Freie Universität Bozen
Libera Università di Bolzano
Università Liedia de Bulsan

Syllabus
Course description

Course title	**Methods for Public Policies Evaluation**
Course code	27507 (loaned from 27612 – LM-63)
Scientific sector	SECS-P/03 – ECON-03/A
Degree	LM DATA – Master in Data Analytics for Economics and Management – curriculum Data Analytics for Economics (loaned from LM 63 – Master in Economics and Management of the Public Sector)
Semester and academic year	1st semester a.y. 2025/26
Year	1st study year
Credits	6
Modular	no

Total lecturing hours	36
Total lab hours	-
Total exercise hours	6
Attendance	Attendance is recommended, but not mandatory.
Prerequisites	None
Course page	https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/economics-management/master-data-analytics-economics-management/

Specific educational objectives	The course is designed to enhance students' expertise in quantitative evaluation and policy analysis, with a focus on the practical application of economic theories and tools. This education prepares them to rigorously assess the viability and sustainability of public policies across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Beyond technical knowledge, the course fosters essential soft skills, including communication, leadership, and management required in evaluation projects. The program nurtures independent learning and critical thinking, ensuring that graduates are equipped for advanced research and policy evaluation roles that demand a high level of autonomy and keen analytical competencies. These combined objectives aim to graduate well-rounded professionals ready to contribute thoughtfully and effectively to public policy and governance.

Lecturer	**Prof. Dr. Alexander Moradi** Office E2.08 - Tel 0471 013135 https://alexandermoradi.org/ https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/economics-management/academic-staff/person/39937-alexander-moradi
Scientific sector of the lecturer	SECS-P/01 – ECON-01/A
Teaching language	English
Office hours	18 hours MySNS – Individual timetable Webpage: https://www.unibz.it/en/timetable/?sourceId=unibz&department=26&degree=13543%2C13723
Lecturing assistant	None
Teaching assistant	None
List of topics covered	The course will cover the fundamental concepts of impact evaluation, distinguishing it from related processes such as monitoring and general evaluation. It covers a range of experimental and quasi-experimental designs, including Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) and the latest and most robust evaluation methodologies. Using an appropriate statistical software package students will engage in practical aspects of impact evaluation, including data collection and analysis. They will learn how to design surveys, choose appropriate statistical methods, and interpret data to draw meaningful conclusions about policy impacts. The curriculum includes a series of case studies from different sectors such as education, health, and environmental policy, providing real-world insights into the application and challenges of impact evaluation.
Course outline	1) The Experimental Ideal: Causal Effects and the Selection Problem 2) Randomized Control Trials, ethical and practical challenges, communication and policy consulting 3) Natural experiments (discovering, analyzing, evaluating) 4) Panel, Difference-in-Differences, Instrumental Variables 5) Regression Discontinuity Designs 6) Synthetic Control The emphasis is on applying the methods to evaluate real world policy questions. For this we use the statistical software R.
Teaching format	Lectures, exercises, projects.

Learning outcomes	**1) Knowledge and understanding** Students of the course acquire detailed knowledge about the economics and econometrics of policy evaluation. Students will gain a solid knowledge and understanding of the core principles and methods of Impact Evaluation. They3/6 will comprehend the importance and application of the experimental ideal in policy evaluation, including the design and implementation of randomized controlled trials and dealing with selection bias to determine causal effects. Furthermore, they will deepen their knowledge in the application and analysis of natural experiments and learn advanced evaluation methods. **2) Applying knowledge and understanding** Upon completion of the course, students will have the ability to use the evaluation methods taught, such as experimental and quasi-experimental designs, to conduct Impact Evaluation studies on actual political interventions. They will master the statistical software to independently perform data analyses necessary for a comprehensive assessment of political measures and their societal impacts. Students will be capable of identifying causal relationships and providing evidence-based recommendations for policy formulation and implementation. These skills will enable them to make informed judgments about the effectiveness of public programs and contribute to the development of sustainable political strategies. **3) Making judgments** Students will develop the competence to critically select and use relevant data to address complex challenges that arise in the planning, implementation, and assessment of public sector projects. They will be able to apply their judgement to contribute to innovative solutions and enhance processes and outcomes in public institutions. This includes integrating models and empirical findings into the analysis of political phenomena to make well-founded decisions. Moreover, students will be empowered to assess the validity of research findings that claim to provide causal answers to policy questions. They will learn to critically examine research designs and outcomes and evaluate the suitability of Impact Evaluation studies for evidence-based policy making. **4) Communication skills** Both oral and written communication skills will be developed in this course via presentations and written assessments. Students will be expected to be able to present research findings to both

