

# PSC 205: Introductory Statistical Methods

Spring 2012

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Harkness 303

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## Course Description

How do we evaluate empirically the claims politicians make? How do we determine whether theories of political behavior are supported by evidence? What do reporters mean when they refer to a poll being accurate to  $\pm 3\%$ ? In this course, students are introduced to data analysis, statistical inference, and research design relevant to political science research. Topics covered will include variable measurement, descriptive statistics, confidence intervals, hypothesis tests, correlation, and regression analysis.

Lectures: Mon & Wed, 11-11:50, Morey 321

Lab: Fri, 11-11:50, Harkness 114

Attendance is required for the weekly lab sessions. During the labs, students will receive computer instruction, perform simple experiments, analyze data, and discuss homework problems.

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## Grading

half-grade (e.g., B to B-) for each day they are late. Homeworks more than seven days late will receive a grade of zero. Finally, while you are encouraged to study together and to learn the software together, all assignments are to be completed individually.

*Academic Honesty.* Please be familiar with [the University's policies](#) on academic honesty. Students found to be copying from another student on HW's or exams will be given a grade of zero for that assignment or exam.

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## Readings

The following textbooks are **required**:

- Alan Agresti and Barbara Finlay, *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*.  
This is the main textbook for the course. The newest copy is [the fourth edition](#). However, [the third edition](#) (1997) — which sells used for substantially less — is perfectly acceptable for this class.
- Larry Gonick and Woollcott Smith, *The Cartoon Guide to Statistics*.  
Yes, this is a textbook for this course, and yes, it is required. It might be helpful to do each topic's reading from the *Cartoon Guide* before reading the equivalent sections in Agresti & Finlay.
- John Verzani, *SimpleR: Using R for Introductory Statistics*.  
This is a free PDF about R, the computer program we'll be using for statistical analysis.

Most of the articles below are linked to the online pdf version (e.g., via JSTOR). To access these, you must be on the UR network or have a VPN connection. Articles without a web link are available on the course blackboard page or in the library reserves.

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## Statistical Program: R

Students will be required to complete homeworks using the R program for statistical analysis.

# Course Outline

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## 1 Course Introduction

Topics: Arrrgh! Why do I have to take this course?!

- Agresti & Finlay, chapter 1.
  - *Cartoon Guide*, chapter 1.
  - Mike Adams. 1990. "The Dead Grandmother/Exam Syndrome." *Annals of Improbable Research*. ([ONLINE](#))
  - HW 1: Intro to R
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## 2 Basics of Data Analysis

Topics: Variables & Measurement, Sampling & Surveys, Randomization, Descriptive Statistics, Mean, Variance

- Agresti & Finlay, chapters 2–3.
  - *Cartoon Guide*, chapters 2, 6 (pp. 89–97).
  - Bernard Grofman, William Koetzle, and Anthony McGann. 2002. Congressional Leaders 1965-96: A New Look at the Extremism Versus Centrality Debate. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. ([JSTOR](#))
  - Michael McDonald and Samuel Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95, Issue 4: 963–974. ([JSTOR](#))
  - John Woolley. 2000. "Using Media-Based Data in Studies of Politics." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 44, Issue 1: 156–173. ([JSTOR](#))
  - HW 2: Variables & Measurement
  - HW 3: Descriptive Statistics
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### 3 Probability

Topics: Probability Basics, Discrete & Continuous Variables, Normal Distribution, Conditional Probability

- Agresti & Finlay, sections 4.1–4.3 (third edition: 4.1–4.2).
- *Cartoon Guide*, chapter 3.
- The following articles from *Law, Probability, and Risk*, Vol. 5, Issue 2 (2006):
  - Peter Tillers and Jonathan Gottfried. “Case Comment: *United States v. Copeland*: A Collateral Attack On The Legal Maxim That Proof Beyond A Reasonable Doubt Is Unquantifiable?”
  - James Franklin. “Quantification Of The ‘Proof Beyond Reasonable Doubt’ Standard.”
  - Jack Weinstein and Ian Dewsbury. “Comment On The Meaning Of ‘Proof Beyond A Reasonable Doubt’.”
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## 7 Hypothesis Tests

Topics: Hypothesis Tests, Type I and II Errors

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- HW 8: Research Design

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## 10 Crosstabs & Association

Topics: Cross-Tabulations, Goodness of Fit, Chi-Square Test, Measures of Association

- Agresti & Finlay, chapter 8

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- Steven Fish. 2002. "Islam and Authoritarianism." *World Politics*, Vol. 55, Issue 1: 4–37. ([JSTOR](#))
- Bruce Russett. 1982. "Defense Expenditures and National Well-being." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76, Issue 4: 767–777. ([JSTOR](#))
- HW 11: Bivariate & Multiple Regression
- HW 12: Multiple Regression: Dummies, Interactions, & Quadratic Terms

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### 13 Logistic Regression (If time permits.)

Topics: Regression with Binary Data, S-curve, Likelihood Ratio Test

- Agresti & Finlay, chapter 15.1-15.3
- John Oneal and Bruce Russett. 1997. "The Classical Liberals Were Right: Democracy, Interdependence, and Conflict, 1950–1985." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 41, Issue 2: 267–294. ([JSTOR](#))
- HW 13: Logistic Regression

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### 14 Final Exam Review

Final exam reviews held during lectures and lab the last week of class.

### 15 Final Exam (TBD: Finals Week)

Covers all material to date.

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NOTE: The course organization may be adjusted/optimized during the semester according to the pace of learning and the priority of topics. Students are responsible for attending lectures and maintaining an awareness of any changes to the course materials, homework requirements, or exam dates.