

# SOCIAL POLICY EVALUATION

## Contact Information

**Social Policy Evaluation**  
<https://socialpolicy.rice.edu>  
 713-328-2367

**Robert M. Stein**  
 Faculty Director  
[stein@rice.edu](mailto:stein@rice.edu)

Rice University's Master of Social Policy Evaluation (MSPE) degree is a one-year, full-time, 30-credit hour program administered by the School of Social Sciences in coordination with the Texas Policy Lab and other research centers at Rice. The MSPE provides the quantitative skills and hands-on application for real-world policy evaluations and explores specific policy areas in depth, currently criminal and juvenile justice, public health, early childhood development and education, and labor markets. MSPE graduates will have acquired the skills necessary to address the challenges faced by entities in the development, implementation, and evaluation of social policies.

Social Policy Evaluation does not currently offer an academic program at the undergraduate level.

## Master's Program

- [Master of Social Policy Evaluation \(MSPE\) Degree \(https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/social-sciences/social-policy-evaluation/social-policy-evaluation-mspe/\)](https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/social-sciences/social-policy-evaluation/social-policy-evaluation-mspe/)

## Professors

Flávio Cunha  
 Robert M. Stein

## Lecturers

Diego Amador  
 Erin Baumgartner  
 James P. Denicco  
 Christopher Kulesza  
 Steven Perry  
 Daniel J. Potter  
 Alisha Small

*For Rice University degree-granting programs:*

To view the list of official course offerings, please see [Rice's Course Catalog \(https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat?p\\_action=cata\)](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat?p_action=cata)

To view the most recent semester's course schedule, please see [Rice's Course Schedule \(https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat\)](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat)

## Social Policy Evaluation (SOPE)

**SOPE 501 - INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC POLICY**

**Short Title:** INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC POLICY

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** This course provides an introduction to the study and evaluation of public policy as practiced across and within different levels and types of governments. Policy making in United States is the principal, but not the exclusive focus of the course. Different models and theories of policy making serve as the focus of the first half of the course. The course will explore how different academic disciplines including, anthropology, economics, political science, psychology sociology and philosophy approach the study and evaluation of public policies.

**SOPE 502 - APPLICATIONS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION – CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**Short Title:** APPS IN PROG EVAL- CRIM JUSTIC

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** This course introduces students to the program evaluation literature in the area of criminal justice. There are reform projects underway at every stage of the American criminal justice system. Understanding the impact of these reforms is crucial for the future of criminal justice in the United States. We will study policies and interventions at various stages of criminal justice, from policing to reintegration.

**SOPE 503 - QUANTITATIVE METHODS FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION**

**Short Title:** QUANT METHODS FOR PROG EVAL

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Lecture/Laboratory

**Credit Hours:** 5

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** This course provides an in-depth introduction to the methods of program evaluation. The associated lab provides concrete examples for the students to gain practical experience in applying these methods. The methods presented will include: Randomized Controlled Trials, Instrumental Variables, Difference in Difference, Propensity Score Matching, and Regression Discontinuity Design. At the end of this course, students should be able to use these methods to conduct impact evaluations of social programs and to do a critical assessment of evaluations performed by others.

**SOPE 504 - APPLICATIONS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION – LABOR MARKETS**

**Short Title:** APPS IN PROG EVAL-LABOR

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** This course introduces students to the program evaluation literature in the area of labor markets. Students will critically read existing evaluations of labor market policies and evaluate for various types of validity and for generalization, draw on methodological best practices and apply empirical tools to their own evaluations of labor market policies, identify and access important datasets commonly used in influential employment-related research, and discuss with policy professionals the salience, outcomes, workings, and broader context of a variety of public programs designed to improve labor markets.

**SOPE 505 - MICROECONOMICS FOR POLICY EVALUATION**

**Short Title:** MICROECONOMICS FOR POLICY EVAL

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** This course will introduce students to economic principles and tools relevant for policy analysis. The course covers topics such as household decision-making, the economics of information, risk and uncertainty, markets and market structure, externalities and other types of market failure, behavioral economics, game theory, and welfare economics. Students will see how the application of economic theory to policy questions informs and guides social policy analysis.

**SOPE 506 - APPLICATIONS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION – HEALTH**

**Short Title:** APPS IN PROG EVAL- HEALTH

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** Public health and healthcare service delivery play a crucial role in shaping population health and in influencing health systems at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. The ability to systematically and critically assess the health program evaluation literature is requisite for understanding how to identify and implement effective, evidence-based legislation, policies, and reforms. This course will provide a framework for analyzing the evidence base for public health programs and interventions, and will help students understand how such programs and interventions can impact health policy and affect the health of populations and individuals.

**SOPE 508 - APPLICATIONS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION – EARLY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

**Short Title:** APPS IN PROG EVAL- CHILD DEV

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** This course introduces students to the program evaluation literature in the area of early childhood education. In recent years, significant investments have been made in increasing and improving early learning opportunities for children. The course will provide students with an understanding of the evidence on the extent to which early childhood education program offerings have long term impacts on later success. It will examine the policy contexts of early childhood education and discuss the importance of using evidence in driving decision making at all policy levels, from school districts to the U.S. Department of Education. It will also examine the role of family in children's educational experiences.

**SOPE 510 - RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS**

**Short Title:** RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Lecture

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** This course provides a foundational understanding of research-practice partnerships (RPPs) in education, an emerging way for education researchers and practitioners to work together on pressing problems of practice. Topics include launching an RPP, theories of action, supporting research use, communications, sustainability, and measuring RPP effectiveness. Cross-list: SOCI 521.

**SOPE 512 - POLICY EVALUATION CODING AND SOFTWARE LAB**

**Short Title:** CODING AND SOFTWARE LAB

**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Laboratory

**Credit Hour:** 1

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.

**Course Level:** Graduate

**Description:** This lab course introduces students to relevant programming languages and enhances their knowledge of statistical software packages.

**SOPE 513 - SOCIAL POLICY EVALUATION PRACTICUM I****Short Title:** MSPE EVALUATION PRACTICUM I**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.**Course Level:** Graduate**Description:** The practicum project asks students to integrate and synthesize many components of the curriculum by undertaking a major policy evaluation project of value to an external client from the Texas Policy Lab, HERC or other university research center. During the project, students engage in the entire process of solving a real-world evaluation project. Students will produce IRB documents, write a literature review, clean data and propose an analysis.**SOPE 514 - SOCIAL POLICY EVALUATION PRACTICUM II****Short Title:** MSPE PRACTICUM II**Department:** Social Policy Evaluation**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Graduate level students. Enrollment limited to students in a Master of Social Policy Eval degree.**Course Level:** Graduate**Description:** A continuation of SOPE 513, the student will perform their proposed analysis and write a final report. The report must address both the strengths and weaknesses of the analysis and clearly state the conclusions that can be drawn.

## Description and Code Legend

**Note:** Internally, the university uses the following descriptions, codes, and abbreviations for this academic program. The following is a quick reference:

### Course Catalog/Schedule

- Course offerings/subject code: SOPE

### Department (or Program) Description and Code

- Social Policy Evaluation: SOPE

### Graduate Degree Description and Code

- Master of Social Policy Evaluation degree: MSPE

### Graduate Degree Program Description and Code

- Degree Program in Social Policy Evaluation: SOPE

### CIP Code and Description <sup>1</sup>

- **SOPE Major/Program:** CIP Code/Title: *30.0601 - Systems Science and Theory*

<sup>1</sup> Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) 2020 Codes and Descriptions from the National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/>