HE 605 Learning Assessment  
George Mason University  
Tuesdays, 4:40 Spring 2018  
Peterson Hall 2408

Instructor: Jan Arminio, Ph. D.  
jarminio@gmu.edu  
Enterprise Hall 303  
MSN 1B3  
703-993-2064  
Office hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistant: Rick Hess  
Rhess5@gmu.edu  
Associate Director of Accreditation and Assessment, School of Business  
032 Enterprise Hall, Ffx, MSN: 1B1  
Phone: (703) 993-4446

Course Description:  
Focuses on classroom and program-level learning assessment, and describes the political and historical context for assessment. Offers hands-on practice of assessment for instructors and student affairs professionals.

Statement of Course Objectives: As a result of this course, by synthesizing course content students will be able  
- to apply best practices in assessment across the assessment cycle  
- to comply with principles of equity in assessment  
- to produce an assessment report that complies with best practices as described in course materials  
- to recognize and synthesize current national findings on student learning outcomes  
- to critique current assessment assumptions, tools, and practices, and  
- to recognize and evaluate current trends and issues in assessment

Note: I refresh my syllabi every semester; hence this one may be the best you have every read!

Required Textbooks:  

Articles, reports, and chapters identified below.

Recommended Texts:

**Learning Methods:**
The above goals will occur through discussing related course content (face to face and through various technologies, in small and large groups), experiencing activities that prompt the understanding and application of material, conducting an assessment, creating assessment-related workshops, and presentations, using SPSS, and recommending improved practice.

**Class Meetings**

**Introduction**
1/23  
Introductions, types of assessments, why assess, assessing student experience with assessment  
Read: EAB and Fitbit Data (Bb)  
Icebreaker: Undergraduate Text  
Activity on Assessment Topics

Assessment Best Practices – **Note: We will meet in ENT 318!**
1/30  
The Assessment Purpose and Products  
Read: Henning & Roberts, pp. 1-53, 204-235  
Suskie xiii-35, 273-296  
Guest Speaker – Carrie Klein

2/6  
Equity and Assessment  
Read: Heisser, Prince, & Levy, 2017, “Examining Critical Theory as a Framework to Advance Equity through Student Affairs Assessment” (Bb)  
Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017, “Equity and Assessment” (Bb)  
Montenegro & Jankowski, 2015, "Focused on What Matters” (Bb)  
Gose, 2017, “Getting Faculty Members to Embrace Student Data” (Bb)  
Due: Come to class with an identified assessment topic. Also, come prepared to discuss (CPTD) common points of all of these readings. What are the principles of equity in assessment?

2/13  
Creating Learning Outcomes/Goals (including 5 column model)  
Read: Henning & Roberts, pp. 54-103  
Suskie, pp. 36-68, 115-134  
Fulcher, Good, Coleman, & Smith, 2014, “A Simple Model for Learning Improvement” (Bb)  
CPTD: How do the SLOs of this course compare or contrast with the reading for today?
2/20 Rubrics and Assignments
Read: Henning & Roberts, pp. 183-203
Suskie, pp. 137-164
Due: Learning outcomes/goals

2/27 Quantitative Measures and Surveys
Read: Henning & Roberts, pp. 104-149
Suskie, pp. 165-182, 214-229, 255-272
Activity: SPSS

3/6 Portfolios and Reflections
Read: Suskie, pp. 183-213
Hotell & Rowan-Kenyon (Bb)
Due: Purpose of your assessment project
Quiz

3/13 Spring Break

3/20 Qualitative Methods and Establishing Standards
Read: Henning & Roberts, pp. 150-182, 236-262
Suskie, pp. 233-254
Schuh and Gansemer-Topf, 2010, “The Role of Student Affairs in Student Learning Assessment” (Bb)

What are students learning?

3/27 National Data on Learning Outcomes
Maryland Higher Education Commission, “2016 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report Vol. 1” (Bb)
Due: How are you measuring and analyzing learning?

Measuring Tools

4/3 Workshop Presentations

4/10 Research on Assessment in Community Colleges: The Question of Accuracy of Development Assessments

Read:


Take note of the sequence of when these articles were written, how data was collected, research methods used, and compare the results across the studies. Come prepared to discuss what policy changes you would recommend.

