

# **431 Fall 2025 Syllabus**

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# 1 Welcome to 431!

This is the Fall 2025 syllabus for PQHS / CRSP / MPH 431: Statistical Methods in Biological & Medical Sciences at Case Western Reserve University with Professor Thomas E. Love.

## 1.1 Working With This Syllabus

1. This syllabus includes **fifteen** chapters. Use the sidebar on the left side of the screen to navigate between chapters. Make sure you look at each chapter.
2. Click the download icon under the title at the top left to download a PDF version of the syllabus.
3. Click the switch next to the download icon to switch from light to dark mode.
4. The sidebar also lets you search the entire syllabus.
5. The current chapter's table of contents is shown on the right of your screen.
6. The syllabus will be updated occasionally. The date of the current version is listed above under **PUBLISHED**.

## 1.2 Who, When and Where?

- The course instructor is Professor Thomas E. Love. Learn more about him in Chapter [7](#).
  - Email him at **Thomas dot Love at case dot edu** if you have any questions before class.
- There are several teaching assistants helping with the course this semester. See Chapter [8](#) for more on them.
- The course is given on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 to 2:15 PM Eastern Time, in Room E321-323 in Robbins Hall, within CWRU's School of Medicine, starting on 2025-09-02.
  - Note that we will not meet on August 26 or 28, as Dr. Love will be away because of a family issue.

## 2 Getting Started

Your first few steps in this course are to:

1. Register and enroll via the [CWRU Student Information System \(SIS\)](#).
  - Section 100 of PQHS 431, CRSP 431 and MPHP 431 are identical. Be sure to register for PQHS 431 unless you are part of the Clinical Research Scholars Program (in which case, register for CRSP 431) or you are part of the MPH program (in which case, register for MPHP 431.)
2. Review the [main course website](#), and be sure to visit the [Course Calendar](#).
3. Skim through each chapter of the Course Syllabus (this document.)
4. Obtain the texts required for the course. The book you need to purchase is David Spiegelhalter's *The Art of Statistics: How to Learn from Data*, originally published in 2020 and available at all major book retailers for around \$20. All other required texts are free. See Chapter 5 for details on how to get the other required texts.
5. Complete the [Welcome to 431 survey](#) - see below for details.
6. Get started installing the software you'll need for the course. See Chapter 6 and [the Software link on our main website](#) for more details.

### 2.1 Welcome to 431 Survey

Please fill out the survey at <https://bit.ly/431-2025-welcome> to help us get to know you a little better.

- Note that you must **log into Google via your CWRU account** in order to access the survey.
- The survey should take 15-20 minutes to complete, and we encourage you to complete it as soon as you can. The formal deadline for completing this form is found on the [Course Calendar](#).

# 3 Course Web Site

The main course web site is found at [this link](#).

By the first class, this page will house links to everything we will provide, including:

- The [431 Syllabus](#) (this document)
- Professor Love's [Course Text](#), the main textbook for the course
- The [Course Calendar](#), which is the final word for all deadlines and assignments
  - The [Calendar](#) also links to materials for each class, including presentation slides and announcements
- [Data \(and Code\)](#) for the course's assignments, presentations, and notes
- Our [Canvas page](#) for turning in assignments and downloading recordings. (Most classes will be recorded.)

## 3.1 Contact Information

Our main website at <https://thomaselove.github.io/431-2025/> includes a [Contact Us](#) page which provides detailed information on the best ways to get help from Professor Love and the Teaching Assistants during the semester.

- The course Teaching Assistants will hold regular office hours, starting in early September and running through early December, over Zoom, and the schedule for these sessions will be found on the [Contact Us page](#) and the [Course Calendar](#).
  - Once the semester begins, questions about course materials are best asked in class, or in TA Office Hours, over Zoom.
- Professor Love will arrive 10 minutes before each class, and stay afterwards, as well, to discuss any student questions and concerns.
  - Professor Love's office at CWRU is on the ground floor of the Wood building (in the WG-82 Suite), specifically WG-82J. Email him if you need an appointment, either in person or via Zoom.
- If you have any unique concerns about the course, need special accommodations or have any other issues you want to discuss with Professor Love specifically, please email him directly (**Thomas dot Love at case dot edu**) and he'll respond as quickly as possible.

# 4 Course Description

PQHS 431 (cross-listed as CRSP 431 and MPHP 431) is the first half of a two-semester sequence (with 432) focused on modern data analysis and advanced statistical modeling, with a practical bent and as little theory as possible. We emphasize the key roles of thinking hard, and well, about design and analysis in research.

The course is formally titled *Statistical Methods in Biological & Medical Sciences, Part 1*. A more accurate title is **Data Science for Biological, Medical or Health Research**.

We'll learn about managing and visualizing data, building models and making predictions, and other data science activities. This highly applied course focuses on modern tools for learning from data. We'll learn a lot of R, and we'll use RStudio and Quarto as tools to help make R work better, and help perform our research in rigorous and replicable ways.

