

Social Statistics
Course 1167, Section 101
Wednesday, 7:25 PM to 9:55 PM
Ambler Learning Center, Room 306

Instructor: John T. Lang

Office Hours: Wednesday, 6:15-7:15pm, and by appointment

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of this course is to enhance data comprehension and ability to explain statistical information. The emphasis is on applications, with examples taken from a variety of sources. We will encounter both descriptive and inferential statistics. We will cover measures of central tendency, the normal curve, probability, frequency distributions, correlation and regression. We will also talk about statistics and statistical reasoning in the media. Upon completion of the course, you will have mastered basic statistical concepts and techniques, and will be able to critically examine and evaluate the (mis)use of these concepts.

“There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”

—Benjamin Disraeli quoted by Mark Twain

“Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please.”

—Mark Twain quoted by Rudyard Kipling

REQUIRED READING

1. Best, Joel. 2004. *More Damned Lies and Statistics: How Numbers Confuse Public Issues*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (Hardcover ISBN: 978-0520238305).

2. Salkind, Neil J. 2007. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, Third Edition*. New York: Sage Publications. (Paperback ISBN: 978-1412951500).

You can find them at Amazon ([1](#), [2](#)) or your favorite bookseller ([1](#), [2](#)), including the [Temple University Bookstore](#).

PREREQUISITES: QUANTITATIVE REASONING A

GRADING

You must complete all parts of the course to avoid an F. In other words, blowing off your essay means you will fail this course, even if you have perfect grades on the exams and group presentation. I do not give extra-credit, but add up these percentages for a surprise. I will base your final grade on the following:

5% = Participation

10% = Essay

15% = Group Presentation

25% = Exam 1

25% = Exam 2

25% = Final Exam

Participation - 5%

Getting an "A" in class participation will require you to be present, attentive, and prepared. I do NOT take official attendance, but after the first few weeks, I will know if you are absent. It is smart to pay attention in class and ask relevant questions when needed. I expect you to bring your textbook and calculator to all classes. I expect you to come to class on time and remain here until class is over. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student, not from me.

Essay - 10%

There will be an interpretive essay (4-5 pages) on Best's Damned Lies and Statistics, due November 28. We will discuss Best's ideas throughout the course; they should be very helpful for selecting the articles from the press. You must submit your essay through Blackboard/turnitin.com AND in hard copy at the start of class on the due date indicated in the syllabus. Failure to submit by the deadline either through Blackboard or in hard copy in class will constitute late submission. Late papers will be penalized a full letter grade for each day late.

Group Presentation - 15%

Students will participate in a group project/presentation in which each group of 1-2 students will present to the class examples of the (mis)use of statistics in the media. At the beginning of each class, each student in the scheduled group will distribute to the class a copy of an article from a newspaper, magazine, etc., that uses statistics. Each student in the group should present his/her own article/example. You must only select articles from print sources; no Internet sources unless it is the website of a newspaper, magazine, or other edited print source. After we have all read the article, the group will lead the class in a discussion of the use of statistics in the article. The first group will present on September 5. Please make 20 copies of your article. Please be sure to write the names of all students in the group on the copies, as well as complete citation information (publication, author, date, pages).

Exams - 75%

There are three scheduled exams; each is worth 25% of your final grade. I will base these exams on your assigned reading, class discussions, and exercises. They will be closed book. Calculators will be required. ONLY the final exam will be cumulative. Unless you immediately present a superb, legitimate explanation, (bring me medical records, phone numbers of surviving relatives, etc.) NO MAKE-UPS ARE ALLOWED. Weddings, personal holidays, SEPTA, etc. are not acceptable excuses for missing exams. Drop the course now if there is a conflict between the test days and your personal schedule.

CURVE

I may create a curve at the end of the course, once I have recorded all the grades. I will assign letter grades for the entire course as follows:

92.5% and higher = A	72.5% - 77.49% = C
90.0 - 92.49% = A-	70% - 72.49% = C-
87.5% - 89.99% = B+	67.5% - 69.99% = D+
82.5% - 87.49% = B	62.5% - 67.49% = D
80% - 82.49% = B-	60% - 62.49% = D-
77.5% - 79.99% = C+	59.99% and lower = F.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I will hold you responsible for the information in this syllabus, so I expect you to read it, understand it, and ask questions about anything you don't understand. I do not print the syllabus, so you'll need to get it online. In fact, I won't hand out anything in class, except for the tests.

Readings

Your most basic duty in this class is to read all of the assigned texts. Be sure to read the calendar of class meetings, readings, assignments, and exams. All readings are due on the day they are listed. You must have read them carefully, taken notes, and be prepared to pass a quiz and discuss them intelligently. Some of the time, I won't cover the readings in class, but the lectures will make more sense if you've done the reading ahead of time.

Incompletes

The University policy on incomplete grades requires that an Incomplete is to be negotiated in advance and include a contract between the student and professor. An Incomplete is not as an extension for a student to catch up on coursework; it reserved for extreme and rare circumstances that prevent a student from completing the final stages of the course.

Academic Integrity

I expect you to be familiar with the Temple University Policy on Academic Honesty in the Student Responsibilities and Rights section of the Undergraduate Bulletin, which defines all forms of cheating and the procedures for dealing with violations. As is always the case, you are responsible for your own work. If you find yourself questioning whether you have documented or cited your sources properly, it is your responsibility to come see me about these issues prior to submitting an assignment. If you are thinking about submitting work that is not your own due to pressure, frustration, perfectionism, or any other reason, please talk to me. I am here to help you resolve these issues before they become a problem for your academic career.

Disability Statement

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Statement on Academic Freedom

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link:

http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The course schedule is tentative and may change slightly. Although I will do my best to keep us on schedule, it is possible that we will make some adjustments during the semester. I will give as much notice - both in class and on the course website - when changes are necessary.

AUGUST

Wed. 8/29 Introduction

Best: Preface, Chapter 1

SEPTEMBER

Wed. 9/5 Illustrating Data - Begin Group Presentations

Salkind: Chapters 1, 4

Wed. 9/12 Descriptive Statistics

Salkind: Chapters 2, 3

Wed. 9/19 Descriptive Statistics

Best: Chapter 2

Wed. 9/26 Exam 1

OCTOBER

Wed. 10/3 Hypotheticals and The Normal Curve

Salkind: Chapter 7

Wed. 10/10 Hypotheticals and The Normal Curve

Salkind: Chapter 8

Best: Chapter 3

Wed. 10/17 Hypotheticals and The Normal Curve

Best: Chapter 4

Wed. 10/24 Exam 2

Wed. 10/31 Test of Significance

Salkind: Chapter 9

Best: Chapter 5

NOVEMBER

Wed. 11/7 Correlations

Salkind: Chapter 5

Wed. 11/14 Reliability and Validity

Salkind: Chapter 6

Best: Chapter 6

Wed. 11/21 NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Wed. 11/28 Regression

Best Essay Due

Salkind: Chapter 15

DECEMBER

Wed 12/5 Summing Up and Review

12/10-12/15 EXAM WEEK

Good luck. I'm looking forward to a great semester.