

**Introduction to Justice Research**  
**JLC-280-001**  
**Fall 2016**

**Instructor:** Thomas Zeitzoff, Assistant Professor

**Schedule:** W 11:20-2:10 PM in Ward 204

**Office:** Ward 252

**Office hours:** T 3-4:30 PM, W 2:30-3:45 PM, or by appointment

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**Course Description**

Social science deals with the scientific study of individuals within a society. Given that our class will focus on the scientific study of people and their interactions, social science research is subject to unique research problems and issues. This makes (good) social science research difficult to carry out, but also uniquely interesting and exciting. The purpose of this course is to give you tools to analyze and understand social science research (i.e. be a consumer of researcher). It will also serve as a springboard should you choose to become a producer of social science research.

Throughout the semester we will examine a variety of approaches and theories to studying social science, many of which are quantitative. The only requirement or assumption of the material is basic algebra.

**Objectives (things you will know after taking this class)**

1. Understand research questions (the good and bad ones)
2. How to use game theoretic logic
3. Be able to apply theories of probability and expected value, including conditional probability
4. Use and manipulate basic data structures to understand patterns in the underlying data
5. Interpret, understand regression, and apply it to your own research question

**Readings**

There is only one required book for purchase at the university bookstore (available on Amazon as well for ~\$10 in paperback):

Mlodinow, Leonard. *The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our lives*. Random House LLC, 2008.

The rest of the readings (and video links where noted) will be posted on the course website.

## **Software**

For the portion of the class that deals with regression and data analysis, and especially for your final project, you will need to use some basic statistical software.

We will be using *R* statistical software for some of the demonstrations in class, and providing code in *R*. *R* is an open source (free!) programming language and software environment for statistical computing and graphics. The *R* language is widely used among statisticians and data miners for developing statistical software and data analysis. While less user-friendly than *Excel*, it is more flexible and has a large user community online for troubleshooting problems. See <<https://cran.r-project.org/>>.

## **Laptop and Cellular Phones Policy**

Laptops and cellular phones will not be permitted during class. While laptops are wonderful inventions, and improve communication and efficiency, the research on their effect on learning outcomes in the classroom is unambiguous. Laptops are distractions (to both you and others), lead to dictation, rather than synthesis during note taking, and harm attention (see studies below)—all leading to worse learning outcomes.

Turn off your cell phone during class and do not bring it out. It is very distracting to others. Off means it does not ring or vibrate. The first time I see your phone out I will ask you a question related to the material. If I see it out again, I will ask you to leave the class.

- Bowman, Laura L., Laura E. Levine, Bradley M. Waite, and Michael Gendron. "Can students really multitask? An experimental study of instant messaging while reading." *Computers & Education* 54, no. 4 (2010): 927-931.
- Fried, Carrie B. "In-class laptop use and its effects on student learning." *Computers & Education* 50.3 (2008): 906-914.
- Yamamoto, Kevin. "Banning laptops in the classroom: Is it worth the hassles." *Journal of Legal Education* 57 (2007): 477.

## **Sharing of Course Content**

Students are not permitted to make visual or audio recordings, including live streaming, of classroom lectures or any class related content, using any type of recording devices (e.g., smart phone, computer, digital recorder, etc.) unless prior permission from the instructor is obtained, and there are no objections from any of the students in the class. If permission is granted, personal use and sharing of recordings and any electronic copies of course materials (e.g., PowerPoints, formulas, lecture notes and any classroom discussions online or otherwise) is limited to the personal use of students registered in the course and for educational purposes only, even after the end of the course.

Exceptions will be made for students who present a signed Letter of Accommodation from the Academic Support and Access Center. See: How Do I Request Accommodations?

< <http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/Accommodations.cfm> >

To supplement the classroom experience, lectures may be audio or video recorded by faculty and made available to students registered for this class. Faculty may record classroom lectures or discussions for pedagogical use, future student reference, or to meet the accommodation needs of students with a documented disability. These recordings are limited to personal use and may not be distributed (fileshare), sold, or posted on social media outlets without the written permission of faculty.

Unauthorized downloading, file sharing, distribution of any part of a recorded lecture or course materials, or using information for purposes other than the student's own learning may be deemed a violation of *American University's Student Conduct Code* and subject to disciplinary action (see Student Conduct Code VI. Prohibited Conduct).

### Academic Integrity

I take issues of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Please familiarize yourself with the AU Academic Integrity Code. I regard violations of this code seriously and will immediately refer the matter to the dean. If you have any questions about the course, or more general requirements about the code, please do not hesitate to talk to me.

### Assessment

\*\*Note: Each unexcused absence will result in the loss of 0.35 GPA points on your final grade. More than three unexcused absences will result in failure for the course\*\*

***Participation (10 %)*** Success in the course depends on regular attendance and discussion. Students must do ALL of the assigned readings before class and be prepared to answer questions and ask them. Attendance alone is insufficient to succeed. Discussion will be evaluated on both quality and quantity of comments. You should also be prepared for the fact that I may call on you randomly--so come prepared.

***Exams (two worth a total of 40 %)*** These exams will be in-class exams on **September 28<sup>th</sup>** and **October 26<sup>th</sup>**.

***Preliminary Draft (5%)*** You will write up a short (1- page) outline of your research question and data sources due on **November 2<sup>st</sup>**. You will then have a scheduled 10-15-minute meeting with the professor to discuss your project and your general progress in the class on the week of **November 9<sup>th</sup>**.

**4-5 page Data Analysis Write-Up (30 %)** Given your research question, you will collect the relevant data, perform the proper statistical analysis, and interpret it. You will also provide the data and replication for the analysis. I will provide a rubric that will detail exactly how the data analysis will be graded. **DUE DATE: November 30<sup>th</sup>.**

**Data Analysis Presentation (15%)** A necessary part of the social science research process is the presentation and dissemination of research. At the end of the semester, you will present briefly your research topic in class. We will discuss expectations more when we assign the actual proposal. **November 30<sup>th</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup>.**

**\*\*NOTE: LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED\*\***

### Classroom Courtesy

Classroom courtesy is an essential component of creating an effective learning environment. All students have the right to learn without unnecessary distractions. These distractions include: cellphones, talking during lectures (unless recognized by the instructor), reading newspapers, falling asleep, etc. If you need a cell phone for emergency purposes, leave it on vibrate. Laptop use is also restricted. Unless you have a documented learning need, or are instructed by the professor, do not bring a laptop to class.

Entering and leaving are also significant sources of distraction. It is your responsibility to be on time and to stay for the entire period. In circumstances where you need to leave early, tell the professor beforehand. Repeated disruptions of class will lead to a reduction in your final grade.

Most importantly, class discussions of the issues in political science, criminology, and justice, can lead to strong feelings and heated debate. Because this is a college classroom, all discussion must be respectful and scholarly.

### *Scholarly Comments*

- Are respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement
- Are related to class and/or the course material
- Focus on advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs, and
- Are delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner.

### *Unacceptable Comments*

- Are personal in nature. This includes attacks on a person's appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs.
- Include interrupting the professor or other students. Raise your hand and wait to be recognized.
- Often use the discussion to argue for political positions and/or beliefs. If political discussions arise, they must be discussed in a scholarly way (see above).
- May include using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students and being threatening in any manner.
- Include ignoring the professor's authority to maintain the integrity of the classroom environment.

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice. These changes may come via e-mail. Make sure to check your university-supplied email regularly. You are accountable for all such communications.

### **Students Resources**

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to consult with me. In addition to the resources of the department, a wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements.

***Academic Support Center*** (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle 228.

***Disability Support Services*** (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical or psychological disabilities.

If you have a disability and might require accommodations in this course, please notify me with a letter from DSS or ASC early in the semester so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

***Counseling Center*** (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

**Writing Center** in 228 Battelle-Tompkins offers free, individual coaching sessions to all AU students. In your 45-minute session, a student writing consultant can help you address assignments, understand the conventions of academic writing, and learn how to revise and edit your own work. The Center offers appointments on the hour from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, and 3 to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Call [202- 885- 2991](tel:202-885-2991) to arrange a session.