## 4.1 Course Objectives

During the 431-432 sequence, students will:

1. Use modern data science tools to import, tidy/manage, explore (through transformation, visualization and modeling) and communicate about data.
2. Think hard and well about rigorous design and analysis in scientific research.
3. Gain sufficient background in the practical issues regarding linear and generalized linear models to give you a starting place for meaningful applied work, particularly in terms of making comparisons to address general types of statistical and analytic questions (exploratory, predictive, inferential, and causal, in particular.)
4. Learn about the importance of replicable research, and develop facility and practice in open source tools for doing it.
5. Complete a series of assignments (labs, projects and quizzes) designed to help you demonstrate what you've learned.
6. Using R and RStudio to make all of the things above happen; with particular emphasis on doing replicable research and using [Quarto](#) to document the work in a replicable way.

This is **NOT** a course in mathematical statistics or statistical inference. It's far more applied than that.

## 4.2 Key Topics in 431-432

1. Exploratory Data Analysis: “All graphs are comparisons” including data exploration, statistical graphics and more general visualization of information.
2. Placing biological, medical and health research questions into a statistical framework.
3. Study Development - making choices in designing and executing the collection and aggregation of data.
4. Data Handling - including important issues in importing, tidying and transforming data, as well as methods for dealing with missing data, including imputation.
5. Statistical Comparisons: “All of statistics are comparisons” - including methods for discrete and continuous variables: intervals, assumptions, some thoughts on statistical power, and the bootstrap, design of visualizations and models for rates, proportions and contingency tables.
6. The proper and rigorous use of multi-predictor models for continuous and discrete data, including...
  - Fitting, evaluating, and interpreting linear and generalized linear models with both classical (frequentist) and Bayesian approaches.
  - Prediction and validation.
  - Critical role of graphics, including diagnostics and residual analysis.
  - Model choice, including variable selection, shrinkage and model uncertainty.
  - Dealing with categorical predictors and interactions meaningfully.
  - Adjusting for covariates meaningfully.
7. Using R and RStudio to make all of the things above happen; with particular emphasis on doing replicable research and using [Quarto](#) to document the work in a replicable way.

## 4.3 Prerequisites and Intended Student Population

What do we expect you to know already before you start the course? **Not much.**

Useful prior experience includes training/experience in statistics, coding/programming and biology/biomedical science. We expect most people will have some experience in one or two of these areas, but very few will have all three.

- Some students have lots of prior training in statistics. But there are many students in the class with no statistical training at all that they use regularly. We assume only that everyone knows what an average is, and has some sense of why statistics might be useful to them in their chosen field.
- Some students have lots of prior coding and programming experience, including experience with R and/or Quarto. Some have never written a line of code in their life. We

assume only that everyone is willing to learn how to do modern work with data, and that means writing computer code, but that some people will be starting from nothing.

- Some students have lots of prior experience with biological and biomedical science, and know a lot of useful things in those areas which relate directly to our work. Others have zero experience in this area, and will learn a lot from their colleagues. We assume only that everyone is willing to learn, and to put in some effort to do so.

People succeed in this course with a wide range of backgrounds and a common interest in using data effectively in research related to biology, health or medicine. There will be multiple people in the class who are years away from their last statistics class. We expect the majority of students will have no prior experience using R, or any meaningful recollection of using statistical software.

The pace can be brisk at times, but all CWRU students who feel up to it are welcome, regardless of their field of study or prior experience. Section 100 (Professor Love's section) is specifically geared towards students in programs under the auspices of the Department of Population & Quantitative Health Sciences, as well as students who intend to continue on and take 432 this Spring. Section 101 (with Professor Zhang) is more appropriate for most other students.

## 4.4 Motivations for our Approach

Professor Love has a lot of thoughts on this issue and you'll hear about them through the semester, but you may prefer to hear from other people on the subject. So here are a few references that guided our thinking in developing the course.

- [A Guide to Teaching Data Science](#) by Stephanie C. Hicks, Rafael A. Irizarry (pdf)
  - ... our (case-study) approach (in a graduate-level, introductory data science course) teaches students three key skills needed to succeed in data science, which we refer to as creating, connecting, and computing.
- [Data Visualization on Day One: Bringing Big Ideas into Intro Stats Early and Often](#) by Xiaofei Wang, Cynthia Rush, Nicholas Jon Horton (pdf)
- [50 Years of Data Science](#) by David Donoho in the *Journal of Computational and Graphical Statistics*, 2017.
- [Why You Should Master R \(Even if it might eventually become obsolete\)](#) blog post from Sharp Sight, 2016-12-27
- [Teaching R to New Users - From tapply to the Tidyverse](#), A YouTube video by Roger D. Peng
- [Teach the Tidyverse to Beginners](#) and a related post on teaching `ggplot2`, specifically from David Robinson. There is also a related video from rstudio::conf 2018.
- Video from Hadley Wickham, [You can't do data science in a GUI](#), 2018 in Chicago.

