UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Public Policies: Assessment

2425-2-E1601N067-E1601N056M

Learning objectives

The second module 'Public Policies: Evaluation' provides a gentle introduction to the main analytical methods used to make an empirically based judgment on the success of a public policy. Intuitively, the module helps students understanding what does it means to establish whether a public policy has "succeeded", has produced the "desired results" or not, and which tools/methods can be used for this purpose.

By the end of the module, students will be able to:

- Distinguish between perception and evidence of the results achieved by a public policy;
- Evaluate the robustness of the empirical evidences put forward by politicians and policy makers in the public debate in support of the success of a public policy;
- Understand the content and critically discuss evaluation examples published in leading national and international journals in the field;
- Apply the main impact assessment methods based on the counterfactual logic to case studies inspired by real public policies, but simplified in terms of data for didactic purposes.

Contents

The second module 'Public Policies: Evaluation' will address the following topics:

- Evaluating the success of a public policy: what it means and what is it for.
- The counterfactual logic and Rubin's model.
- Randomized controlled trials.
- Difference in differences.
- Linear regression.
- Statistical matching.
- Regression discontinuity design.

- Instrumental variables approach.
- Interrupted time series.

Detailed program

The second module "Public Policies: Evaluation" is divided into two parts.

The first introductory part presents the key concepts and vocabulary of public policy impact evaluation. Once the 'jargon' of impact evaluation has been acquired, students are introduced to the counterfactual logic and are guided to formalize it through the Rubin's Model.

The second part, the most extensive, presents consolidated experimental and non-experimental methods to assess the success of a public policy, each time emphasizing their conditions of application, potential and limits. In particular, the second part describes and presents applications of the following methods: randomized controlled trials, difference in the differences, linear regression, statistical matching, regression discontinuity design, instrumental variables approach, and interrupted time series.

Prerequisites

Students are allowed to attend classes, to join class exercises, to take the mid-term and final exams and to do the team work of the second module "Public Policies: Evaluation" even if they have not yet taken the written exam of the first module "Public Policies: Decision and Implementation". However, they have to be familiar with the topics covered by the first module "Public Policies: Decision and Implementation".

Besides, the requirements for the second module "Public Policies: Evaluation" are minimal. It assumes only a decent knowledge of algebra and a basic understanding of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Teaching methods

The second module 'Public Policy: Evaluation' consists of 42 hours, of which approximately 26 hours are spent on didactic delivery (lectures with the use of slides and audio and video content) and 16 on interactive teaching (classroom exercises and group work).

Assessment methods

The program is the same for attending and non-attending students. Attendance is not compulsory, but it is warmly suggested.

All students, both attending and non-attending, will be given the opportunity to do a teamwork. Non-attending students wishing to join the teamwork have to contact the instructor by email (fedra.negri@unimib.it) by 31 March 2025.

The **exam for students with teamwork** includes:

- A team work. In small groups (max 6 people), students must read, understand, present and critically discuss in English a scientific paper published in an international journal. Evaluation: up to +3 points to be added to the final exam.
- Final written exam (10 questions in two hours). Note: an open question concerns the paper read by the student during the teamwork and grants up to 4 points. Scores: 0-31.

The **exam for students without teamwork** is a single final written test (10 questions in 2 hours). Scores: 0-31. Please note: the program and questions 1-9 are identical to that of students with teamwork. Question 10 will be different.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

The program is the same for attending and non-attending students and includes:

- Martini, A., Sisti, M. (2009), *Valutare il successo delle politiche pubbliche*, Bologna: il Mulino, capp. Introduzione, 1; 6, 7, 8, 9, (10), 11, 12, 13, 14, 16.
- Battistin, E., Bertoni, M. (2023). Counterfactuals with Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Variation. In: Damonte, A., Negri, F. (eds) Causality in Policy Studies. Texts in Quantitative Political Analysis. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-12982-7_3
- Negri, F. (2023). Correlation Is Not Causation, Yet… Matching and Weighting for Better Counterfactuals. In: Damonte, A., Negri, F. (eds) Causality in Policy Studies. Texts in Quantitative Political Analysis. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-12982-7_4
- Costalli, S., Negri, F. (2021). Looking for twins: How to build better counterfactuals with matching. Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica, 51(2), 215-230. doi:10.1017/ipo.2021.1

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION