ability to accurately and concisely: a) discuss the findings and methods of the key studies in favor and against your position, and b) describe the strengths and weaknesses of these studies. While the report will discuss the weaknesses of the evaluations that support your team's position, you will of course not reveal these weaknesses during the debate.

   The format of the debates is described in detail at the back of the syllabus. Three topics will be debated. For each topic there will be a "pro" and "con" team, with 4-5 members per team. The topics will be chosen within the first 3-4 weeks of class and will reflect your personal interests. Potential topics may include, for example, school choice, hand gun laws, Head Start, and minimum wage laws.

   Although PhD students will not be required to participate on a debate team, each PhD student will be required to lead the question and answer/critique period of one debate. They will be expected to ask the teams probing questions about their claims based on their own assessment of the evaluations.

   Percent of semester grade: Masters students 20%; PhD students 5%.

7. *Original research paper.* PhD students will be required to write a paper that contains original data analysis or an assessment of a body of research and evaluation. I will meet with each student to help choose the topic, with the hope that the paper will dovetail with the student's dissertation or third year paper. One-page outlines are due September 25th; Final papers are due November 25th.

   Percent of semester grade: Masters students not required; PhD students 45%.

8. *Final exam.* The in-class final will be held at the scheduled time during exam week.

   Percent of semester grade: Masters students 25%; PhD students not required.

9. *Class participation.* For much of the time this will not be a straight lecture course. I will ask students questions throughout the class meetings. Moreover, I will ask students to answer their classmates' questions. Therefore attendance at each class period and participation in class discussions are graded. The reading assignments will be moderate in length; it is expected that they will be read prior to each class.

    Percent of semester grade: Masters students 10%; PhD students, 10%.

COURSE READINGS

The readings for each class period are listed on the syllabus. We will typically have two reading assignments per class: one reading discusses the concept or idea, and the second reading provides a concrete example of the concept or idea in practice. A substantial share of the class time will be spent discussing the readings with fellow students – asking and answering questions. Therefore, it is imperative that the material be read prior to class. At the same time, I have tried to keep the amount of reading to a reasonable level.

One textbook is required:

1. Lewis-Beck, Michael S. *Applied Regression: An Introduction*. Sage University Press Series: Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences.

The text is a short guide to the basics of regression analysis. This text will hopefully be a useful reference for you years into the future.

The most widely used textbook on program evaluation was written by Peter Rossi, and we will use a few chapters from it. However, the material on impact analysis in Rossi is not as thorough as I would like, so we will use a collection of readings I have pulled together. The readings are contained in the course pack, which is available at Dollar Bill Copying.

Overview of Class Schedule for Program Evaluation, Fall 2003

Class #	Date	Topic
1	02-Sep	Introduction to the course
2	04-Sep	Review syllabus; overview of program evaluation
3	09-Sep	Program theory
4	11-Sep	Refresher on the basics of regression analysis: I
5	16-Sep	Refresher on the basics of regression analysis: II
6	18-Sep	Introduction to impact analysis: Class meets from 3:10 to 4:30pm
7	23-Sep	Experimental designs: understanding the concept I
8	25-Sep	Experimental designs: understanding the concept II
9	30-Sept	Experimental designs: applications I
10	02-Oct	Guest lecture: TBA
11	07-Oct	Experimental designs: applications II
12	09-Oct	Midterm exam
	14-Oct	*Fall Study Break*
13	17-Oct	Quasi-experimental designs: Introduction, and post-intervention observation, with comparison group
14	21-Oct	Quasi-experimental designs: Pre-/post-intervention observation, no comparison group
15	23-Oct	Quasi-experimental designs: Pre-/post-intervention observation, with comparison group
16	28-Oct	Quasi-experimental designs: Interrupted time-series I
17	30-Oct	Quasi-experimental designs: Interrupted time-series II
18	04-Nov	Quasi-experimental designs: Regression discontinuity
19	06-Nov	Quasi-experimental designs: Matching
20	11-Nov	Process and implementation analysis: methods and applications.
21	13-Nov	Process and implementation analysis: methods and application: Paula Lantz, School of Public Health
22	18-Nov	Process and implementation analysis: methods and applications
23	20-Nov	Writing and presenting findings; ethical issues in program evaluations
24	25-Nov	Debate and report due; PhD student papers due
	27-Nov	*Thanksgiving Break*
25	02-Dec	Debate and report due
26	04-Dec	Debate and report due
27	09-Dec	Integration of the material covered during the semester
28	TBA	Final exam

