## For-Credit Winter Graduate Course

# Improving Programs
## through Performance Measurement

January 4-17, 2026
Rome, Italy





Students at the Italian Senate

The University of Maryland School of Public Policy will offer an in-person, for-credit international course on evaluation-based, performance monitoring and management in Rome, Italy during Winter 2026. Classroom instruction will be provided by university instructors and guest faculty—complemented by consultations with officials of the Italian Government, international organizations, and NGOs.

The course is a three-credit, stand-alone course for doctoral, master's level, and advanced undergraduate students studying social policy-related subjects such as economics, education, international development, political science/governance, public administration, public health, public policy, social welfare, sociology, and urban planning.

## Course Summary

Even the best designed program can falter from poor implementation or management. Consequently, governments, multinational organizations, NGOs, and funders seek to improve program operations—using the tools of program evaluation to monitor program activities, outcomes, and costs. The most important tools they use include counterfactual identification, performance targets, and comparative effectiveness evaluations.

This, in turn, creates a demand for staff able to apply and interpret these tools of evaluation-based program monitoring. The course seeks to advance the skills and careers of participants by helping them understand and use these tools in real-world settings. Students will learn how to:

- Apply common performance measurement frameworks;
- Use logic models to identify and operationalize key elements of performance indicators;
- Collect and analyze data performance data for program monitoring;
- Use counterfactuals, performance targets, and comparative effectiveness evaluations to gauge performance;
- Estimate program costs (including total costs, cost-efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and cost-benefit analysis);
- Develop and apply criteria to create new performance measures or to assess and improve existing performance measures;
- Anticipate potential pitfalls of performance measurement (such as cream skimming and goal displacement); and
- Apply the resulting data to improve program performance though management techniques and program adjustments and restructuring.

In addition to course instruction, the class will also visit senior officials of relevant Italian government offices, international organizations, and NGOs in Rome and Florence. The meetings will include officials from the Bank of Italy; the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance; the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research Systems (ANVUR); the Italian National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (INDIRE); the Italian National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education and Training System (INVALSI); the Italian Senate; and UNICEF.

A preliminary syllabus will be available on the [course web page](.).

The course will culminate in the preparation of a set of performance measures for either an existing program familiar to the student, a proposed program, or a program that is suggested by the instructors. Students will prepare a logic model for the program, use the logic model to identify and define, operationalize performance measures, describe how data will be collected for the performance measures on an ongoing basis, and, for outcome measures, identify the method for identifying counterfactuals that will be used for each of the measures. Students will then evaluate each of the performance measures using criteria discussed in the course.

Final papers will be due at the end of March 2026.

Classes will be in English.



Students at the Bank of Italy



Students at UNICEF

## Faculty

The core faculty will be:
- *Douglas J. Besharov*, Professor, University of Maryland, College Park; and
- *Douglas M. Call*, Lecturer, University of Maryland, College Park

## Course Schedule and Facilities

Prior to the class meetings in Rome, a preliminary meeting will be held (online) to discuss the course syllabus and other arrangements. The course will meet daily (tentatively 9:00-1:00) on weekdays, but some days will include additional site visits. In addition, there will be a day trip to Florence.

As mentioned above, final papers will be due at the end of March, after students leave Rome.

## Eligibility

The course is open to all potential students, including individuals enrolled in accredited graduate and undergraduate programs as well as professionals who are seeking additional training and education. Enrollment in a University of Maryland program is NOT required.

Students who are currently enrolled in a graduate program must be in good academic and judicial standing and must not have any registration blocks. The minimum GPA for this program is 3.0 (unless otherwise approved by the program director).

## Course Credit

Students will receive three credits from the University of Maryland upon successful completion of the course. Non-UMD students should confirm the transferability of credits with their home academic departments.

## Application Deadline

Applications will be accepted through September 30, 2025.

Because space is limited, early application is encouraged. Students will be accepted on a rolling basis.

## Application

Prospective students should apply through UMD's Education Abroad application portal.

## Additional Information

Further information regarding the course format, travel, and other course logistics will soon be available on the course web page.

## Contact

For any specific questions regarding the course, please contact: Douglas Call (dcall1@umd.edu) of the University of Maryland.