



Doing Sociology

Sociology 1015-090: Summer 2013

Online Course

May 14 – June 20, 2012

~Tentative; subject to change~

Instructor:

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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, trend lines, 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 be able to process and think critically about the information that we encounter each 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 your own research.

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.



distributions of single variables (univariate distributions) and move to cross-tabulations that allow us to examine the possible relationship between variables.

2. Sex and Sampling

We certainly hear a lot about sex in popular culture –and see quite a bit of it as well! How much of what we hear and see is an accurate representation of people’s lives? In this chapter, we explore data that will begin to answer questions about how much sex people have, and how it is related to a variety of other characteristics. We’ll also learn why surveys conducted on relatively small sample sizes can accurately tell us a great deal about a whole population.

3. Comparisons and Correlation

“Correlation” is one of the most basic and important concepts in social scientific research. It refers to the extent to which the level of one variable (like per capita wealth) and that of another variable (like automobile ownership) tend to be related. You’ll learn some basic tools that allow social scientists to visually represent and systematically measure that kind of relationship.

4. Socialization: Gender Roles

“Men are from Mars and women are from Venus” –at least, that’s what we’re socialized to think. But are they really? In this chapter, you’ll look at some cross-national survey data that will allow you to examine differences in gender roles across nations. You’ll also examine survey data from the United States that compares attitudes across different gender roles at home and in the workplace.

5. Deviance

Why is it that the modern world seems so wrought by “social pathologies” like drug and alcohol abuse? Here you will consider some classic sociological ideas about social disorganization –its causes and consequences. You’ll examine correlation matrices (i.e. tables that look at the relationships among multiple pairs of variables) to see how economic development and social mobility is (or isn’t) related to those problems.

6. Stratification

All known human societies have been stratified to some degree (characterized by structured inequalities). But the differences in the level of inequalities across societies are vast. This chapter presents data from “traditional” societies with different social

One of the most important dynamics of any data is how they change over time. This chapter focuses on time series data –and how sociologists present those data by drawing general trend lines. You will examine trends in variables that impact population growth (and decline) –like fertility, diseases, and life expectancy.

Spurious is a fancy word that just means false –so a spurious correlation is a relationship that isn't a cause-and-effect (or the error terms are large to an extent that to draw a peceived conclusion of cause and effect relationship is susspect, hence spurious). but one where another (sometimes invisible) variable is at the root of things ommitted variable bias. In this chapter, those invisible variables will be brought out into the open.



16. Final Examination - TBA

Students will sign up for an examination time slot via the uOnline website:

www.uonline.utah.edu. There will be several times as well as locations available for the exam. More information will be provided during the course. You will also be contacted by uOnline with further instructions.

**Please do not hesitate me with any questions.
Learning in the online environment can create
new challenges, opportunities, and difficulties, for
students. I am here to help and glad to do so!**