

**MS\_HE: 472**  
**ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**SPRING 2014**  
**Annenberg 345**  
**Monday 6:00-9:00 p.m.**

**Instructor:**

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**Office hours:**

TBD

**Course Description:**

This course is intended for students who are pursuing an advanced degree in higher education or a related area. Students in this course will examine a variety of ways in which assessment and evaluation can be implemented to improve higher education. Alternative methodological approaches will be reviewed and critiqued, as will the larger public policy context which brought assessment to the forefront of the nation's educational agenda. Students will develop a foundational understanding of the scholarship of assessment and a framework for thinking about the circumstances under which assessment and evaluation can be conducted successfully and used to promote educational quality. The course material will include discussions of data and quantitative analyses.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- ◆ Develop an understanding of the various purposes and approaches to evaluation and assessment.
- ◆ Distinguish between and relate assessment, evaluation, accountability, and quality.
- ◆ Understand the role of public policy in shaping both the climate for and the design of assessments.
- ◆ Identify the strengths and limitations of alternative methodological approaches to assessment and evaluation in higher education.
- ◆ Describe ways in which assessment is currently being implemented in higher education institutions.
- ◆ Design an evaluation and articulate its strengths and weaknesses.

**Expectations:**

Each student will take an active role in maximizing their course experience. This will include preparation, participation, and completion of assignments. Each meeting of the course will include active group discussion of the reading assignments. Preparation for class will include both reading the materials and thinking critically about the concepts, reflecting on how they relate to your previous experiences and/or coursework, or perhaps just previous class sessions of this course. I will lead each class in conjunction with another student each week, who will have signed up to be a discussion facilitator. Your commitment to preparation extends then, not only to making the course successful for yourself, but also to your classmates who will have taken time to prepare for facilitating a class discussion. You can expect from me a commitment to creating a positive classroom environment, in which a climate of mutual respect will enable each of us to learn from others. I will also do my best to accommodate individual learning styles, and will couple my understanding of the course materials with the research and policy experiences I have gained to better illustrate the theoretical and abstract concepts.

*Attendance:* Each student will be present at all sessions. Please notify me if you are unable to attend class on a particular day.

*Assignments:* All assignments should be submitted on or before the due date.

**Academic Integrity:**

Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide." All papers submitted for credit in this course must be sent as email attachments as well as delivered in printed form. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/>. If you need a copy of the brochure visit the SESP Student Affairs Office.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 467-5530 or [ssd@northwestern.edu](mailto:ssd@northwestern.edu). SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall. SSD also has an excellent web-site which is viewable at: <http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/>

### **Required book**

Banta, T.W. (2002). *Building a Scholarship of Assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

### **Assignments:**

- 1. Class discussion facilitator:** Each of you will, with at most one other classmate, assist in leading the discussion for one week. Student facilitated discussions will take place during the first half of each session. As facilitator you should bring questions or discussion points for your classmates, and prepare an 8-10 page synthesis of the reading material. This synthesis is not simply a summary of the material, but rather integrates the readings into the course, drawing on previous class discussions, in-class writing assignments, or reading materials. It should also raise the questions and discussion points you intend to share with your classmates and put them in the large context of the course and its goals. As each of you will have differing perspectives, experiences and viewpoints to draw on, you will submit your own synthesis. These are due by **12:00 noon on the day of the class you will be facilitating**. However, you are encouraged to work as a team in leading the discussion, and to take some time to speak with your co-facilitator to plan for the course discussion.
- 2. Data analysis project:** Each of you will receive a small data set to analyze over a 2-week period. You will use a statistical software package to conduct the analysis (SPSS and STATA are recommended packages for ease of use, but others are available on campus). The data set will be accompanied by a series of questions. You are welcome to work with your colleagues to conduct the analyses and discuss the questions, however each of you will turn in your own output and narrative that responds to the questions. **Due May 5<sup>th</sup>**.
- 3. Evaluation project:** Each of you will identify a subject for an evaluation within higher education, and will write up an evaluation proposal. The proposal should be 10-12 pages in length, and should describe the subject area and the stakeholders, defend the methods that will be used to conduct the evaluation, and discuss its limitations. It should also include the types of policy recommendations or conclusions that would yield from the evaluation depending on its findings. The final write-up will be due **in class on June 2<sup>nd</sup>**.
  - This paper is an evaluation proposal, not a research paper. As such, you need not include bibliographic citations or a list of references in your paper. Instead, you will be graded upon your ability to *apply* to your proposal the materials we have read. This means you should use your readings for the creation of your proposal. Of course, if you refer to a specific author's

work or quote it you will need to provide an appropriate citation in accordance with Northwestern's policies on plagiarism and intellectual property.

- If you intend to propose utilizing a survey for your evaluation, you may either draft a survey instrument (and include it as an appendix), or make explicit reference in your text to the types of questions you would ask. This is not a course on survey design and administration, so you will not be graded on the overall quality of a draft survey instrument. However, you will lose points if your survey questions do not directly address the goals of your assessment.
- In addition to articulating your evaluation proposal, and defending your choice of strategy to address your "problem", you should also provide a critique. Indicate what were the tradeoffs you made both with regard to your goals (an evaluation cannot do everything) and your methods (even multi-method strategies have limitations). This could be in your conclusion or a separate section.
- The strongest proposals will not just say *what* they will do, but will also say *why*. This is important in a practical sense for achieving buy-in from participants and stakeholders, and will also indicate to me the ways in which your reasoning builds upon the course material.
- You will also prepare and give a brief 10-minute Powerpoint presentation of your evaluation proposal to the class, highlighting the objectives and methods of the proposal.

Additional guidelines will be available through an in-class handout and on Blackboard.

**Grading:**

|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| Class attendance and participation: | 10%         |
| Class facilitation:                 | 30%         |
| Data analysis project               | 20%         |
| Evaluation proposal:                | 40%         |
| <hr/>                               |             |
| <b>Total:</b>                       | <b>100%</b> |

**Week 1 (3/31):**

**Introductions, course overview, goals  
What is assessment and evaluation?**

*Patton, Chapter 1, BLACKBOARD*

*Gawande, pp. 184-190, BLACKBOARD*

**Week 2 (4/7):**

**Establishing an historical context for the study of assessment and evaluation  
What is the current national context for assessment and why is it important?**

*Banta Ch. 1*

*Bok pp. 1-81, 109-145, BLACKBOARD*

*Miller BLACKBOARD*

**Accreditation and accountability in assessment**

*Banta Ch. 3 & 13*

*Volkwein BLACKBOARD*

*Hernon & Dugan, Ch. 1-2, BLACKBOARD*

**Week 3 (4/14):**

**Planning an evaluation: purposes, goals, audiences  
Steps to conducting a successful evaluation**

*Palomba and Banta, Ch. 2 BLACKBOARD*

*Patton, Ch. 4 BLACKBOARD*

*JCSEE website BLACKBOARD*

**Quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches to assessment**

*Palomba and Banta, Ch. 4 BLACKBOARD*

*Patton, Ch. 8-9 BLACKBOARD*

*LeCompte and Aguilera-Black Bear BLACKBOARD*

**Week 4 (4/21):**

**The assessment of student learning: Part 1**

**How are coursework and portfolios used for assessment?**

**How are general cognitive outcomes assessed (esp. communication, critical thinking, and student engagement)?**

**What is the role of student affairs professionals?**

*Astin, Ch. 1-2 BLACKBOARD*

*Banta, Ch. 11& 14*

*Dwyer, Millett, & Payne (2006) BLACKBOARD*  
*NILOA Survey, BLACKBOARD*  
*Schuh and Gansemer-Topf BLACKBOARD*  
*Green BLACKBOARD*

**Week 5 (4/28):**

**The assessment of student learning: Part 2**

**National rankings and ratings**  
**What is value-added?**

*Teagle/Hechinger Institute Report pp. 1-30 BLACKBOARD*  
*Selections from Peer Review (2002) BLACKBOARD*  
*Pascarella et al. BLACKBOARD*  
*Ehrenberg article BLACKBOARD*  
*Altbach article BLACKBOARD*  
*Brooks article BLACKBOARD*

**Week 6 (5/5):**

**Assessing higher education institutions**  
**Program review**

*Banta, Ch. 12*  
*Program Review at Northwestern BLACKBOARD*  
*ASHE Reader, pp. 79-107BLACKBOARD*  
*Rosser, Johnsrud, and Heck article BLACKBOARD*

