

Sociology 208: Social Statistics Fall 2008

General Information:

Instructor: Neal Christopherson

Office: 208 Memorial (in the Registrar's Office)

Official Office Hours: 1:30-3:30 Tuesday

Unofficial Office Hours: over e-mail, by appointment, or just drop by. I'm in most of the time from 8-4.

Phone: x5056 (office), 524-0731 (home, but not after 10 p.m.)

E-mail: christnj@whitman.edu

Required Text:

The Essentials of Statistics: A Tool for Social Research by Joseph F. Healey.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What will I learn in this course?

A: If you do the assignments and make an effort to understand the material, at the end of the semester you will have a basic working knowledge of statistical techniques used in sociological research. You will know what these techniques are, how to do necessary computations with and without the use of the SPSS computer program, when certain techniques should and should not be used, what types of sociological questions statistical methods will help you answer, and how to understand basic statistics in published research. In the social sciences, statistics are a tool we use to answer research questions, so by the end of the semester you will have a new set of tools in your research toolbox.

Q: I really want an A. How will I be graded?

A: Your grade will be determined through a combination of homework assignments and exams, using the following distribution:

Exam 1	22.5%
Exam 2	22.5%
Exam 3	25%
Homework	30%

The letter grade scale is as follows:

A	92.5 – 100
A-	90 – 92.5
B+	87.5 – 89.9
B	82.5 – 87.5
B-	80 – 82.5

...and so on.

Q: Why is Exam 3 worth more?

A: The topics in this course build on each other, so an understanding of the concepts covered in the first two exams will be necessary for you to do well on Exam 3. Thus, a good performance on Exam 3 demonstrates more overall mastery of the subject than a good performance on Exam 1, so Exam 3 is worth more. By the way, exams will be take-home.

Q: Do I have to come to class every day?

A: Coming to class will be to your benefit in that there will be in-depth explanations of how to answer the questions you will encounter on the homework and exams. If you are going to miss class, please let me know ahead of time.

Q: I'm afraid of math. How much math do I need to know for this class?

A: You shouldn't need to know more than high school algebra. Check out the Prologue at the beginning of your textbook, titled "Basic Mathematics Review". It will remind you of things you may have forgotten. The hard part about statistics isn't the math, but rather knowing what to do and when to do it. This isn't really a math class, it's a *skills* class. I think you will find that there is much more emphasis on writing and explanations than you might expect.

Q: Will I need a calculator?

A: This class will be much easier if you have some sort of calculator. That's all I'm going to say.

Q: What will a typical week in class be like?

A: On Monday I will introduce a new topic and give you some examples. On Wednesday we will continue with the topic and examples, and I will distribute the next homework assignment, which will be due *in class* the following Wednesday. Friday we will be in the Maxey computer lab and you will have the opportunity to try out the technique for yourself using the SPSS computer program. We will break with this schedule for a couple weeks around fall break.

Q: Can you tell me more about the homework assignments?

A: You'll have 10 homework assignments, each worth 3% of your final grade. I'll hand out the assignment on Wednesday, and it will be due in class the following Wednesday. On Friday in the computer lab you'll have an opportunity to ask questions about the homework, as well as during my official office hours on Tuesday afternoon. I grade each homework assignment on a scale from 0-100.

Q: What happens if I turn my homework in late?

A: Homework is due in-class on Wednesday. I will take off 10 points if you turn it in after class on Wednesday, and take off 20 points if you turn it in on Thursday. I will not accept homework after Thursday. *If you anticipate a problem turning your homework in late, come talk to me and we'll work something out.* The reason for this strict policy is that homework is due every week, and I don't feel comfortable returning graded homework until everyone has turned in the assignment. This policy "encourages" you to turn your homework in on time so everyone will benefit by having it returned before the next homework assignment is due.

Q: Can we work together on the homework assignments?

A: You may work in groups on homework, but not exams. If you work together on the homework, make sure you are ultimately doing your own work, and not simply copying your friends' work. You never know what sort of silly mistakes you might be copying, and there are consequences for plagiarism

Q: The textbook is boring. Do I have to read it?

A: Yes, the textbook will provide you with a knowledge base that will help you understand what's going on in class. When you read the book, don't just skim through it to try and figure out how to do the homework problems. If you see a formula, make sure you understand what all the different components are, and what questions you can answer with that formula. If you see a table or graph, make sure you understand what information that table or graph is telling you. The "Statistics in Everyday Life" Sections are also interesting and enlightening. It will be to your benefit to do some of the reading before Monday's class, and you should try to complete the week's reading before class on Wednesday.

Fall 2008 Course Schedule

Dates	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Unit I: Foundations			
Sept. 3-5	Introductions, Levels of Measurement, Frequency Distributions	Ch. 1 and 2	
Sept. 8-12	Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion, Graphs, Intro to SPSS	Ch. 3-4	
Sept. 15-19	Probability, the Normal Curve, Z-Scores	Ch. 5	HW 1 due 9/17
Sept. 22-26	Central Limit Theorem and Confidence Intervals	Ch. 6	HW 2 due 9/24
Sept. 29	Review, Catch-Up; Intro to Hypothesis Testing		HW 3 due 10/1
Unit II: Hypothesis Testing			
Oct. 1-3	Intro to Hypothesis Testing	Ch. 7	
Oct. 6-10	1-sample tests; T-Tests	Ch. 7, 8	Exam 1 due Oct. 8
Oct. 13	Fall Break!		
Oct. 15-17	T-Tests	Ch. 8	HW 4 due 10/16
Oct. 20-24	Analysis of Variance	Ch. 9	HW 5 due 10/22
Oct. 27-31	Categorical Data Analysis, Chi-Square	Ch. 10	HW 6 due 10/29
Nov. 3-Nov. 7	Choosing the Right Procedure, Review, Catch-up		HW 7 due 11/5
Unit III: Regression and Correlation			
Nov. 10-14	Correlation and Bivariate Regression	Ch. 13	Exam 2 due Nov. 12
Nov. 17-21	Multiple Regression	Ch. 14	HW 8 due 11/19
Nov. 24-28	Thanksgiving Break!		
Dec. 1-5	Multiple Regression, cont, Statistics in the Research Process	Ch. 14	HW 9 due 12/3
Dec. 8-12	Review, Catch-up		HW 10 due 12/10
	Final Exam due TBA		