

Course Numbers: SOCI 386
Time: 12:00–1:50 pm
Days: T & Th.
Place: Kent 115
Instructor: Curt Raney
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Office Hours: 2:00-2:30 pm
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Course Description: Most people know that data analysis is a process of discovery. They don't know that it is also a creative process. Coming to grips with the creative side of data analysis will change your way of thinking. Your interpretive habits will become more sophisticated and flexible. When your way of thinking changes, your *world* changes, too. Along the way to intellectual transformation, you will acquire a valuable array of technical, analytical, and writing skills. You will learn to reason systematically with facts to produce theories of how things work.

Facts don't have meaning until we interpret them. Creating knowledge is more than following procedures. It always requires imagination. Facts never speak for themselves, regardless of the old cliché.

In this course, you'll learn how to interpret and produce tables, graphs, and statistics. You'll write scientific papers about social phenomena. You'll acquire a healthy skepticism regarding explanations and interpretations of data. Once you grasp the imaginative nature of knowledge, you'll realize your personal responsibility for what you believe. Intellectual integrity is the ultimate goal of the course.

Course Sequence and Requirement: The course follows a sequence, not an exact schedule. Each class is a group with its own pace and needs. First we'll survey SMC students using an existing questionnaire and enter data into SPSS, the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*. Then we'll begin writing a series of five papers testing theories of our own devising with the data collected in these surveys. We'll do two studies on the relationship between 2 variables. Then we'll do one or two more on the relations between 3 variables. In the final study we'll analyze at least 4 variables simultaneously. That makes for a total of four or five required papers, depending on the working pace of the class.

Most of your class time will be spent working on studies and reports. You will also have to work on them outside of class in order to keep up with other students. There is not enough class time to complete the projects in class. My class time will be spent helping you individually on the use of the computer, on your ideas, and evaluating your papers. I'll also lecture occasionally on specific topics related to the work.

I'll provide you with various documents covering the lecture material on statistical and analytical topics. The textbook for the course is a manual for using SPSS.

You will act as resources for each other. Before asking me for help, you must try and solve your problems by getting help from your classmates. I want you to acquire the habit of actively seeking assistance from colleagues when you need it. Contrary to most schoolwork, scientific work is a collaborative process. Don't be shy asking for help. It's out of place.

Intellectual growth is a trial-and-error process. Learning how to create knowledge means making mistakes along the way. Mistakes are our best teachers. Learning from them is what makes us responsible for our own ideas. I will adjust my grading standards during the course, tightening them up as you acquire skills. I'll demand your very best, right from the start, and reward you for progress. If the quality of your work stands still, your grades will fall, and you'll be required to revise your work to make it better when it falls short of excellence. You'll also be required to criticize your classmates work. I'll evaluate your efforts at criticizing each other's work.

Whenever you receive assistance on a study, I you must acknowledge that assistance in your papers. It's a way of thanking others, of scrupulously adhering to standards of intellectual honesty, and cultivating humility in yourself. Abandon the illusion of the self-made individual. We owe others recognition for the help they give us. They feel better for it, and you'll feel good, too. Acknowledging assistance is standard practice in all creative endeavors. Every paper must have an acknowledgments section at the very end.

It's a good idea to schedule work outside of class with one or more of your classmates so you can help each other. I encourage you to share your work with your classmates. You must do all your own work, but getting advice and editorial assistance from others should become part of your production routine.

It's not enough to be a good writer. I insist that you strive to make your work look good, too. You must be attentive to your layout work for your papers to have a professional appearance.

You may revise any paper until you are satisfied with it, and with the grade you receive on it. Note, however, that penalty points for not following specific directions will not be removed. You must be a careful editor of your own work to avoid penalty points. See *Read This Paper* for a detailed list of grammatical and layout requirements.

Course Grade Formula: Your final grade in the course will be determined in the following manner. First, your assignment average will be calculated, weighting assignments by the following percents.