Guest Speaker: Lorrie Budd, Community College of Baltimore

Workshop Presentation

4/17 Workshop Presentations

Issues and Trends in Assessment
4/24 Creating a Culture of Learning
   Read: Henning & Roberts, 263-279
   Suskie, 69-114
   Hess and Klein chapter
   Kinzie & Jankowski, (2015), “Organizing to Yield Results” in Using Evidence of Student Learning (Bb)
   Rice, 2011, “Networked Assessment” (Bb). Note: This needs to be studied not just read.
   Due: Findings

5/1 Critiquing the Accountability Movement and Synthesis – Are you a good data steward?
   Kuh & Hutchings, (2015), Assessment and Initiative Fatigue in Using Evidence of Student Learning (Bb)
   Brief Report of Your Assessment Project

5/14 Assessment Report Due

*Cancellation Assignment
Visit three websites of institutions at which you have not attended or worked. The institutions must be very different from each other (for example one is a public community college, one a public HBCU, and one a for profit). Try to find any examples of assessment initiatives and assessment reports. Post on Blackboard what you notice. How difficult are such reports to find? How do they share bad news? Specifically, how
do they share good news? Is there an institutional assessment office? If so, organizationally where is the assessment office located? Note too if assessment functions are also a part of the institutional research office.

Assignments and Grading: Please read every single word of this section!

1. Participation
The success of this course will depend heavily upon the active participation and willing engagement of everyone. I recognize that every individual learns in a different way, however, it is expected that you respect the different strengths and learning styles that individuals bring to the class and appreciate that diversity. While a commitment to being honest and open about the course material will be most helpful to individual development and to the understanding of the course material, it is also expected that each of us honor a fundamental principal of respect for one another as individuals and learners. This includes not “hogging” discussion time, but rather inviting space for everyone. This also means that the classroom atmosphere is such that students are comfortable in disagreeing with each other and are not interrupted or demeaned.

Students will be expected to actively engage in class discussion. This means that students will need to come to class prepared by reading the assigned material, reflecting on the author’s arguments, considering the relationship of the readings to your life and work, generating questions and reactions, and contributing in the large and small group discussions. I aim to create a brave space and am open to new learning and a reorganization of my current learning, and hope that this is your aim to as well.

Note that points will be deducted for lack of participation. Refer to my participation rubric for more information.

2. Learning Outcomes/Goals
The purpose of this assignment is to apply course content on writing measurable learning outcomes.

Cite the mission of the institution at which you are conducting your assessment. List the learning goals/outcomes of the learning opportunity you are assessing. Describe how the outcomes/goals connect with the institution’s and the unit’s mission. You may want to accomplish through the five column model discussed in class. If you are using a unit’s already established learning outcomes/goals indicate how they meet the criteria of well written outcomes/goals and how you would rewrite them. (~ 3 pages, 10 points)

3. Assessment Purpose
This assignment will assess your ability to discern an appropriate purpose of an assessment based on learning outcomes/goals.

Describe the purpose of the assessment you are conducting. In essence, what questions do you want answered? The purpose must be directly connected to at least one of the stated learning outcomes/goals. (~ 1 page, 5 points)
4. **How are you measuring and analyzing learning?**
This assignment determines if you can select a measuring method that will answer the question you are asking and the story you want to tell.

Discuss the methodology and method you are using and why they are appropriate for the assessment purpose. Describe how data is to be collected and analyzed. If qualitative, don’t just write that you will create “themes.” What is it you are looking for? How will you identify them? What will you do with them? Discuss sampling procedures. If quantitative, state measuring tool and statistic used to analyze data. If you are using a published survey state author/s plus validity and reliability data. Include how participants will be selected and the criteria for selection. What are the standards you are looking for? (~5 pages 10 points)

5. **Instrument Workshop** – The purpose of this workshop is to share information about assessment measuring tools, to prepare for designing conference proposals, and to communicate assessment content orally. There are two parts to this assignment. First, (in small groups) you are to create a workshop. Using the requirements of a professional association conference workshop (you will need to name it and provide a link to the requirements), propose a workshop about an assessment measuring tool. This can be an established instrument or one you create. If you create it, be sure it is consistent with properties of worthy assessment measurement tools. Be sure the proposal includes workshop title, proposed learning outcomes, literature supporting the workshop, and an agenda for the workshop.

Be aware that workshops differ from a presentations in that they assume you are presenting to peers and they offer an application segment.

Second, you are to present a 30 minute segment of the workshop. You may select any Aspect of the workshop. (30 points, 15 points written proposal and 15 points oral presentation)

6. **Quiz**
This objective quiz will assess your knowledge of the facts we studied to this point. (20 points)

7. **Findings**
This assignment determines if you can identify key findings and describe them to a targeted audience. Consider this the climax of the assessment story. In one to two pages, describe what you found from the analysis of the data you collected. There should be little interpretation. (2-5 pages, 10 points)

8. **Assessment Report**
The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate the differentiation of assessment reports from other types of scholarly writing. Too students will demonstrate good report writing according to course readings.
The assessment report must include an executive summary, the learning goals measured, how they were measured, findings, and implications (interpretation of the findings, and how you suggest the unit responds to the findings including next assessment steps). Include references of course content. Note to whom you would share this report. Though conforming to APA format, feel free to include infographics, pictures, or create a website. (~ 8 pages, 15 points)

*Note: The assignments that lead up to and include the assessment report (assignments 2, 3, 4, and 7) may be completed individually or in a group. If you complete these as a group, the group must submit a brief description of who did what. Too, you may use assessment outcomes and an assessment purpose that have already been created, but you must critique it. Too, you may use data already collected but you must work on its analysis. The assessment report must be your original work (as a group or an individual).