**Week 7 (5/12):**

**Evaluating graduate education: The National Research Council, graduate student surveys, and alumni surveys**

*National Research Council reports and website BLACKBOARD*  
*CIRGE reports and website BLACKBOARD*  
*Brooks & Heiland article BLACKBOARD*

**Making institutional use of (sense of?) assessments and evaluations**  
**Behind the scenes with institutional research and data collection**

*Astin, Ch. 7 BLACKBOARD*  
*Blaich and Wise BLACKBOARD*

**Reporting on assessment and evaluation results**

*Patton, Ch. 10 BLACKBOARD*  
*Palomba and Banta, Ch. 11*  
*Volkwein BLACKBOARD*

**Week 8 (5/19):**

**Measurement challenges to assessment and evaluation**

**Validity, reliability revisited; racial/cultural biases; online education; community colleges**

*Banta, Ch. 8*

*Siefert et al. BLACKBOARD*

*Bowman BLACKBOARD*

*Prineas and Cini BLACKBOARD*

*Brooks, BLACKBOARD*

*Hughes and Scott-Clayton BLACKBOARD*

**Week 9 (5/26)**

**Integration and summary**

*Banta, Ch. 15*

*Ruben et al. BLACKBOARD*

**Student presentations of evaluation proposals: Part 1**

**Week 10 (6/2):**

**Student presentations of evaluation proposals: Part II**

**Final Evaluation Proposals Due**

### Supplemental Bibliography:

Association of American Colleges & Universities and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2008). *New Leadership for Student Learning and Accountability*. Washington, DC: AAC&U and CHEA.

Astin, Alexander W. (1991.) *Assessment for Excellence*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co.

Bok, Derek (2006). *Our Underachieving Colleges*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Boyer, Ernest (1990). *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Dwyer, Carol A. et al. (2006). *A Culture of Evidence: Postsecondary Assessment and Learning Outcomes, Recommendations to Policymakers and the Higher Education Community*. Princeton: Educational Testing Service.

Gawande, Atul. (2007). *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Glassick, Charles E; Huber, Mary T.; Maeroff, Gene I. (1997). *Scholarship Assessed*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hernon, Peter & Dugan, Robert. (2004). *Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited of Greenwood Press.

Heywood, John. (2000). *Assessment in Higher Education: Student Learning, Teaching, Programmes and Institutions*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Lee, W. Y. ed. (2003). *Assessment and Program Evaluation, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Messick, Samuel J. (1999). *Assessment in Higher Education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.

Middaugh, Michael F. (2001). *Understanding Faculty Productivity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Millett, Catherine M. (2008). *A Culture of Evidence: An Evidence-Centered Approach to Accountability for Student Learning Outcomes*. Princeton: Educational Testing Service.

Millett, Catherine M. et al. (2007). *A Culture of Evidence: Critical Features of Assessments for Postsecondary Student Learning*. Princeton: Educational Testing Service.

Palomba, Catherine A. & Banta, T. W. (2001). *Assessing Student Competence in Accredited Disciplines: Pioneering Approaches to Assessment in Higher Education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Patton, Michael Q. (1986). *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

*Peer Review: Special Issue: Value Added Assessment of Liberal Education*. 2002. Vol 4: (No. 2/3).

Walker, George E. et al. (2008). *The Formation of Scholars*. Stanford: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Walvoord, Barbara E. (2004). *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Learning outcomes should be specific and well defined. When developing a list of student learning outcomes, it is important that statements be specific and well defined. Learning outcomes should be realistic. It is important to make sure that outcomes are attainable. Outcomes need to be reviewed in light of students' ability, developmental levels, their initial skill sets, and the time available to attain these skill sets ( i. e, 4 years). They should also be in line with what is being taught. What Are Learning Outcomes? Think first about what is essential that students know or be able to do after the course or program " what students need to know and could make powerful use of to enhance their lives and more effectively contribute to society. Learning outcomes are statements that describe the knowledge or skills students should acquire by the end of a particular assignment, class, course, or program, and help students understand why that knowledge and those skills will be useful to them. Effective learning outcomes highlight expected student behavior as well as the specific conditions and standards of performance by which students will be measured. Expected Student Behavior " It is best to write learning outcomes in terms of an observable, behavioral outcome; essentially, learning outcomes should provide a description of what the student will be able to do. When writing the outcome in performance terminology, the selection of an effective action verb is of utmost importance.