Daily Schedule

1. Introduction to the course. (September 2)

   The most important resources in the course are your fellow students and me. The objective of the first class meeting is to foster an environment that is comfortable for you to learn. You will be required to participate actively in the discussion during the semester, and my hope is that you will work as teams/study groups outside of class. Therefore, throughout the semester we will try to foster an atmosphere that is supportive of collaboration and team work. On the first day we will also complete a group exercise that will require you to begin to think critically about programs and policies.

   Readings

   None.

2. Review of syllabus, and overview of program evaluation. (September 4)

   This class session will begin with a review of the syllabus, in detail. We will then provide a broad picture of program evaluation, addressing questions such as: What is program evaluation? What is evaluated -- programs? projects? policies? laws? Why are programs evaluated? How much does society spend on evaluations? What is the history of program evaluation?

   Readings

   1. Rossi, et al, Chapter 1

3. Program theory. (September 9)

   Before we can evaluate a program or policy, we need to know what outcomes they are expected to alter. What is the theory that guides the design of the program or policy? Are there competing theories that need to be considered? Do these alternative theories imply different effects on the given outcomes, and do they imply that additional outcomes may be affected? A good theory will explicitly identify each of the linkages necessary to translate the program or policy into the anticipated effect on the desired outcome.

   Readings:

   2. Rossi et al, Chapter 5

4 & 5. Refresher on the basics of regression analysis. (September 11 & 16, plus 2-3 review sessions with Pooja Patel)

   Regression analysis is used in the vast majority of evaluations. The objective of these two sessions is to bring you up to speed with the basic ideas of regression analysis. At the end of the two classes, plus the meetings with Pooja, you should know how to read and interpret regression output. Moreover, they should understand the concepts of omitted variable bias and self-selection; the ideas will be presented formally (i.e., in equations), but the key is for the students to understand the concepts. These two concepts will be used extensively during the section of the course that covers impact analysis.

   Pooja Patel will hold study sessions beginning the week of September 9 where she will cover additional material on regression.

   Readings:

   1. Lewis-Beck, Applied Regression. Sage University Papers Series, #22.

6. Introduction to impact analysis. (September 18): Class meets from 3:10 to 4:30pm.

This class session will serve as an introduction to and overview of impact analysis. The following topics will be covered:

a. Definition of impact analysis and the questions it is intended to answer.
b. Establishment of terminology used in impact analyses, e.g., "treatment," policy, program
c. Description of the "fundamental problem"
d. Selection bias
e. Overview of alternative strategies for impact analysis.
f. Discussion of construct, conclusion, internal, and external validity

Readings. Note that we will most likely spend some time during this class discussing the readings listed under classes 7 and 8 as well.

1. Rossi et al, Chapter 7.

7 & 8. Experimental designs: understanding the concept. (September 23 & 25)

The topics covered include the following:

i. The theory
ii. Advantages of experiments
iii. Disadvantages of experiments

Readings

1. Rossi et al, chapter 8.
2. Burtless, Gary. 1995. "The Case for Randomized Field Trials in Economic and Policy Research." *Journal of Economic Perspectives.* 9(2): 63-84.
3. Heckman, James J., and Jeffrey A. Smith (1995) "Assessing the Case for Social Experiments", *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 9(2): 85-110.

9 & 11. Experimental designs: applications. (September 30th and October 7)

One of the primary objectives of the course is for you to be able to understand and critique evaluations. Therefore, we will spend two class periods discussing specific evaluations, two evaluations per class. Four of the nation's largest, most influential experimental evaluations will be discussed in class:

1. James Riccio, et al. (1994). *GAIN: Benefits, Costs, and Three-Year Impacts of a Welfare-to-Work Program.* Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. Chapters 1 and 4.
2. Gertler, Paul, and Simone Peart Boyce "An Experiment in Incentive Based Welfare: The Impact of Mexico's PROGRESA on Health" (April 2001).
3. Katz, Lawrence F., Jeffrey R. Kling, and Jeffrey B. Liebman, "Moving to Opportunity in Boston: Early Results of a Randomized Mobility Experiment," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (May 2001) 607-654.
4. Yinger, John. (1995). *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York. Chapters 1, 2, 3.