For those with little or no assessment experience feel free to partner with others more experienced. I will help facilitate that. Those interested in gaining assessment supervision experience, please let me know.

If you do not have access to data and do not wish to collect data, you may wish to use data collected by others. For example, Dr. LaShonda Anthony (lanthon2@gmu.edu) from Mason’s academic integrity office and Dr. Stephanie Foster (sfoster21@gmu.edu) in Undergraduate Education in the Provost’s Office at Mason have volunteered to share data with students. Also, Rick Hess (TA) has some data available. I too have some qualitative data.

**General Notes**

1. **Regarding written assignments**, please do not simply add length to written assignments. I prefer papers that are clear, concise, and thorough enough to address required topics. All papers must follow the formatting, referencing, and style of the APA Publication Manual (6th ed.). Page length guidelines do not refer to the title page. Written assignments will be graded on the following criteria:
   1. Organization and development of required ideas;
   2. Soundness of analysis;
   3. Writing quality; and
   4. APA formatting and referencing.

Please refer to my writing rubric for more information.

**I do not accept late work.** If a difficult situation has come up that prevents you from completing an assignment on time, contact me but send me what you have, then we’ll chat.

2. **Classroom Etiquette - Please turn off all cell phones or switch them to silent mode. Text messaging or sending e-mail during class time is inappropriate – unless it is class related. I will deduct points if I see you constantly looking at your lap!** If you have an emergency situation that requires being accessible by
phone or beeper, please notify me. If at all possible, use restroom facilities immediately before or after class or at the break to avoid leaving class while it is in session and distracting others (including me). I expect students to be physically and emotionally present in the room.

3. Feel free to eat during class.

4. I do allow students to resubmit their work, but students cannot earn a perfect score for a resubmission. Both the original and resubmitted paper must be resubmitted together within one week after the assignment was returned.

5. Academic Dishonesty - In carrying out assignments professional ethics must be followed at all times. Academic dishonesty means deceit or misrepresentation in attempting (successfully or unsuccessfully) to influence the grading process or to obtain academic credit by a means not authorized by the course instructor or university policy. A breach of academic honesty is committed by students who give, as well as receive, unauthorized assistance in course and clinical work and/or who purposefully evade, or assist other students in evading the university’s policy against dishonesty.

6. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. It is your unacknowledged use of another writer’s own words, specific facts, propositions, or materials in your own writing. When other writers’ words or materials (even short phrases or specific terminology) are used, you must cite these words, phrases, or sentences according to APA 6th edition. Failure to do so will be considered a violation of academic honesty. The graduate school is quite strict regarding academic dishonesty. First offenses may be penalized with an F or by suspension. Second offenses require suspension.

Honor Code

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this:

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

7. Grades are earned not given. Final grades will be given using a + and - as is indicated in the University Catalog. Also, no Ds are given according to the Graduate Catalog. I do give Cs for those who earn Cs. The grading scale is as follows: 100- A+; 99-96 = A; 95-92 = A-; 91-88 = B+; 87-84 = B; 83-80 = B-; 79-75 = C, below 75 is an F.

8. Student Support Resources are plentiful at George Mason University. These include:
   Counseling and Psychological Services http://caps.gmu.edu/
9. **Statement Regarding Religious Observances for Students.** It is Mason's policy to encourage its faculty to make a reasonable effort to allow students to observe their religious holidays or to participate in university-sponsored activities without academic penalty. Absence from classes or exams for these reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the absence. Students who miss classes, exams, or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance or for participation in a university activity will be provided a reasonable alternative opportunity, consistent with class attendance policies stated in the syllabus, to make up the missed work. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty, within the first two weeks of the semester, with the dates of major religious holidays on which they will be absent, and the dates for which they are requesting an excused absence for participation in any university-sponsored activity scheduled prior to the start of the semester, and as soon as possible otherwise.

10. **Documented Disability.** Both in compliance with and in the spirit of the Americans with disabilities Act (ADA), I would like to work with you if you have a disability that is relevant to your work in this course. If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me.

