

MMC 2450: Data Literacy for Communicators

Tuesdays, 3:00pm-3:50pm MAT 0118

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 1:00pm-3:00pm

PROFESSOR

Frank Waddell, Ph.D.
frank.waddell@ufl.edu

OFFICE

3067 Weimer Hall

REQUIRED RESOURCES/READINGS

All readings will be posted to Canvas or available via UF library access

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Data Literacy for Communicators (MMC 2450) introduces students to the fundamentals of data interpretation in the context of journalism. Topics to be covered include central tendency, dispersion, percentages, probability, sampling, causation, correlation, and methodology, among other topics.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Course objectives include (1) familiarity with key concepts related to data literacy, (2) the ability to interpret data-focused journalism, and (3) the development of critical thinking skills for critiquing data-based claims.

GRADING

Class Attendance/Participation: 20%

Numeracy critique: 20%

Midterm exam: 30%

Final exam: 30%

Grading scale: A, 100-93; A-, 92-90; B+, 89-87; B, 86-84; B-, 83-80; C+, 79-77; C, 76-74; C-, 73-70; D+, 69-67; D, 66-64; D-, 63-60; E, 59 and below

Information on current UF grading policies can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

ASSIGNMENTS

Class attendance/participation (20%): Students are required to come to class each week for the full class session. Grading for class attendance/participation will be based on arriving to class on time each week, attending the entire class session and participating in class discussion. If you need to miss class for illness or an emergency, please contact me in advance to ensure the absence is excused. Absences without a valid excuse, arriving to class late, leaving class early or not participating during class discussions will lead to a lower grade for class attendance/participation.

Exams (60%): Two exams will be completed during the semester: one midterm exam and one final exam. Each exam is worth 20% of your final grade. The exams will cover key course content covered during lecture and from class readings. The format and timing of the exam will be summarized during the semester.

Numeracy critique (20%): Students will find and critique an example of journalistic writing that uses data-focused reporting. The assignment will require students to explain the numeracy principles that were used and offer a critique of whether the writing accurately conveyed the information that was summarized. The assignment will be no more than 2 double-spaced pages. More directions will be provided during the course of the semester.

LATE WORK POLICY

One letter grade (-10 points) will be deducted per day for work submitted past the assignment's deadline. If an exam is missed, official documentation must be provided for the absence, with a makeup test scheduled within one week of the original examination. If students anticipate that they will be unable to meet a deadline due to university documented issues (e.g., health condition, death in family), please contact me as soon as possible to arrange an extension. In general, I am quite willing to work with students when issues arise that prevent you from submitting work on time.

HONOR CODE POLICY

This class strictly adheres to the UF honor code. Any prohibited behavior such as plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question and referral to the honor

court, who may administer additional penalties such as a failing grade for the course or dismissal from the college. More information about the university honor code is available online at the following link: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMODATIONS

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

COUNSELING AND WELLNESS

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

COURSE EVALUATION

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Schedule

Week 1 (8/26): Course Overview

Week 2 (9/2): Descriptive Statistics, Part 1

Week 3 (9/9): Descriptive Statistics, Part 2

Week 4 (9/16): Descriptive Statistics, Part 3

Week 5 (9/23): Sampling, Part 1

Week 6 (9/30): Sampling, Part 2

Week 7 (10/7): Probability, Part 1

Week 8 (10/14): Probability, Part 2

Week 9 (10/21): Midterm exam

Week 10 (10/28): Basics of Inferential Statistics, Part 1

Week 11 (11/4): Basics of Inferential Statistics, Part 2

Week 12 (11/11): University holiday; no class

Week 13 (11/18): Surveys; Experiments

Week 14 (11/25): University holiday; no class

Week 15 (12/2): Ethics for numeracy

Week 16 (12/9): Final exam