

Seminar in Health & Society

HS 378

Fall 2022

Professor

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Office Hours: T|TH 1:00-3:00pm; by appt.

Office Location: Batts 3.126

Class

T|TH 3:30-5:00

RLP 1.108

Course Description

This course focuses on helping students develop a full-length quantitative research report on a topic of their interest—within the Health & Society area of study. During the course, we will work on developing each part of the research project in stages together (research question, literature review, data collection, etc.) as a series of smaller assignments, leading each student to the completion of a 15-20 page paper. Ideally, these papers will serve as a writing sample for graduate programs, an early draft of an academic publication, and/or demonstration of analytical skills for private-sector and non-profit jobs related to health.

Prerequisite: Upper-division standing and Health and Society 301.

Textbook and Software

You are *not* required to purchase books this semester. I will make readings available on the course website and many of the resources we will use are available for free online. However, you *must* download the free version of [RStudio](#) Desktop. Be sure to download the right version for your operating system. We will go over this the first day of class, but it is imperative that you download the program on your/a computer. We will do all data analyses and perform many in-class exercises using this free, but widely professionally-used statistical program.

Course Objectives

The course has four primary learning objectives.

- Learn how to identify and state a clear research question.
- Engage in independent data collection and analyses.
- Critical evaluate existing social science research on the influence of social forces on health and wellness.
- Develop academic and professional writing skills.

Assignments and Grading

Below you will find the three major grading categories for the semester.

Item	% of Grade
Class Participation and Topic Discussions	25%
Individual Paper Assignments	25%
Final Paper	50%
Total	100%

Class Participation & Topic Discussions

Most weeks—as indicated on the syllabus—we will have a topical discussion corresponding to an assigned reading for that week to help motivate the research process. On Mondays of those weeks, you will be asked to post a response to discussion questions related to the readings on Canvas. These responses as well as your participation in class discussions will be evaluated to form this component of your grade. *Late work is not accepted for online discussion posts.*

Individual Paper Assignments

The final research paper due at the end of the semester will be largely completed through several smaller assignments, including a literature review, data collection, data analyses, and preparing the final draft. Each of these individual assignments will be graded as complete or incomplete. If you miss a deadline, you have one week from the due date to receive a partial complete for that sub-paper assignment. Individual paper

assignments are due Fridays at 11:59pm. *Late work is not accepted after the partial completion deadline.*

Final Paper

The final paper is due at the end of the semester, on December 8th at 11:59pm. The goal is to have a polished, research paper that can be used for graduate school applications and professional portfolios. *Late work is not accepted for the final paper.*

Grading Policy

Overall semester averages will earn the following letter grades. Grades will be assigned strictly according to this scale without automatic rounding.

A 94.0-100	B- 80.0-83.9	D+ 67.0-69.9
A- 90.0-93.9	C+ 77.0-79.9	D 64.0-66.9
B+ 87.0-89.9	C 74.0-76.9	D- 60.0-63.9
B 84.0-86.9	C- 70.0-73.9	F 0-59

Flags

Independent Inquiry

"This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work."¹

Writing

"This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and

¹ <https://ugs.utexas.edu/flags/faculty-resources/teaching/syllabus>.

Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.”²

Academic Integrity

“Using someone else’s work in your own writing without giving proper credit is considered plagiarism, a serious form of academic dishonesty that can result in severe penalties. Copying someone else’s work, buying a paper and submitting it as your own, copying and pasting text (even with changes), or borrowing images from an online source, are some examples of plagiarism. Even if you plagiarize accidentally, you can be held responsible and penalized.

Learning to cite sources appropriately is an important part of becoming a professional. When you are unsure about citation, you are encouraged to **ask your instructor** (who is already an expert in the discipline) what is appropriate in the context of your assignment. Consultants at The [University Writing Center](#) can also help you determine whether you are citing sources correctly—and they have helpful guides online for using [direct quotations](#) and [paraphrasing](#). Reviewing those skills will help you feel confident that you are handling sources professionally in your writing.

You can read the University’s definition of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in Sec. 11–402 of the [Student Conduct Code](#). For more information, visit the [Dean of Students’ site](#).”³

Plagiarism Detection Software

“All assignments in this course may be processed by TurnItIn, a tool that compares submitted material to an archived database of published work to check for potential plagiarism. Other methods may also be used to determine if a paper is the student’s original work. Regardless of the results of any TurnItIn submission, the faculty member will make the final determination as to whether or not a paper has been plagiarized.”⁴

Inclusivity

² <https://ugs.utexas.edu/flags/faculty-resources/teaching/syllabus>

³ <https://ugs.utexas.edu/flags/faculty-resources/teaching/syllabus>

⁴ <https://ugs.utexas.edu/flags/faculty-resources/teaching/syllabus>

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. I am committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students, but I can only do so if you discuss your needs with me as early as possible. I promise to maintain the confidentiality of these discussions and work to make our classroom a positive learning environment for all.

Accommodations

The University of Texas provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Please contact Services for Students with Disabilities for more information (diversity.utexas.edu). If you are uncertain about your needs, please do not hesitate to speak with me.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Due at End of Week
August 23	Course Intro	
August 25	Research Question and R Download	
August 30	R Basics + Reading 1	
September 1	Working with Data in R	
September 6	Types of Data and How to Find + Reading 2	
September 8	Using library resources	Research Question Draft
September 13	Literature Review Overview + Reading 3	
September 15	<i>Virtual Office Hours by appointment</i>	
September 20	Selecting Data and Sample + Reading 4	
September 22	Measuring Concepts	Literature Review Outline
September 27	Managing and Merging Data + Reading 5	
September 29	Distribution and Description	Variable Table
October 4	Visualizing Your Question + Reading 6	
October 6	Bivariate Correlation and the Scatterplot	Scatterplot
October 11	"Statistical Significance" + Reading 7	
October 13	Threats to Inference	
October 18	Multi-variate Regression + Reading 8	
October 20	More Regression	
October 25	In-class Data Work	
October 27	Writing about Statistics	Results Table
November 1	Correlation vs. Causation + Reading 9	
November 3	Causation Continued	Results Section
November 8	Geography and Data	
November 10	Mapping Your Data	
November 15	Assembling the Paper + Reading 10	
November 17	Assembling the Paper	Full Draft
November 22	BREAK	

November 24	BREAK	
November 29	The Limits of Quantification	
December 1	Research Presentations	Presentation
December 6	STUDY DAY	
December 8	NO CLASS	Final Paper

Reading List

Reading 1. Gerber and Patashnik. 2006. "Sham Surgery."

Reading 2. Bradley and Taylor. 2013. *The American Health Care Paradox*. Ch. 2.

Reading 3. Dionne and Turkmen. 2020. "The Politics of Pandemic Othering."

Reading 4. Metzl. 2019. *Dying of Whiteness*. "Tennessee." & Sen and Wasow. 2016.

"Race as a Bundle of Sticks."

Reading 5. McGregor. 2020. *Sex Matters*. Ch. 2-4.

Reading 6. Campbell. 2014. *Trapped in America's Safety Net*. Ch. 4-5.

Reading 7. Washington. 2006. *Medical Apartheid*. Ch. 7. (motivate lower black COVID vax rates).

Reading 8. Callaghan et al. 2021. "Rural and Urban Differences in COVID-19 Prevention Behaviors."

Reading 9. Baicker et al. 2013. "The Oregon Experiment: Effects of Medicaid on Clinical Outcomes." & Clinton and Sances. 2018. "The Politics of Policy."

Reading 10. Kam. 2019. "Infectious Disease, Disgust, and Imagining the Other."