

**Political Science 230**  
**Introduction to Statistics for Political Scientists**

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Moodle: <https://learn.illinois.edu/course/view.php?id=489>

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## General Information

This class is an introduction to applied statistics as practiced in political science. It is computing intensive, and, as such, will enable students to execute basic quantitative analyses of social science data using the linear model with statistical inference arising from resampling and permutation based techniques as applied in the R statistical computing language. By the end of the course, a successful student will be able to find social science data online, download it, analyze it, and write about how the analyses bear on focused social science or policy questions.

*Where/When* The whole class meets in 333 Armory Hall on Tues and Thurs from 2:00pm to 2:50pm.

Sections meet as specified online on Fridays.

Moodle enrollment key is: Ilovestatistics!

*Office Hours* Jake's office hours are Tues 3–4:30pm by appointment in 432 David Kinley Hall (DKH) or other times by appointment. I am very happy to meet with you. If you know in advance that you want to come to office hours, please email me to reserve a 20 minute slot. I have found that making appointments for office hours leaves fewer students sitting in the hall waiting to talk with me. Please make an appointment if you want to come to office hours or if you would like to meet at times other than the office hours.

Jason's office hours are Tuesday, from 11am to 1:40pm in Armory, room 315. He would also prefer that the students make appointments in twenty minute blocks.

*Note:* Students should bring their own laptops (if they own laptops) to Jason's office hours if they have computing-related questions.

## Goals and Expectations

More than anything we assume a **willingness to engage** with mathematics, data analysis, computer programming, and the practice of social science thinking and writing. We also assume you've taken at least one class in algebra at the level taught in most high schools in the United States and have used a personal computer to read and type email and other documents and have some experience with the Internet.

We also assume that you will read the syllabus and that you keep up to date on changes in the syllabus (which will be announced in class). You should not expect a response to emails that ask a question already answered in the syllabus.

This is an experimental class so you should expect that the syllabus will change throughout the term. Make sure you have the syllabus with the latest date stamp. We will announce syllabus changes via the emails sent from the Moodle.

If you have any special needs (for example any disability that you'd like us to know about) please contact us during the first two weeks of class. We are happy to help and to work with the folks from <http://www.disability.illinois.edu/>.

### In-Class Work

The class itself will involve work in groups at your computers nearly every class meeting. This is not a lecture class but an experiment in hands-on learning. At the beginning of each class, we will hand out worksheets with problems that will require you to use the R statistical computing language. The problems will be designed first to introduce you to the idea of scientific computing as practiced in the social sciences and then to the basics of social science data analysis and frequentist statistical inference. We anticipate that you will work on the worksheets during the class-time (in groups of about 3 people). We will collect one worksheet from each of you at the end of the class. We will grade one problem from each worksheet selected at random with fixed probability.

As we specify below, we will grade one problem chosen at random from each day's worksheet. Here is how we might use R to choose the problem to grade from a particular worksheet, assuming 4 problems but not knowing much about R:

```
set.seed(1234567) ## Ensure that the random numbers I produce are the same on each run of the program.
## go to http://rseek.org, search for: how can I generate a list of numbers
problem.numbers <- seq(1, 4) ## make a list of problem numbers
problem.numbers ## print the list just to make sure we got it right

[1] 1 2 3 4

## go to http://rseek.org, search for: how can I draw a random sample from a
## list of numbers
sample(problem.numbers, size = 1) ## choose one at random

[1] 3

## Notice that over the course of the term, assuming four problems per
## session, and about 25 sessions, we'll grade each problem about the same
## amount of the time but not exactly the 1/4 of the time.
problems.graded <- replicate(25, sample(problem.numbers, size = 1))
## what does replicate() do? Type help(replicate) ?replicate in R.
table(problems.graded)

problems.graded
 1 2 3 4
5 8 4 8

table(problems.graded)/25 ## to convert the totals into proportions

problems.graded
 1 2 3 4
0.20 0.32 0.16 0.32

## However, if we had 10000 class sessions, the same procedure would allow us
## to grade each problem nearly exactly 1/4 of the time.
problems.graded <- replicate(10000, sample(problem.numbers, size = 1))
table(problems.graded)

problems.graded
 1 2 3 4
2497 2608 2469 2426

table(problems.graded)/10000

problems.graded
 1 2 3 4
0.25 0.26 0.25 0.24
```

*Participation* Quality participation does not mean “talking a lot.” It includes attending section; thinking and caring about the material; and expressing your thoughts respectfully and succinctly and thoughtfully. Participation, in this class, will mostly refer to your active involvement in your sections, but the quality of your general involvement in lectures, emails, and office hours will also be taken into account.

*Final Report* Each of you will write a final paper no longer than about 10 pages (but we hope closer to 5 pages). This paper is an opportunity for you to use the ideas from this class to pursue some data analysis on a topic that interests you.

