Course Syllabus

Syllabus for Evaluation in Anthropological Practice ANTH 5070

ANTH 5070-810/820 University of North Texas

Course Description

Anthropological theory and method are increasingly in demand for evaluations because of the capacity of anthropology to delineate cultural positions of individuals and organizations around key issues of needs assessment, service delivery, equity and justice in the design and implementation of both public and private programs.

Course Objectives

This course provides a graduate-level experience in the field of evaluation anthropology, an important area for jobs in practicing and applied anthropology in government and the private sectors.

- Link evaluation and anthropological method and theory
- Address common methodological, logistic and theoretical issues that occur in the course of conducting evaluation projects
- Demonstrate how to use holistic, mixed method and qualitative designs in evaluations.

Course Requirements:

As the requirement for this class, you will work in teams to design, conduct and report a small- scale evaluation. I will work with you to help you define the evaluation and develop a scope that will fit into the time we have available for this project. *All members of your team will receive the same grade for projects*.

The required products for this course are set up so that they are cumulative, that is, you set up the basis for later ones by the quality of your work on earlier ones. Moreover, it is to be expected that these products will change as we discuss them and as we vet each other's projects in class. Don't panic. We will walk through this project step by step.

Grading:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

The final grade will be the weighted numeric average of the letter grade distributed as above. The university does not allow "+" and "-" grades. *All members of your team will receive the same grade for evaluation projects*. This is

in line with the real-world principle that you can't pass the buck in practice. You rise or fall together.

Teamwork - (10 POINTS). People who don't pull their weight on teams are a big problem in teaching online courses. In the university, teammates don't usually complain about slackers on their teams, choosing instead to do a disproportionate amount of the work. If you are not pulling your weight on the job, you just get fired. I have finally come to realize that the only way to handle this problem is to grade it. So, at random times during the semester, I will send each of you a question on team participation. Your responses to these will be strictly private. I will talk to people who seem not to be participating adequately on teams**.** I will follow up on problems.

Timeliness – (10 points) 10% of your grade depends on getting everything in on time. This is the most important – and often the most difficult – requirement for success as evaluators. Like us, clients have deadlines. If we miss ours, they miss theirs. This is bad.

On time is the end of the day on the due date (11:59). You can submit products through the assignment function in Canvas unless it is an assignment that I have directed to a Discussion Forum. The latter are assignments that I would like shared with the whole class, such as the bio in Week 1.

Participation in class discussions (15 POINTS) Once a week I will post a discussion question on Canvas. You will read the question and respond. It's a blog format, so you can respond to responses. This is really important because it is the classroom discussion part of the course. It has been my experience that these discussions work really well on online courses. Your name must show up on the discussion page at least twice for every discussion.

Completion of written course assignments (15 POINTS) – This refers to submissions of the "Real Work" assignments. These are simulated evaluation activities. They are often worth a thousand words. There are four of them.

Evaluation – The evaluation is worth 50% of your grade broken down as shown above. The evaluation problem (10 POINTS), the evaluation Plan (15 POINTS) and the final evaluation report (25 POINTS).

As I grade, I will bear in mind the following criteria:

1.*Adequacy for the completion of the project*: Does the product do what it needs to do as discussed in class? Will it support the project that you are trying to do?

2.*Clarity and coherence:* Can I understand it? Is it clear and correctly organized and does it have all of the elements it needs? Or am I baffled about what you proposed? Does it have pictures and tables to explain your approach?

3.*Methodological feasibility:* Do the things you propose be methodologically feasible and do they reflect the state-of-the art around social science method? They don't have to be perfect, and they don't have to be final. In fact, they probably will change due to

my feedback and class discussion. This is not a problem. But what you propose has to be reasonable method as represented in the readings and discussed in class.

4.*Quality:* The final presentation needs to reflect work and care in its preparation. This is the dimension that reflects how happy I would be if I were your client. In delivering effective evaluation, this is the critical dimension that captures everything else.

More About Projects

As part of this project, you will work with at least one other person on the class project. In my experience, a supervised trip through the evaluation process will prepare you to think logistically and theoretically like an evaluator. And it will face you with the difficulties that all evaluators must manage over and over again. You will learn as much from solving these problems, as you

will from anything we do here. I'm always surprised by some of the issues that come up in evaluation. However, here are a few that I expect:

- ***Working on teams.*** Evaluations are almost never conducted by "lone wolf" evaluators. Evaluation problems are complex and require many different kinds of skills to address. As you have undoubtedly noticed in the past, teamwork is hard work. I encourage you from the start to maintain daily contact with your team members and try not to wander off and do your own thing. And listen carefully to what your team members are saying.
- ***Time pressure***. People often wait until the last possible minute to think about evaluation. This means that clients usually want their answers the day before yesterday. There is almost never enough time to do the deliberate, comprehensive plan you would like to do for your evaluation. This is of course a big problem here because we have thirteen weeks, no matter what. You do not have time to dawdle here.
- ***Getting a small enough problem.*** Just about every evaluation proposal I have ever written looked dauntingly complex to me the first time I saw the problem. A significant evaluation skill is cutting through complexity (dare I say confusion) to discover one, simple question to be evaluated. This is not easy; in fact, it may be the most challenging thing about the whole process.
- ***Scope creep.*** A very frustrating part of evaluation. You start out with a nice clean evaluation question, but as you go on to collect and analyze data, all kinds of interesting stuff show up that you would like to check out. Some of this you can do, but most of it you can't. In a "real" evaluation, you will have neither the time nor the money. In this course, you don't have the time. Keep your eye on the ball and learn how to put off questions that don't directly link to your evaluation question until later.

It's always a voyage of discovery. I expect this list to be longer next time because of what you learn here.

Project Planning

Project Activity

Get organized. Build a team to do your evaluation. Meet by Zoom to

talk about how to get started. If we have non-anthropologists in the course, make sure to include one on your team.

Read the materials about the program to be evaluated.

Task 1: Define an evaluation question. In your team, determine what

your evaluation will try to find out about. One clear question is best, but you may not get there on the first round. As a class we will settle on the final question.

Statement of Project Question

Task 2: Plan the evaluation. How do you plan to answer your

evaluation question? What will you want to find out? What will be your data sources? You may want to collect other types of data too. How will you collect data? How will you analyze the data?

Project Evaluation Plan

Task 3: Collect the data. Do the work. It's best if you collect data

quickly as possible.

Task 5: Analyze data. Allow plenty of time for analysis

Task 6: Write Report.

Final Evaluation PPT Report

Required Texts: Butler, Mary Odell. *Evaluation: A Culture Systems Approach.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. 2015,

Recommended: Butler, Mary Odell and Jacqueline Copeland-Carson, *Evaluation Anthropology: Introducing an Emerging Sub-Field*, NAPA Bulletin 24, University of California Press, 2005. ISBN 1-931303- 23-I.