Readings

The evaluation reports listed above constitute the required readings.

10. Program evaluation in action. (October 2)

Guest lecture TBA.

12. Mid-term exam. (October 9)

13. Quasi-experimental designs: Introduction to quasi-experimental designs. (October 16)
This class marks the beginning of our coverage of quasi-experimental program evaluations. This is the most difficult part of the course, and arguably the most important. The vast majority of evaluations use quasi-experimental designs, the quality of quasi-experimental designs varies greatly, and many of the designs use quite sophisticated statistical and econometric techniques. Our goal is to become familiar with the various approaches so that you can understand them and can ask critical questions about the evaluations that use these approaches: this is a tall order without having had extensive background in statistics and econometrics. The first class will provide an overview of quasi-experimental designs.

Readings

1. Campbell, Donald. (1965). Reforms as Experiments, *Psychologist*, 24(4): 409-429.

14. Quasi-experimental designs: Pre-/post-intervention observation, no comparison group. (October 21)
In each of the next 5 class periods we will first describe a quasi-experimental design in theory, and then examine an application of that approach in practice. There will be parallel readings for each class – one reading describing the concept and one evaluation report that uses the given approach.

Readings

1. Posavac, Emil J., and Raymond G. Carey, *Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies*, 6th Edition, chapter 8.
2. Duckart, J.P. (1998). An Evaluation of the Baltimore Community Lead Education and Reduction Corps (CLEARCorps) Program. *Evaluation Review*, 22: 373-402.

15. Quasi-experimental designs: Pre-/post-intervention observation, with comparison group. (October 23)
This approach is also called the nonequivalent control group design.

Readings

1. Posavac, Emil J., and Raymond G. Carey, *Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies*, 6th Edition, pages 184-188
2. Judd, Charles M., and David A. Kenny. (1981). *Estimating the Effects of Social Interventions*. Chapter 6.
3. Schoeni, Robert F., and Rebecca Blank. 2001. What has Reform Accomplished? Impacts on Welfare Participation, Employment, Income, Poverty, and Family Structure, NBER working paper 7627. Available at: http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bschoeni/vjpam3.pdf

16 & 17. Quasi-experimental designs: Interrupted time-series. (October 28 & 30)
Interrupted time series designs are quite common. Therefore, two class meetings will be devoted to this approach.

Readings

1. Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference*. Chapter 6.
2. Ballart, X., and C. Riba (1995). Impact of Legislation Requiring Moped and Motorbike Riders to Wear Helmets, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 18: 311-320.

3. Mulford, H.A., J. Ledolter, and J.L. Fitzgerald. (1992). Alcohol Availability and Consumption: Iowa Sales Data Revisited, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 53: 487-494.
4. Loftin C. et al. (1991). "Effects of restrictive licensing of handguns on homicide and suicide in the District of Columbia". *New England Journal of Medicine*. 325(23): 1615-1620.

18. Quasi-experimental designs: Regression discontinuity. (November 4)

Readings

1. Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference.* Chapter 7.
2. Lee, David S., Enrico Moretti, and Matthew J. Butler. (2002). Are Politicians Accountable to Voters? Evidence from U.S. House Roll Call Voting Records, UC Berkeley. Available at: http://emlab.berkeley.edu/users/cle/wp/WP50Lee-Moretti-Butler.pdf.

19. Quasi-experimental designs: Matching. (November 6)

Readings

1. Shadish, William R., Thomas D. Cook, and Donald T. Campbell. 2002. *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference.* Page 118-122.
2. Reville, Robert, and Robert Schoeni (2001). The Effects of Permanent Partial Disability on Employment and Earnings, mimeo. Available at: http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bschoeni/DRU2554.pdf

20, 21, & 22. Process and implementation analysis: methods and applications (November, 11, 13, 18)

Process or implementation evaluations answer important questions that inform decision makers. The focus is on questions of implementation – are programs being implemented in the way they were intended? Moreover, a high quality process analysis can enhance the impact study. We will spend three class periods talking about the goals of process analyses and the methods used to conduct them. In addition, we will review three examples of high quality process studies.