We will have several assignments and class sessions oriented around your paper to (1) give you practice with the techniques under discussion and (2) push your paper along so that the quality of papers turned in at the end is high. We will also require you to turn in two partial drafts of your paper — thus ensuring that you do not have to scramble at the end of the term to complete your paper and that you have some input on your work.

We will be working through the format of the final paper as the class proceeds. Roughly speaking, in the final paper, we will expect you to put together what you’ve learned in class with your own interests to execute a simple bit of statistical data analysis (including fitting a linear regression model, and graphing and interpreting the results). For example, you will produce a regression table and be able to explain what  $p$ -values and confidence intervals mean as well as the substantive meaning of the regression coefficients.

*Grades* We’ll calculate your grade for the course this way:

**50% In-Class Work and Attendance** This part of the grade consists of 70% in-class work grade and 30% attendance. We’ll drop the lowest 3 of the daily worksheet grades. The worksheets will tend to be multiple choice but will require you to do open-ended data analysis to arrive at the correct answer. If you answer the randomly chosen problem correctly you will receive an A on that worksheet (100%). If you answer incorrectly you will receive a B on that worksheet (86.99%). If you do not answer the question chosen for grading, you will receive 0%. Obviously, if you do not attend the class that day, you will receive a zero for your worksheet grade. Attendance will be a simple percentage of the number of class sessions you attended. In-class work happens in-class. It may not be turned in late or made-up at a later date without official excuses: For example, if you are hospitalized in the middle of the term, but the Dean thinks that you should not drop the course, we will work with you, your doctors and the relevant Dean to enable you to complete the course.

**40% Final Reports** Grades on the final reports will be based on the clarity of your writing and thinking and the correctness of your data analysis. You may turn in reports late, but you will lose  $\frac{1}{3}$  letter grade for each day that you are late (e.g. an “A” assignment would become a “A-” assignment after 1 day, a “B+” assignment after two days, . . . , a “C” assignment after 6 days). The Final proposals are a part of the Final Report, and, as such the Final Report Grade will be  $\max(\text{Final Report} * .80 + \text{Final Proposal} * .20, \text{Final Report})$ .<sup>1</sup> The final proposal grade itself will be calculated in the same way as  $\max(\text{Final Proposal} * .80 + \text{Draft Proposal} * .20, \text{Final Proposal})$ .

As you can see, we aim to reward improvement.

**10% Participation** The Professor and TA will consult with each other to assign a letter grade reflecting the quality of participation. In the past, this part of the grade has reflected both attendance and quality participation at sections and also useful conversations during office hours or email as well as a general sense about attitude toward the course during the main twice-weekly class meetings.

**Incomplete Work** Assignments not turned in will be counted as zero in the calculation of the final grade.

**Computers in class** Please bring your laptops if you have them. If you do not own a laptop, you can still work in a group of other people who have laptops and will be able to complete the in-class worksheets without a problem. In fact, it is ideal if each group of 2–4 people works with one laptop and then shares the work among themselves. Of course, feel free to work on your own. We just think it will be more fun and fulfilling if you work with your colleagues in the class.

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<sup>1</sup>Type `help(max)` in R to find out what this command does.

## Books

*Required:* Kaplan, D. (2012). *Statistical Modeling A Fresh Approach*. Daniel Kaplan, Macalester College, St. Paul, MN, second edition [Called “ISM” for the rest of the syllabus. The first few chapters are available online for free at <http://www.mosaic-web.org/go/StatisticalModeling/index.html>.]

*Recommended:* Gonick, L. and Smith, W. (1993). *The cartoon guide to statistics*. HarperPerennial New York, NY [Nice coverage of hypothesis testing and confidence intervals as well as other topics at a very accessible level.]

Verzani, J. (2005). *Using R for Introductory Statistics*. Chapman & Hall/CRC [Another nice textbook combining statistics with R. (see <http://wiener.math.csi.cuny.edu/UsingR> for more materials related to this book.)]

Becker, H. S. (1986). *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*. University of Chicago Press [A wonderful book on social science writing.]

Abelson, R. (1995). *Statistics as Principled Argument*. Lawrence Erlbaum, New York [Provides some very useful frameworks for how one might use statistics within the context of doing scholarly work.]

## Computing

In this class, we will be using the R statistical language (<http://www.r-project.org>) and the RStudio integrated development environment for R (<http://rstudio.org>). This means that we will be learning some computer programming skills. We will be typing sequences of commands in the R language in a text editor ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text\\_editor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_editor)) and then asking the R interpreter to execute these commands. We will not be pointing and clicking to execute statistical analyses.

Computing is an essential part of modern statistical data analysis—both for producing persuasive information from data and for conveying that information to decision makers. So we will pay attention to computing, with special emphasis on understanding what is going on behind the scenes.