Papers: 75% (15% each)
Critiques: 25% (5% each)

Normally, your course average will be the same as your assignment average. In special cases where one has been especially cooperative and well-motivated, or especially uncooperative and poorly motivated, up to 10 points will be added or subtracted from one's assignment average to calculate one's course average. This is to emphasize that you are working in a group, and will be held responsible to be a good citizen of the group. In most courses, whether any particular student keeps up or is helpful to others has no effect on the class. However, in this course we are interdependent to an unusual degree. The entire class depends on the quality and timeliness of each individual's work on the class survey and data file construction. Individuals also depend on each other for timely, responsible, helpful critiques of their work, for assistance with computer problems, and for productive consultations concerning theoretical and methodological problems. I depend on all the students in the course because without everyone's responsible participation, I can't maintain the flow of instructions and advice. If even a few class members don't keep pace, my job becomes untenable. I wind up having to repeat myself too often, bogging down the instructional process for the entire class. A high degree of responsibility to the group, which includes timeliness, and a willingness to help others, is the expected norm. Therefore, only under special circumstances will your course average be boosted due to meritorious service to the class. Hopefully, everyone's course average will be at least as high as their assignment average, but if necessary, a penalty will be assessed for not measuring up in this area.

Grading Scale for the Course:

A	=	90 - 100
B	=	80 - 89
C	=	70 - 79
D	=	60 - 69
F	=	50 - 59

Attendance Policy: The first 4 absences are automatically excused. After that, an absence must qualify for an excuse to avoid a grade penalty. To qualify for an excuse, an absence must be due to illness, unavoidable employment requirements, college-related extracurricular events, or serious family or personal matters. Each unexcused absence will reduce your course grade by 3 points. For example, if your final course average is 85 (middle B) and you accumulate 2 unexcused absences, your course average will be reduced to 79 (high C). Partial absences will be penalized proportionately. For example, if you miss half of a class, your penalty will be 1.5 points. Absence from class, by itself, does not excuse one from meeting one's deadlines.

Note that misrepresentation of your reason for being absent, or falsifying attendance records constitute academic dishonesty, and will result in an F for the course.

Late Papers & Papers Not Turned In: Late papers will be reduced by 5 points the first school-day they're late, 4 more points the second day, 3 more points the third, 2 more points the fourth, and one more point each subsequent day they're late, up to a maximum late-penalty of 20 points. For exam-

ple, a paper that is 3 school-days late will be assessed a 12-point penalty. If you don't turn in a paper, it will receive a grade of 50 points, the lowest grade on the grading scale.

Non-conforming Papers: Papers that don't conform to requirements will be assessed a 2-point penalty for each non-conformity. For example, a paper that lacks page numbers and has improper margins, and which has no other significant deviations from the instructions, will be assessed a 4 point penalty. If that paper is also 3 school-days late, it will be assessed a 16 point penalty ($12 + 4 = 16$). The document *Read This Paper!* contains grammatical and format instructions. Follow them exactly in order to avoid penalties.

Incomplete Grade : A grade of Incomplete can be assigned in the course if the following conditions are met:

- Your missing work consists of only a single requirement.
- You have NOT demonstrated a pattern of late work.
- You request an acceptable grade of incomplete prior to the end of the semester. If no request is made, missing papers and exams will receive a grade of low F (50 points).

Lost Papers: If I lose your paper, you will be required to turn in another copy. You should keep 3 copies of all your work, 2 on separate floppy diskettes, and 1 hard copy. These are in addition to the computer system's centralized disk files. Every semester students lose copies of papers due to diskette failure. For your own sake, DO NOT count on a single diskette for backups of your papers. ALWAYS keep 2 magnetic backups. Diskettes are notoriously unreliable. Keep an additional hard copy for those unlikely times when both diskettes are damaged or lost. You put so much work into your writing, don't let carelessness cause you to lose it. You don't want to have to retype a paper. It's a good idea to keep your notes, too, at least until the end of the semester and you've received your grades, preferably until you graduate. Sometimes they come in handy on subsequent projects.

Academic Honesty: You are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. Please read the College catalog and the Student Handbook for information concerning academic dishonesty. In essence, you are expected to do your own work, and not to give or receive assistance except as explicitly permitted by your instructor. You are also expected to acknowledge any and all sources of information used in preparing your assignments, regardless of whether you are quoting, paraphrasing, or discussing the material. When you paraphrase material, be sure to use your own wording completely. Changing a few words here or there, representing such writing as your own, is a form of plagiarism. When you use specific information from a source, whether quoting it, paraphrasing it, or discussing it, supply the reference, including page number(s). Specific references are required for ALL information except that which you personally know and can attest to, or which is widely considered to be common knowledge. Merely listing a source in the bibliography of your paper is not an adequate reference. Any instance of academic dishonesty will result in an **F** grade for the course.