11. **Attendance.** It is expected that you will attend all classes. I understand, however, that at times students become ill or have severe circumstances that require that you be elsewhere. I have found that typically students who miss class ultimately have to rewrite at least one assignment. Lax attendance (for whatever reason) precluded these students from learning the material necessary to satisfactorily complete assignments. Note that missing more than one class will result in a deduction of participation points. Students cannot pass this course if three class sessions were missed. Students who miss class are responsible for knowing course content that was missed.

12. **University Academic Policies**
   - University Catalog: [http://catalog.gmu.edu/](http://catalog.gmu.edu/)
   - University Policies: [http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/)

13. **Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence.** George Mason University is committed to providing a safe learning, living and working environment free from discrimination. The University’s environment is meant to be experienced as vibrant and dynamic, and one that includes ample opportunities for exploration of self, identity and independence. Sexual misconduct and incidents of interpersonal violence deeply interrupt that experience, and George Mason University is committed to a campus that is free of these types of incidents in order to promote community well-being and student success.
George Mason University encourages individuals who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. Confidential resources are available on campus at Counseling and Psychological Services (caps.gmu.edu), Student Health Services (shs.gmu.edu), the University Ombudsperson (ombudsman.gmu.edu), and Wellness, Alcohol and Violence Education and Services (waves.gmu.edu).

All other members of the University community (except those noted above) are not considered confidential resources and are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator.

For a full list of resources, support opportunities, and reporting options, contact the University Title IX Coordinator at integrity.gmu.edu and/or at 703-993-8730. Our goal is to create awareness of the range of options available to you and provide access to resources.

14. I would like to quote from the syllabus of Dr. Kurt Kraus a former colleague who writes on his syllabi:

I wish for each of us to be sensitive and accommodating to individual’s gender identification and pronoun preferences. To be successful at this, I pledge to try my best not to make blundering assumptions – although I admit I too frequently do. I invite you to share with me and the members of this class how you wish to be identified; you are encouraged to determine how and when you wish to accomplish this. Please know that I welcome any communication if I can be of value or support in this important realm of self-identification and of being known by others.

Ok, you can stop reading every single word.

*At this point in my syllabus I typically write about why you should not leave a message with my sons if you call me at home. However, my husband and I are now “empty nesters” so the possibility of a son answering your call will be minimal. Additionally, we all have cell phones now, so the possibility of one of my sons answering my cell is close to nil. Nonetheless, in the rare occasion that one would, please read the following:

- If you call and an adult male answers, it is most likely my husband, who has had a number of careers – Navy pilot, homeland security consultant, instructor at Penn State, and security officer for a medical marijuana grower/producer/distributor in PA. He always asks, “Who is calling?” which at my age I find irritating. Sometimes if he believes that I need some free time he will tell you I am “not available” when in fact I am there. He is very detailed and has a good memory so there are no problems related to leaving a message with him. I will call you back.
- If my oldest son answers, you will have a good chance that he will give me your message, but it is not guaranteed. He does take messages, but the problem is that I cannot always read his handwriting or he leaves the message in places that are hidden. He is a
significant movie buff and can offer readily his views on all types of movies. He has a BA in English and works at a comic/graphic novel store. He writes weekly critiques of graphic novels and has appeared on several podcasts critiquing movies.

- If someone answers with a strong “Hello” or answers by saying "Talk to me" in a very, very deep voice, it is my middle son who is a graduate of West Chester University and Tai Sophia Institute for acupuncture. Due to his low voice, staff at West Chester called him “the White Barry White.” He is NOT good at taking messages for me even though he says he will so beware! I will not receive the message you leave with him. You will have to call back. He now works for Games Workshop.

  This guy now has a daughter (Sophia, two and a half years old). If she answers the phone you are really in trouble. She does love our dog Abbey and calls me Marnie.

- The voice that used to be soft and shy is now also very low. This is my youngest son. He may answer with, “You’ve got me at hello.” He attended the National Defense Language Institute in Arabic, loves languages, and is a wonderful study in development theory. He is a member of the Augusta City Improv Players and is quite funny. He recently earned his BA from AZ State University in Religious Studies. Beginning this summer, he will be attending graduate school at Monash University in Australia. He probably will not answer the phone as he is stationed in Georgia, but if he is ever home on leave beware of this guy as well. He too may forget that you called.

- If you call and no one answers the phone, it could be that no one is home or that my sons may think that they are just too busy or too cool to answer. Leave a message on or email me and I’ll get back to you as soon as possible. I do have a cell phone but I still forget to turn it on, so my cell phone number will be of no use to you. Email is the best means to get a hold of me.

Adopted from Drs. Carney Strange, Chris Linder, Kurt Kraus, and Tom Segar.