

JOU 4930 Data Literacy

Fall 2015 / Section 047F / Period 9-10 Thursdays, Weil 279 / 1 credit



Associate Professor Norman P. Lewis, Ph.D.

Office: Weimer 3052

Office hours: Periods 5-6 (11:45a to 1:40p) on Wednesday and Friday

Phone: 352-392-5137 (I respond within 24 hours Monday through Friday)

E-mail: nplewis@ufl.edu (I respond within 24 hours Monday through Friday)

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. Otherwise, make an appointment or drop in if the door is open.

ABOUT THE COURSE

Description

This course in numeracy helps future media professionals correctly interpret numbers, accurately communicate data to audiences and acquire basic competency in spreadsheets and data visualization.

Purpose

Our fields draw students who insist they’re “not good at math.” But increasingly, employers in mass communication require the people they hire to be data literate – 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 (not math) 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.

Objectives

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

- Appraise the reliability and validity of common types of data.
- Calculate average, percent and simple probabilities.
- Distinguish between random events and meaningful patterns.
- Interpret and evaluate public opinion polls.
- Evaluate assertions about causation, evidence 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 Textbooks

Only one: “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 Mac or Windows PC) to class in November, when we work on spreadsheets and data visualization. No special software is required to buy.

Before the spreadsheets class, be sure you’ve installed Citrix Receiver on your laptop. You will find installation instructions for both (Windows) PC and Mac from [UF Apps](#). Also, be sure the laptop is charged before class; the classroom has few outlets to plug in adapters.

Bring a Calculator

You may use a calculator in class for quizzes and tests. It must be a dedicated calculator; no smartphones allowed. Also, the calculator cannot have memory or be programmable, so that graphing calculator from calculus is verboten. OK are solar-powered devices or business/scientific calculators. Bottom line: If the calculator display shows only one row of numbers, it’s acceptable.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Tentative Schedule

	Date	Subject	Before Class
1	Aug. 27	Numerical Confidence	
2	Sept. 3	Data Reliability and Abuse	Read “Damned Lies”
3	Sept. 10	Percent	Online videos, quiz
4	Sept. 17	Average	Online videos, quiz
5	Sept. 24	Simplify Large Numbers	Online videos, quiz
6	Oct. 1	Probability and Risk	Online videos, quiz
7	Oct. 8	Polling	Online videos, quiz
8	Oct. 15	Midterm	
9	Oct. 22	Number Biases	Online videos, quiz
10	Oct. 29	Numerical Language of Science	Online videos, quiz
11	Nov. 5	Writing With Numbers	
12	Nov. 12	Spreadsheets	
13	Nov. 19	Data Visualization basics	Online videos, quiz
	Nov. 26	No class; Thanksgiving	
14	Dec. 3	Data Visualization online	
	Dec. 14	Final exam, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.	

Grade Allocation

Weekly quizzes (low 2 drop) 40%
 Midterm 25%
 Final (cumulative) on Dec. 14 35%

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.

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.

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 as early in the semester as possible.

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.

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.