Readings

1. Rossi et al. Chapter 6.
2. Lantz, Paula et al. 1995. Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening in a Low-Income Managed Care Sample: the Efficacy of Physician Letters and Phone Calls, *American Journal of Public Health*, 85(6): 834-836.
3. Lantz, Paula. 1996. Implementation Issues and Costs Associated with a Proven Strategy for Increasing Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Among Low-Income Women, *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, summer: 54-59.
4. Klerman, Jacob, et al. 2000. *Welfare Reform in California: State and County Implementation of CalWORKS in the Second Year*. Available at: http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1177/MR1177.pdf (This report is over 400 pages in length. Make sure you read the appendix that discusses the methods used – this is a very comprehensive process analysis.)
5. Thomas Corbet and Elizabeth Boehnen. 1997. Wisconsin Works: A View from the Ground.

Paula Lantz, Professor in the School of Public Health, will give a guest lecture on November 13, discussing the results from her two evaluations listed above. The evaluation included both a process analysis and a randomized control trial, and she will discuss results from both.

23. Political and ethical issues in conducting and reporting on evaluation findings; writing an evaluation and disseminating results. (November 20)

Readings

1. Weiss, Carol H. *Evaluation*, 2nd Edition. Chapter 13
2. Gueron, Judith M. (2001). The Politics of Random Assignment: Implementing Studies and Impacting Policy, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). Available at: http://www.mdrc.org/Speeches&Presentations/Gueron-The%20Politics%20of%20RA-BrookingsPpr-6-27-2000.htm)

24, 25, & 26. In-class debates. (November 25, December 2 & 4)

27. Integration of materials covered during the semester. (December 9)

The last class period will be spent integrating the material learned during the semester. If needed, we will also review specific concepts and ideas to help prepare for the final.

28. Final exam. To be held at scheduled time during exam week.

CRITIQUE OF EVALUATION BASED ON REPORTS FROM POPULAR PRESS

(Not required for PhD Students)

Due Date: Beginning of class on September 25th

Objective

Literally every day findings from studies and evaluations are reported in the popular press. In their thirst for new and headline-catching stories, the press often reports on evaluations whose research designs are quite weak. Or if the study design is strong, it is not clear from the article.

The objective of this exercise is to begin to encourage you to be a critical consumer of research findings. It is healthy for you to have an initial prior that the claim being stated in the study is wrong. And in reading the story, you should try to think of ways to debunk claims being made.

This exercise consists of a 2-3 page memo assessing the findings of a recent study. The memo should consist of a snappy, concise summary and critique of a study that has recently been described in the popular press (e.g., New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Time magazine, etc.). The critique should be based solely on the description contained in the newspaper or magazine article; I do not want you to read the original study.

Choice of Article

Choose an article from any popular press. The leading national newspapers are a good source, including the New York Times, Washington Post, and Wall Street Journal. Time, Newsweek, Business Week, or any other news-type magazines are also fine.

Any topic will do, so I encourage you to choose a study/evaluation that is in your area of interest or specialization. Make sure the article has enough detail on the study so you know the basics of the study design, or at least you can make an educated guess at what design was used.

The Memo

Assume that you work for the Secretary of the federal department under whose purvey this program or policy would fall. For example, if it were health policy, you work for Secretary Tommy Thompson. If it were tax policy, you work for Secretary John Snow. The newspaper story just broke, and your goal is to identify all of the potential weaknesses of the study.

The Secretary is a very busy person. Your memo must be short, snappy, to the point, and accurate. Therefore, the memo must be 2-3 single spaced pages with 12 point font and 1 inch margins. Be clear and concise – don't ramble.

The memo should have four sections: objective of the study, design of the study, findings from the study, and critique. The first three sections should be no more than 1 page. The majority of the memo should discuss the weaknesses of the study.

In order for you to evaluate the study based on the newspaper article, you will most likely need to make some assumptions about the design of the study. This is fine, and I expect you to do so. Just be clear about what you assume. For example, you can sate: " I assume they did not adjust for factors Y and Z. If not, then the study may suffer from problem X. To illustrate this problem, consider the following example…"

A copy of the newspaper article must be attached to the memo.

