Doing Sociology

Sociology 1015: Fall 2010
2 Credit Hours
Online Course

Instructor:

Daniel Poole
Office Hours: BEH S 330; By appointment
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Course Content and organization:

This course is an introduction to basic forms of data presentation and analysis. By data, we mean all sorts of empirical observations that we use to support or oppose an argument. This course focuses on quantitative data – data that are presented in numerical form. Presentation refers to the multiple ways that data are summarized and made accessible (e.g. tables, charts, trendlines, scatterplots, etc.). You will be introduced to several different analytical methods including cross-tabulation, correlation, regression, and others. The course will also expose you to some basic research concepts including sampling, causation, as well as independent and dependent variables. The main goal of the course is to introduce you to basic tools of data analysis and presentation, as well as helping you to understand the underlying logic. We will not be dealing with statistical formulas and calculations, rather we will focus on becoming familiar with using data to interpret and explain social phenomena in the world around us.

It is important to begin with the understanding that data analysis is not just for so-called “experts.” The tools and concepts taught in this class are not just for those “producing” the data, but also for the “consumers” of data. We all are consumers of data at some level. We are constantly made aware of data within our worlds, from the trivial to the essential: “4 out of 5 dentists recommend” and “less than two out of five Americans support…” It is important to be able to process and think critically about the information we encounter every day – be it as students in a sociology class, consumers at the shopping mall, or as citizens in a democracy. This class is designed to help you become better “consumers” of data. It is also designed to create a solid foundation for the subsequent courses taught in the sociology major (especially statistics). It should also provide a useful base for those of you who will eventually go on to become producers of data in the form of your own research.

The course is organized around a workbook accompanied by a user-friendly data analysis software program called Student ExplorIt. The program can be installed from the CD and 3.5” diskette included in the workbook or from the files posted on the course homepage on WebCT. It can also be accessed via the U’s remote access service. Details and instructions will be posted on WebCT. The program utilizes a variety of data which sociologists find particularly interesting. For example surveys addressing social attitudes across the United States, rates of suicide across
nations, measures of economic development across the globe, and many more. You will learn about the world around you while acquiring basic analytical tools. For each chapter you will complete an online exercise that uses the program to answer a series of questions about the results including objective measures and subjective interpretations. The exercises will encourage you to explore patterns in the data, conduct basic analysis, and interpret the results.

**Text:**


**Course Requirements and Grading Criterion:**

The course will consist of 15 chapters, each with an assignment. Each student is required to submit their own work! Cheating will not be tolerated. Any student caught cheating will receive a zero and may face more severe consequences depending on the situation. As a student you have both rights and responsibilities that are outlined in the Student Handbook. I would recommend that you become familiar with the University regulations which also provide me as your instructor with rights and responsibilities as well. It is recommended that you complete the assignment in your workbook first, and then submit your answers online. While the workbook questions do not match the online questions perfectly, it will be less stressful if you have already completed the workbook. You will also want to complete your workbook in order to use it as a study guide for the final exam. Each chapter will have a supplemental introduction which can be found on WebCT. This will be relevant information that should help clarify confusing topics, and even provide answers to some of the more difficult questions. These short (2-3 pages) readings are required.

Assignments will be due on Friday each week. Due dates are listed on the course schedule below. **Late assignments will be subject to a 10 point minimum penalty.** Because exercises will be completed online, students must have regular access to a computer that is connected to the Internet.

You may retake any assignment on which you score below 90 percent, not only to raise your score, but to ensure that you have a clear understanding of the material. When you retake an assignment, both scores are averaged for the final grade. You will have one week after the due date to resubmit an exercise. More specific information will be emailed to you.

**Final Exam**

In addition to 15 weekly exercises, you will have to take and pass a final examination during finals week. The exam will be comprehensive, covering the material addressed throughout the semester. The format will be very similar to weekly exercises except that it will be taken on paper and not on a computer. **You must score a C or higher on the final exam to pass the course.** UOnline will administer the final exam and will contact you via email for scheduling. There are many testing locations both on and off campus. You will receive more
information regarding the final exam later in the semester.

**Grading Criteria**

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly exercises</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Grades will be calculated as follows: 100-90 =A; 90-80 =B; 80-70 =C; 70-60 =D; below 60 =F; within each range, 0 to 2.99 will earn a minus, 7 to 9.99 will earn a plus.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

**Faculty and Student Responsibilities**

“All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.”

“Faculty...must strive in the classroom to maintain a climate conducive to thinking and learning.”

PPM 8-12.3, B.

“Students have a right to support and assistance from the University in maintaining a climate conducive to thinking and learning.”

PPM 8-10, II. A.

- Undergraduate Council Syllabus Guidelines 2008

**Course Schedule:**

To Be Announced
*This syllabus is subject to change at any time. Updates will be sent via email or updated on WebCT and will be considered as obligatory as the information in the syllabus itself.

Please contact me with any questions. Learning in the online environment can create new challenges for students. I am here to help and glad to do so.