

JOU 4930 Data Literacy

Spring 2016 / Section 1G51 / Period 4-5 Wednesdays, MCCA 1142 / 1 credit



Associate Professor Norman P. Lewis, Ph.D.

Office: Weimer 3052

Office hours: Periods 4-5 (10:40a to 12:35p) Mondays & periods 8-9 (3p to 5p) Tuesdays

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About me: See my [website](#) or follow me (@bikeprof) on [Twitter](#)

“Office hours” are times I dedicate to being in the office (unless called away by my bosses) and are first-come, first-served. Or, make an appointment. Or, drop in if the door is open.

ABOUT THE COURSE

Description

This course helps future media professionals correctly interpret and communicate numbers as well as acquire basic competency in spreadsheets and data visualization.

Purpose

Mass communication majors tend to say they’re “not good at math.” However, employers increasingly expect new hires to communicate numbers properly and use a spreadsheet. Thus, the purpose of this class is to help you gain confidence with numbers and acquire the numeracy skills that make you more employable.

Structure

This is a “flipped” course. In a traditional course, the classroom is for instruction and practice comes from homework. This course “flips” that model. Homework time is for receiving instruction through videos and handouts while the classroom is for working through practice problems. Class time is scheduled for two periods to allow sufficient time to work through those problems.

Objectives

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Appraise the validity of common statements using numbers.
- Calculate average, percent and simple probabilities.
- Distinguish between random events and meaningful patterns.
- Interpret and evaluate public opinion polls.
- Evaluate assertions about causation, evidence, theory and risk.
- Identify cognitive biases that inadvertently prompt us to misinterpret numbers.
- Enter, import, calculate, sort and filter data using a spreadsheet.
- Create basic data visualizations appropriate for common types of data.

Required Textbook

“Damned Lies and Statistics,” updated edition, by Joel Best. University of California Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0520274709 (links to [Amazon](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#))

Required Equipment: Laptop

Bring a laptop (either Apple or Windows) to class when we work on spreadsheets and data visualization. We’ll use software through UF Apps that free to you, so no special purchase necessary. Charge your laptop before class; the classroom has few electrical outlets.

Bring a Calculator

You may use a calculator in class for quizzes and tests. It must be a dedicated calculator; no smartphones are allowed. It must be a simple calculator; a business or scientific version is fine while that multi-line graphing calculator from calculus is not. Bottom line: If the calculator display shows only one row of numbers, it’s useable in class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Tentative Schedule

	Date	Subject	Notes
1	Jan. 6	Numerical Confidence	Take quiz 1, on “Damned Lies,” by 11:59 pm Jan. 12
2	Jan. 13	Evaluating Data	Online material before class; quiz 2 in class
3	Jan. 20	Percent	Online material before class; quiz 3 in class
4	Jan. 27	Average	Online material before class; quiz 4 in class
5	Feb. 3	Simplify Large Numbers	Online material before class; quiz 5 in class
6	Feb. 10	Probability and Risk	Online material before class; quiz 6 in class
7	Feb. 17	Polling	Online material before class; quiz 7 in class
8	Feb. 24	Number Biases	Online material before class; quiz 8 in class
	March 2	Spring break; no class	
9	March 9	Midterm	
10	March 16	Writing With Numbers	Online material before class; quiz 9 in class
11	March 23	Excel 1: Formula & Function	Online material before class; quiz 10 in class
12	March 30	Excel 2: Filter & Sort	Online material before class; quiz 11 in class
13	April 6	Dataviz 1: Basics in Excel	Online material before class; quiz 12 in class
14	April 13	Dataviz 2: Digital	Online material before class; quiz 13 after class
15	April 20	Review	

UF has scheduled the final exam for 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Thursday, April 28, during finals week. This is the only time the final will be given, so plan your schedule accordingly.

Grade Allocation

Weekly quizzes or assignments (low 2 drop) 45%
 Midterm 25%
 Final (cumulative) on April 28 30%

Attendance

Attendance is expected. Course requirements for attendance, make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with UF [policy](#).

Rather than determine if an absence is the result of a genuine medical malady or an elongated happy hour, the course drops the two low quiz scores in lieu of offering make-ups. These two drops can be for any reason, whether covered by UF policy or not.

For an exam, a make-up can be accommodated if and only if (a) the absence is covered by UF policy, (b) you call me at my office (392-5137) at least 30 minutes before class begins, and (c) you promptly provide written documentation for the absence.

Final Exam

The final exam time was scheduled by the University of Florida. If you have more than two exams that day, UF policy determines which one has to be rescheduled. Please let me know early in the semester if that situation applies to you. Otherwise, the final exam cannot be rescheduled to accommodate personal schedules or family vacations.

Grading Scale

	Percent		Percent		Percent		Percent
		B+	89-87%	C+	79-77%	D+	69-67%
A	100-93%	B	86-83%	C	76-73%	D	66-63%
A-	92-90%	B-	82-80%	C-	72-70%	D-	62-60%

Scores are rounded to the nearest whole point: 89.4 rounds down to 89 (B+) while 89.5 rounds up to 90 (A-). The [UF grading policy](#) details how GPA is computed.

MORE IMPORTANT DETAILS

Academic Integrity

UF students pledge to abide by an [honor code](#) that prohibits academic dishonesty such as fabrication, plagiarism and cheating. You have an affirmative obligation to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. You also must report to appropriate personnel any condition that facilitates academic misconduct. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

When I discover cheating, my default policy is to fail all involved for the entire course and report the details to the Dean of Students Office.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online [evaluations](#). You will be notified by email when the evaluations are open, typically in the last two or three weeks of the semester. Summary [results](#) are available to you and the public.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) (352-392-8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to me when requesting accommodation. Such requests should be made in the first two weeks of the semester.

Help With Coping

The UF [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) is a terrific, free resource for any student who could use help managing stress or coping with life. The center, at 3190 Radio Road on campus, is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment or receive after-hours assistance, call 352-392-1575.

The UF Police can be reached at 392-1111 or, in an emergency, by dialing 911.