THE DEBATES AND REPORT

Overview

The debates will be structured and formal, with the specific format described below. You should be well prepared with professional quality PowerPoint slides to make your points, if needed. You must be prepared to not only argue the merits of the evaluations in favor of your position, you must defend the evaluations you are supporting against criticism by the opponents and critic the evaluations that support your opponents' views.

There will be a set of evaluations that will provide the core "pro" and "con" positions. While you are most likely to focus on these specific studies, you are free to draw on any additional research/evaluations that you think helps make your case.

Format for the debates

Construction

- "Pro" team gives an 8-minute presentation of its position. The emphasis here is not so much on criticism of the other side as on explanation of the position it takes and why (the principles and arguments to which it appeals)
- "Con" team gives the same 8-minute presentation of its own position
- 3 minute break to allow teams to develop criticisms

Criticism & Rebuttal

- "Pro" team presents challenges to the view defended by the "con" team, for 4 minutes.
- "Con" team has 3 minutes to rebut the challenges, including time to strategize among themselves about their response
- "Con" team presents challenges to the view defended by the "pro" team, for 4 minutes.
- "Pro" team has 3 minutes to rebut the challenges, including time to strategize among themselves about their response
- The floor is opened to the rest of the class to present questions for either team, or both. 1-2 PhD students will be assigned to lead this component of the debate, asking questions of both teams. This might last up to about 15 minutes, and the instructor has authority to moderate this discussion.

Summary

- "Pro" gives a 3 minute "state of the debate," summarizing why its position should be adopted
- "Con" gives a 3 minute "state of the debate," summarizing why its position should be adopted
- Floor votes on the policy.

Issues to keep in mind

- The construction and criticism must be in PowerPoint format; you may also want to use PowerPoint for parts of the summary.
- The time schedule will be strictly enforced.

- Be polite, even if you feel strongly: for instance, (a) do not speak out of turn, (b) if you disagree with someone, never attack her/him, attack what s/he said/argued, etc.
- All arguments must focus on the quality of the research and analysis; other issues, such as political, moral, or ethical factors are not germane for this debate.
- Each team has four structured presentations; no team member should give more than one presentation.
- Confer closely during your preparatory time to avoid overlaps and to maximize coverage of the main aspects of the topic.

Suggested Strategies

1. State your case in a logically complete manner, stressing its significance.
2. Anticipate the arguments of the negative position and create responses to those arguments ahead of time.
3. Define the significant terms you use in making your case.
4. In your response, examine the negative side's evidence critically, for biases and weakness.
5. Evaluate the affirmative case for its weakest points and for its logical completeness and consistency.
6. Think of possible disadvantages of the affirmative's proposals, in terms of solving the problem and of feasibility.

General Considerations

Your goal is persuasion, to convince your audience of the benefits of the position your team is taking. Keep your composure, show good sportsmanship and respect for contrary arguments, and stay within allotted time limits. Make clear the meaning you ascribe to the major terms, concepts, and symbols in your argument. For all participants, an apparently spontaneous (and well-practiced) delivery is superior to reading a manuscript.

The Report

Each team will also prepare one 10-12 page report. (The report must be single spaced, 12 point font, with 1 inch margins on all sides.) Therefore, you must learn to work collaboratively, which is typically the case in evaluation research. Your grade will be based on your team's ability to accurately and concisely: a) discuss the findings and methods of the key studies in favor and against your position, and b) describe the weaknesses of the these studies. While the report will discuss the weaknesses of the evaluations that support your position, you will of course not reveal these weaknesses during the debate. Your goal is to win the debate!

The 10-12 page report will count for half your grade on this assignment (i.e., 12.5 percentage points of your grade for the semester), with the other half based on the debate itself. All reports are due at the beginning of class on December 2nd.

Selection of Teams and Topics

Once I have met with each student during the first 3 weeks of class, I will decide the topics of the debate, doing my best to match the topics with your specific interests. You will get to choose the topic – e.g., school choice, work first vs human capital investment, minimum wage increases – but then team members will be randomly assigned. We will make these decisions within the first 3 weeks of class so that you can begin working on the debates asap.