The final reports must be turned in on the class Moodle either as pdf, postscript, or html. **Documents in Microsoft Word format (or Wordperfect, or Pages, or OpenOffice) will not be accepted. Neither the professor nor the TA can be counted on to read any document not in pdf, postscript, plain text, or html formats.** The in-class work, of course, will be completed with pencil and paper after using R to produce the computations.

## Schedule

**Note:** This schedule is preliminary and subject to change. If you miss a class make sure you contact Jake or Jason or one of your colleagues to find out about changes in the lesson plans or assignments.

### Tuesday, August 27 — A Taste of the Course

**Task** Bring laptops if you have them.

**Watch:** The Rstudio screen cast: <http://rstudio.org/> or other Rstudio videos.

**Check out:** Some resources about R [http://rstudio.org/docs/help\\_with\\_r](http://rstudio.org/docs/help_with_r)

**Section** Read ISM § 1.4. Bring laptops if you have them.

**Thursday, August 29 — No Class**

**Tuesday, September 3 — What do we mean when we say “data”?**

**Task** From now on bring laptops if you have them. Ensure that you either have an RStudio account (see the Moodle for instructions) or have an installed and working copy of R (using either the desktop version of RStudio or some other GUI).

**Read** ISM Chap. 1 and 2

**Thursday, September 5 — Why do we want to talk about variation?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 3

**Tuesday, September 10 — Why do we want to talk about variation?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 3

**Thursday, September 12 — Why do we care about models?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 6 (ISM Chap 4 as Background)

**Tuesday, September 17 — Why do we care about models?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 6 (ISM Chap 4 as Background)

**Thursday, September 19 — What is a linear model? How are linear models useful?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 7

**Tuesday, September 24 — What is a linear model? How are linear models useful?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 7

**Thursday, September 26 — How can we fit linear models to data?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 8

**Tuesday, October 1 — How can we fit linear models to data?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 8

**Thursday, October 3 — Model Fit and  $R^2$  ...**

**Read** ISM Chap. 9

**Tuesday, October 8 — Statistical Adjustment: Holding Constant**

**Read** ISM Chap. 10

**Tasks** Interlude on final papers.

**Thursday, October 10 — Holding Constant by Subsetting or Stratifying**

**Read** ISM Chap. 10

**Tuesday, October 15 — Holding Constant by Residualization, Covariance Adjustment, “Controlling For”**

**Read** ISM Chap. 10

**Thursday, October 17 — When is holding constant meaningful?**

**Read** Berk 2004, Chapter 6.5 and 7.2

**Tuesday, October 22 — Report proposal practice**

**Tasks** Come to class ready to write and talk about your outcome, explanatory, and control variables, and possible data.

**Thursday, October 24 — How can we talk about uncertainty about (or confidence in) our models? What is a “sampling distribution”? Confidence intervals.**

**Read** ISM Chap. 12 (and ISM Chap 5 as background)

**Tuesday, October 29 — Sampling Distributions and model uncertainty**

**Read** ISM Chap. 12 (and ISM Chap 5 as background)

**Thursday, October 31 — Report Proposal Workshop**

**Task** Come to class prepared to work on your report proposal (i.e. your plan for writing your report).

**Friday, November 1 — Report Proposals Due by 5pm**

The report proposal is a proposal: it tells us what question you have and what dataset and variables you plan to use. The point of this assignment is to get you thinking seriously about your final paper and doing the hard work of finding data, grappling with codebooks, and thinking about how outcome variables, explanatory variables, and control variables relate to your questions. Specifics about the form of this proposal (and draft report and final report itself) will be handed out in class as the term progresses.

**Tuesday, November 5 — What is a hypothesis test?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 13, 14, 15

**Thursday, November 7 — Why test a hypothesis about a parameter in a model?**

**Read** ISM Chap. 13, 14, 15

**Tuesday, November 12 — Why test a hypothesis about a parameter in a model?**

Read ISM Chap. 13, 14, 15

**Thursday, November 14 — Report Draft Workshop**

**Task:** Come to class ready to work on the draft of the first half of your report.

**Friday, November 15 — Report Drafts Due by 5pm**

**Tuesday, November 19 — Can math can make our lives easier?**

Read Freedman, Pisani and Purves 2007, Chap 16–18. The Law of Large Numbers and the Central Limit Theorem.

**Thursday, November 21 — Do we always have to resample/permute?**

Read Freedman, Pisani and Purves 2007, Chap 16–18. The Law of Large Numbers and the Central Limit Theorem.

**Tuesday, November 26 — Fall Break**

**Thursday, November 28 — Fall Break**

**Tuesday, December 3 — Hypotheses about whole models? Evaluating fit. More Predictive Plotting and Checking**

Read ISM Chap. 14

**Thursday, December 5 — Hypotheses about whole models? Evaluating fit.**

Read ISM Chap. 14

**Tuesday, December 10 — Putting it all together: Report Writing**

**Task** Come to class ready to work on your final reports.

**Monday, Dec 16 — Final Reports due by 5:00pm**