<div align="center">

Impact Evaluation in Developing Countries
Elective: Spring 2026
BA BSC Economics
Jindal School of Government and Public Policy

</div>

Prof. Sunaina Dhingra
sunaina@jgu.edu.in
Office hours: by appt.
Credits: 4.5

Overview

Significant resources, are regularly dedicated to programs and policies aimed at improving the well-being of the world's poor. With what degree of confidence can observed changes in an outcome be attributed to a given intervention, program or policy? What are the characteristics of evaluation designs, quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, and analyses that allow empirically defensible *Impact Evaluation in Developing Countries* cause and effect inferences to be made? The purpose of (IEDC) is to explore how questions of this kind, which are essentially causal, are conceptualized and investigated. Students will learn about impact evaluation by examining evaluation designs and causal modelling techniques and by performing fundamental evaluation tasks. To explore how impact evaluation is situated and used in development agencies, students will examine the guidelines that are in circulation. As way to build professional skills set needed to conduct evaluations, students enrolled in IEDC engage in evaluation application activities.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed to help students pursue and achieve three types of learning objectives. Learning objectives related to *knowledge and understanding* are concerned with technical facts and concepts that constitute the field of impact evaluation as an area of specialization. *Critical thinking* objectives are concerned with the ability to assess the relative strengths of different evaluation designs and to assess how well parts of an impact evaluation design (e.g., theories of change, sampling, data collection instruments, analysis,) can support causal inference. *Application* objectives are focused on the ability to use knowledge and critical thinking skills to address actual evaluation problems in a specific context.

- Knowledge and understanding objectives
    - Develop fluency in the concepts and technical practices needed to design and perform impact evaluation
    - Understand the set of guidelines and technical conventions followed by major development organizations (e.g., United Nations Agencies, scientific organizations)
- Critical thinking objectives
    - Assess the strengths and weakness of the different types of designs that are used to produce plausible counterfactuals that underwrite impact evaluation
    - Explain the extent to which inferences derived from a given impact evaluation can be trusted
- Application objectives
    - Use knowledge and critical thinking skills to generate and implement plans to conduct an impact evaluation in connetion with a specific policy, program, or intervention

        o Use knowledge and critical thinkings skills to work directly with a client who requires an impact evaluation

By structuring the instructional acvities around these three learnring objectives, students enrolled in IEDC will develop the perspectives and skills needed to construct an impact evaluation design.

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

The instructional approach for IEDC, which supports the above noted learning objectives, uses a combination of teaching tools. Traditional lecture format and active discussion of readings are used to build the knowledge base and promote critical thinking. Structured group projects, with attention to time allocation among group members, promote collaboration and introduce the idea of labor management within projects. Direct engagement with programs and contact with stakeholders provides a platform on which evaluation application skills can be developed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE WEIGHTING

Prerequisites- Statistics. Introductory Econometrics -1 and Intermediate Econometrics (Econometrics-2)

The learning objectives and instructional approach of IEDC is structured around four activities, each of supports one or more of the learning objectives of the course. A brief description of work to be completed, along with respective contribution to the final course grade is detailed below. Together, assignments submitted to meet course requirements accounts for 90% of the course grade. The remaining 10% is reserved for attendance and participation.

- Reading reflections (individual) (20%)
    - *Purpose:* to document key points and raise questions about readings
    - *Structure*: individual assignment, prepared according a prescribed format
    - *Length estimate*: 1-2 pages per reading
    - *Due date:* Each day of class meetings (no later than 10:00 a.m.), unless otherwise noted
- Evaluation knowledge resources (team) (20%)
    - *Purpose:* to provide a resource of technical knowledge needed to conceptualize and design an impact evaluation. Areas covered include theories of change, sample design, survey development, regression based analysis, qualitative/ethnographic methods
    - *Structure*: Structured summary (template distributed) for each area, and a list of annotated references and resources and in-class briefing/presentation
    - *Length estimate:* 5 pages for each knowledge domain, excluding references
    Due date: presentations and Oct 1 & 3; 5 Resource supplement by Oct 9 at 5:00 pm.
- Concept note (individual) (10%)
    - *Purpose:* State goals for final project and describe work plan
    - *Structure*: brief paper that describes purpose, significance, approach, and plan of work
    - *Length estimate: 3 pages*
    - *Due date: Presentations, Nov 5 & 8; Written Nov 8 y 5:00 p.m.*
- Final project (individual)- evaluation proposal or focused review (40%)

- o Purpose: To gain experience in the process of writing and evaluation proposal or to deepen knowledge of the methodological merits of evaluation as applied to particular class of interventions
- o Structure: standardized format for both options to be reviewed in class
- o Length estimate: 15 pages (excluding references and appendices)
- o Due date: December 13 at 5:00 p.m.
- Attendance and participation (10%)
  - o All students are expect to attend all class meetings.
  - o Engaging in class discussion is an important part of the class

READINGS (primary textbook +)

- Gertler, Paul J.; Martinez, Sebastian; Premand, Patrick; Rawlings, Laura B.; Vermeersch, Christel M. J. 2016. Impact Evaluation in Practice, Second Edition. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank. © World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25030
- Angrist & Pischke, *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*, Ch. 4 (selected parts)

- Angrist & Krueger (1991), "Does compulsory school attendance affect schooling and earnings?"

Impact Evaluation in Developing Countries			
Date	**Topic**	**Activity**	**Reading**
Part I: Introduction to Impact Evaluation			
Week 1–2	**Introduction & Foundations** • Why do we evaluate policies? • Correlation vs. causation • Counterfactuals and the evaluation problem	Lect/Disc	• Gertler et al. (2016), Ch1-2
Week 3-4:	**Experimental Methods** • Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) • Design, strengths, limitations, ethics		• Banerjee & Duflo (2011), *Poor Economics*, Ch. 1 • Gertler et al., Ch. 3
Week 5-6:	**Quasi-Experimental Methods I – Difference-in-Differences (DiD)** • Before/after comparisons • DiD models in regression framework • Case studies	Lect/Disc	• Angrist & Pischke (2009), *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*, Ch. 5 (simplified excerpts) • Selected empirical paper (e.g., Card & Krueger, 1994, minimum wage and employment) • Gertler et al., Ch. 4

Impact Evaluation in Developing Countries			
Date	**Topic**	**Activity**	**Reading**
Week 7-8:	**Quasi-Experimental Methods II – Instrumental Variables (IV)** • Endogeneity and instruments Examples from education, health	Lect/Disc	• Angrist & Pischke, *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*, Ch. 4 (selected parts) • Angrist & Krueger (1991), "Does compulsory school attendance affect schooling and earnings?" • Gertler et al., Ch. 5
Week 9-10	**Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD)** • Intuition and graphical approach Applications in policy contexts	Lect/Disc	• Lee & Lemieux (2010), "Regression Discontinuity Designs in Economics" • Gertler et al., Ch. 6
Week 11-12	**Matching Methods & Propensity Scores** • Nearest neighbor, propensity score matching Strengths and weaknesses	Lect/Disc	• Rosenbaum & Rubin (1983), "The Central Role of the Propensity Score" (excerpts) • Gertler et al., Ch. 7
Week 13	Focus on validity – internal and external	Lect/Disc	TBA