

PLSC 197 / SODA 197N: Social Data, Technology, and Artificial Intelligence

Assignment 1A: Conceptualize Some Data

Assignment

Choose one of the following activities:

- Walking to class
- Buying a coffee at the HUB
- Scrolling Instagram
- Registering for classes
- Making an appointment with your advisor
- Buying a space heater on Amazon
- Calling your first-year roommate
- Playing a game of disc golf
- Posting a photo on TikTok
- Booking a spring break trip
- Grocery shopping
- Going for a jog around your neighborhood

In a short essay, answer the following questions:

1. What actions occur? Describe them.
2. Which of these could be turned into data?
3. How would they be represented as data? (numbers, categories, timestamps, text, etc.)
4. What would be lost?
5. Who might find this data valuable, and why?

Details

Your essay should include a separate title page with your name, the name of the course, the name of the assignment, and the date on which it was completed / submitted. The body of the essay should be double-spaced, in a conventionally-sized (10 to 12 point) font. The essay itself need be as short or long as you deem necessary; I would anticipate something in the neighborhood of 1000-1500 words would be adequate. You need not cite any sources for this essay, or include references, unless you choose to.

This assignment must be completed and submitted by Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET. Submit your assignment by *creating / converting your essay to PDF format*, and emailing it to Dr. Zorn (at zorn@psu.edu) and Mr. Memovic (at arif.memovic@psu.edu). Essays received after the due date will not be accepted. Note: If you choose to complete this assignment, you may not also complete / submit Assignment 1B.

This assignment is worth a possible 100 points.