	specialist and non-specialist audiences in a clear and precise way. Students will develop the ability to communicate complex content and results of policy evaluation clearly and persuasively. They will be able to convey their findings and analyses appropriately to different audiences – from policymakers and professional colleagues to the general public. Students will learn to apply the principles of policy consulting to translate research findings into policy recommendations and present these recommendations convincingly. This includes the ability to assess the educational and persuasive impact of their communication approaches and understand how information must be presented to foster informed political discussion and decision-making. **5) Learning skills** Students will develop independent learning skills to conduct data-based analyses for Impact Evaluations. They will learn to effectively research relevant information, classify complex problems, and develop models from their investigations. These abilities will empower them to make connections between theory and practice and formulate independent, substantiated conclusions.

Assessment	**For attending and non-attending students**: **Project Development**: Students will choose a topic relevant to the course and develop either: a) an evaluation plan for a public policy of their choice, which includes a comprehensive methodology section detailing the proposed data collection and analysis methods using R, or b) a replication of an existing public policy evaluation, including a critical reflection on the original study's methodology, findings, and implications. **For attending students**: 1. **Presentation**: Students must present their project plans or replication studies to the class. The presentation should succinctly summarize the project's purpose, methodology, expected outcomes (for evaluation plans), or main findings and critique (for replications). This will account for 30% of the final grade and will be evaluated on clarity, engagement with the audience, and the depth of understanding demonstrated.

	2. **Project Report**: A 1,500-word report must be submitted, documenting the project in detail. For evaluation plans, this should include background, methodology, expected results, and potential impact. For replications, it should discuss the methodology, analysis in R, findings, and a critical reflection. The report counts for 70% of the final grade and will be assessed for thoroughness, insightfulness, and the ability to convey complex information effectively. **For non-attending students:** Extended Project Assignment: Non-attending students will submit a longer project report of 2,500words that covers the same criteria as above but should also include a more detailed literature review to contextualize their project within the current research landscape. This report will count for 100% of the final grade. **Initial Contact**: Non-attending students must contact the lecturer within the first four weeks of the course to discuss their project topic and receive guidance. *Project work and classroom presentations are valid for 1 academic year and cannot be carried over beyond that time-frame.*
Assessment language	English
Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks	**Presentation:** 1. **Clarity of Presentation (20%):** The student must present content in a manner that is both clear and comprehensible. Complex concepts should be articulated in a way that is accessible to all audience members. 2. **Quality of Argumentation (20%):** Arguments should be presented in a logical and persuasive manner, with adequate support from empirical data or scholarly literature. 3. **Mastery of Technical Terminology (20%):** Usage of technical terminology should be precise and contextually appropriate. 4. **Interactive Communication Skills (20%):** The student's ability to engage with the audience through responsive Q&A, as well as the effective use of visual aids, will be evaluated.

	5. **Structure and Organization (20%):** The presentation should have a coherent structure with a clear narrative thread throughout. **Project Report:** 1. **Correct Application of Methods (25%):** The report should demonstrate that Impact Evaluation methods have been accurately applied and thoroughly described. 2. **Depth of Analysis (25%):** The report must reflect a comprehensive analysis and profound understanding of the chosen subject matter. 3. **Critical Thinking (25%):** The report should critically examine the methods employed and the results achieved, showcasing analytical depth. 4. **Accuracy and Completeness (25%):** The report must be meticulous in considering and presenting all relevant aspects of the project with precision. Each criterion will be rigorously evaluated, with scores assigned according to the specified weightings. These scores will be aggregated to ascertain the final course grade. This comprehensive assessment is designed to ensure that students are evaluated on a spectrum of essential skills and knowledge reflective of rigorous academic standards.

Required readings	Cunningham, S. (2025), Causal Inference. The Mixtape. https://mixtape.scunning.com/
Supplementary readings	Dunning, T. (2012). *Natural Experiments in Social Sciences*, Cambridge University Press. 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. http://hdl.handle.net/10986/25030 Further supplementary reading material will be published regularly on OLE.