COURSE DESCRIPTION

This an introduction to descriptive and inferential statistics for bivariate and multivariate analyses. The course will help you understand statistics reported in social science publications and in the news media, as well as help you conduct original research. The overall goal is to increase your statistical literacy – your ability to create, interpret, present, and critically evaluate statistical evidence. This is a set of skills that you will find highly useful in your current academic life and in your future career. It is also a valuable set of skills for virtually everyone in modern society, as statistical knowledge (and numerical literacy more broadly) is key for making sense of the growing amounts of information that we encounter in a digital world.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS COURSE

I approach this course with certain principles. First, I firmly believe that the use of statistics without a theoretical framework is highly problematic. Indeed, the best sociological scholarship weaves together theoretical concerns with empirical investigation. The language of the syllabus emphasizes the empirical aspects of scholarship, well, because this is a statistics course. But, please know that while we grapple with such things as data, sampling, regression – that is due to the nature of this course rather than my privileging of statistics over theory. (I also teach theory courses, by the way).

Second, I likewise do not privilege quantitative approaches over qualitative approaches. Both are extremely important for scholarship across the disciplines. The quantitative-heavy nature of this course is due to the fact, well, that this is a statistics course.

Third, I recognize that most practicing sociologists rely upon software packages when conducting statistical analyses (I sure do). As a result, this introductory course on statistics also is paired with a particular package – that of R. As two of the books emphasize, R has many advantages, but it also has a learning curve. We handle that curve in two ways. On the one hand, we ease into R by way of descriptive statistics and diagnostics before getting into data visualization and linear / logistic regression. Thus, this course picks up speed, so to speak, as you become more adept at both statistics and the use of R.

Finally, I believe that the best way to master statistics is use them in the context of your own research (rather than simply doing the exercises found in a given text). I have set up this class,
then, with the opportunity for us to engage in statistical analysis collectively—with several intensive workshops spurring along your progress. My goal is that, rather than produce papers and exams as “busy work” for this course, you all will emerge with one or more projects on which to employ your statistical skills.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is a seminar, which entails, not only a fair amount of reading, but also class discussion and in-class exercises / analyses. Given that, you are expected to attend each class and to participate.

A) Attendance

If you must miss a class, please inform me ahead of time so that we can make arrangements. Note that unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade.

Of course, given the current pandemic, some students might become sick or will need to go into isolation or quarantine. If you are sick, understand that I will be flexible about attendance. Please make sure to email me so that we can discuss your individual circumstances. For students in quarantine who are well, we have provided ways that you can keep up with your schoolwork, whether our class is delivered online or in person. Please also contact me via email if you are in quarantine.

B) Class Participation and Discussion

Active participation requires adequate preparation. You therefore must read the assigned material before class and practice the skills necessary for statistical analysis and visualization.

Such careful preparation will improve the quality of class discussion. Of course, class discussion should be both informed and respectful; moreover, it should be a forum wherein all can raise questions, explore ideas, and express misgivings.

D) Assignments

You will not be doing assignments for this class in the traditional sense. Of course, you are still expected to develop the necessary knowledge and skills. Indeed, in each of our classes, you will be demonstrating your mastery of the week’s materials. So come prepared!

The actual assignments, instead, will connect course material to your substantive interests. The dates that these assignments are distributed and due are listed below.

E) Final Grade
My starting assumption is that you will earn an “A” in this seminar. If you do the work and contribute to the class, then all is fine. If you fall below expectations, I will let you know, so that you can adjust accordingly. Of course, if you are having difficulties, please contact me.

F) Office Hours and Appointment

I will be holding “virtual” office hours via Zoom on Mondays from 1:30 to 3:30 pm (Atlanta time – Eastern Standard Time). The Zoom link for office hours is:  https://emory.zoom.us/j/94647323595

Meeting ID: 946 4732 3595
One tap mobile
+14703812552,,94647323595# US (Atlanta)
+14702509358,,94647323595# US (Atlanta)

Dial by your location
+1 470 381 2552 US (Atlanta)
+1 470 250 9358 US (Atlanta)
+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)
+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
Meeting ID: 946 4732 3595
Find your local number:  https://emory.zoom.us/u/aimnEe7FJ

Please use my Calendly link to sign up for a specific time:  https://calendly.com/tdowd-1-office-hours

I will have other meetings times as needed, please email me to arrange those.

COURSE RESOURCES

We will be drawing upon five books for the bulk of our readings, books that I will provide for the class. They are as follows:


We will read additional papers, articles or chapter in addition to our five books. Those will be posted on our Canvas site for SOC 500.

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester, and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (for additional information, visit the Emory Office of Accessibility Services website; see [http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html](http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html)).

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

*Subject to Revision*

**August 19: Introductions**

**August 26: Situating Data, Statistics, & Research**


Fox 2016. Chapter One.


**September 2: Getting Started with Statistics and Statistical Packages**

Allison 1999: Chapter 4.


Zeitlin and Auerbach 2019. Chapters 1 through 4 and Appendix C.

**September 9: Workshop on R - Dr. Allison Roberts, Tennessee Department of Health**

Assignment #1 Distributed

**September 16: From Inferential Statistics to Simple Linear Regression**
Allison 1999: Chapters 1 and 5.


Zeitlin and Auerbach 2019. Chapters 5 through 7.

**September 23: Getting into Multiple Regression (OLS)**

Allison 1999: Chapters 2 and 6.


Assignment #1 Due.

**September 30: When OLS Regression Goes Awry**

Allison 1999. Chapters 3, 7, & 8.0 through 8.4.


**October 7: Depicting Patterns Amidst All That Data**

Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert 2018.

Healy 2019. Chapters 1 through 5.

**October 14: Workshop on Data Visualization – Dr. John Bernau, Emory University**

Assignment #2 Distributed

**October 21: Depicting Spatial Patterns Amidst All That Data**


**October 28: Categorical Independent Variables and Interactions**

Allison 1999. Chapters 8.5 through 8.7.


**Assignment #2 Due**

**November 4: Outliers and Missing Data**


Fox 2016. Chapter 11.

**November 11: Workshop on Missing Data and Imputation – Dr. Heeju Sohn, Emory University**

**Assignment #3 Distributed**

**November 18: Getting into Logistic Regression**

Fox 2016: Chapter 14


**November 24: Assignment #3 Due**