***Center for Diversity & Inclusion*** is dedicated to enhancing LGBTQ, Multicultural, First Generation, and Women's experiences on campus and to advance AU's commitment to respecting & valuing diversity by serving as a resource and liaison to students, staff, and faculty on issues of equity through education, outreach, and advocacy. It is located on the 2nd floor of Mary Graydon Center: [202-885-3651](tel:202-885-3651), email is [cdi@american.edu](mailto:cdi@american.edu).

***Dean of Students Office*** (x3300, 408 Butler Pavilion) offers one-on-one meetings to discuss academic, adjustment, and personal issues that may be interfering with a student's ability to succeed academically. The DOS office also verifies documentation for students who have medical or mental health issues that cause them to be absent from class.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site ([american.edu/emergency](http://american.edu/emergency)) and the AU information line at [\(202\) 885-1100](tel:202-885-1100) for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/college-specific information.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **Section 1: Fundamentals of Logic and Probability**

#### **Week 1 August 31 Introduction, Social Science Method and Research Questions**

- Chapter 1. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Frakt, Austin. "How to Know Whether to Believe a Health Study." *The New York Times*, 2015.
- Gawande, Atul. "The Mistrust of Science." *The New Yorker*, 2016.

**Week 2 September 7 Probability Theory, Expected Value, and Intro to Game Theory**

- Chapters 3-4, *Drunkard's Walk*.
- Riley, Geoff: "An Introduction to Game Theory" 2015.

**Week 3 September 14 Conditional Probability and Game Theory Cont'd**

- Chapters 6, *Drunkard's Walk*.
- Game Theory 101 Extensive Form Games Videos 1-5  
<[http://gametheory101.com/The\\_Basics.html](http://gametheory101.com/The_Basics.html)>

**Week 4 September 21 Review of Probability, Game Theory, and Midterm 1 Review****Week 5 September 28 \*\*\*MIDTERM 1\*\*\*****Section 2: Fundamentals of Data and Regression****Week 6 October 5 Describing the Data: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Confidence Intervals/Intro to R**

- Chapters 5, 7-8. *Drunkard's Walk*.
- Install R, and read/play around with R Tutorials  
<<http://rtutorialseries.blogspot.com>>

**Week 7 October 12 The Experimental Ideal vs. The Regression Reality: Research Design, Average Treatment Effects, and Control \*\*Assign Data Analysis Project\*\***

- Nau, Robert. "Notes on Linear Regression"
- Aronson et al. "Methods of Social Psychology." Chapter 1.

**Week 8 October 19 Regression in Practice: Statistical Significance, R-Squared, and Residuals /Midterm 2 Review**

- Abrams, Deborah R. "Introduction to Regression," Princeton University DSS
- Statwing, "A user-friendly guide to linear regression."

**Week 9 October 26 \*\*\*MIDTERM 2\*\*\*****Section 3: Inference, Presentation, and Ethics****Week 10 November 2 Threats to Inference: Selection Bias, Omitted Variable Bias, and Confounding/ \*\*\*Rough Draft of Data Analysis Due\*\*\***

- Boston School of Public Health "Bias."

**Week 11 November 9 One-on-One Meetings with Prof Z**

**Week 12 November 16 Ethics, Presenting Data, Presentation Discussions**

- Andrew Gelman “Infovis, infographics, and data visualization: Where I’m coming from, and where I’d like to go.” *Statistical Modeling, Causal Inference, and Social Science* (August 2011).
- Babbie, Earl. "Laud Humphreys and Research Ethics." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 24.3/4/5 (2004): 12-19.
- National Public Radio Transcript and MP3 “Taking a Closer Look at Milgram’s Shocking Obedience Study.” (August 2013).
- Michelle N. Meyer and Christopher Chabris “Why Psychologists’ Food Fight Matters.” *Slate* (July 2014).

**Week 13 November 23 No Class (Thanksgiving)****Week 14 November 30 \*\*\*Data Analysis Due\*\*\* Presentations****Week 15 December 7 Presentations**