## **4.5 Is 432 Required?**

If I take 431 this semester, do I have to take 432 in the Spring?

It is the natural thing to do, and I assume that almost all of you will do so. The 431 course is part 1 of a two-semester sequence. Frankly, 432 contains some of the most interesting material and is generally regarded by students who take both as the more entertaining course. Every year, some students take only 431, though. The decision is up to you. The 432 course assumes you have completed 431, whether with me or another instructor.

# 5 Required Texts

## 5.1 Course Notes

Professor Love maintains a [Course Text](#) entitled [Applied Statistics and R Foundations for 431](#).

Although this Text shares some of the features of a textbook, it is by no means comprehensive. The main purpose is to give 431 students a set of common materials on which to draw during the course, providing a series of examples using R to work through issues that are likely to come up during the semester, and in later work.

In addition, [slides](#) and (occasional) recordings from Professor Love's lectures, plus other in-class materials will be posted for your use throughout the semester.

Once class begins, you'll be able to access all materials (including the Course Notes) through the main course website at <https://thomaselove.github.io/431-2025/>.

## 5.2 Buy This Book!

During the course, we will read David Spiegelhalter's [The Art of Statistics](#), which was first published by Penguin in March 2019 (and February 2020) in the UK and then by Basic Books in the US in September 2019. You can purchase any of the available versions (hard-cover, paperback or e-reader) online or in your local bookstore for about \$20.

- [Dr. Spiegelhalter's website](#) has lots of useful information.
- The [book's website](#) contains R code, corrections and other materials.
- You are welcome to read this book before class starts, if you'd like to get a jump on things, but that's not necessary: a reading plan is on the [Course Calendar](#).

## 5.3 Other Books to Download

There are three additional [free](#) books that you will definitely need to obtain during the semester and may be interested in looking at before class begins. Simply visit the links below.

1. [R for Data Science](#) (2nd edition) by Hadley Wickham, Mine Çetinkaya-Rundel and Garrett Grolemund.
  - Solutions to the exercises in R4DS can be found [here](#) and may be very helpful to you.
2. [R Graphics Cookbook](#) (2nd edition) by Winston Chang.
3. [Biostatistics for Biomedical Research](#) by Frank E. Harrell Jr.
  - A related set of YouTube videos can be found [here](#).

There are many other free R books available online, which may be helpful to you. Here are a few that some students in past versions of this course have liked.

- [Introduction to Modern Statistics, 2nd edition](#) by Mine Çetinkaya-Rundel and Johanna Hardin.
- [Introduction to Data Science: Data Analysis and Prediction Algorithms with R](#) by Rafael A. Irizarry
- [Fundamentals of Data Visualization](#) by Claus O. Wilke
- [Data Visualization: A practical introduction](#) by Kieran Healy

## 5.4 Key Articles and Posts

While I will recommend dozens, perhaps hundreds of articles, blog posts and the like to you over the course of the year, these are especially important in 431.

1. Several of the guides prepared by Jeff Leek and his group, including:
  - [Finally, a Formula for Decoding Health News](#), from fivethirtyeight.com
  - [Reading academic \(scientific\) papers](#),
  - [Writing your first academic paper](#)
  - [Write papers like a modern scientist](#)
  - [How to Share Data for Collaboration](#) by Shannon E. Ellis and Jeffrey T. Leek in *The American Statistician*, 2018 Special Issue on Data Science, or you can [read the PeerJ preprint version here](#).
2. [Data Organization in Spreadsheets](#) by Karl W. Broman and Kara H. Woo in *The American Statistician*, 2018 Special Issue on Data Science, or you can [read the PeerJ preprint version](#).
  - The Ellis/Leek and Broman/Woo papers are part of the [Practical Data Science for Stats](#) collection, which may be of interest.
3. [Project-oriented workflow](#) at tidyverse.org from Jenny Bryan.
4. From the Ten Simple Rules series at PLOS Computational Biology:

- [Ten Simple Rules for Effective Statistical Practice](#) by Kass RE et al. 2016
  - [Ten Simple Rules for Graduate Students](#) by Gu J Bourne PE 2007
  - [Ten Simple Rules for Better Figures](#) by Rougier NP Droettboom M Bourne PE 2014
  - [Ten Simple Rules for Creating a Good Data Management Plan](#) by Michener WK 2015
5. [Statistical Inference in the 21st Century: A World Beyond  \$p < 0.05\$](#)  from 2019 in *The American Statistician*
  6. The American Statistical Association's 2016 [Statement on p-Values: Context, Process and Purpose](#).

Professor Love's class-specific READMEs will provide links to these articles and other recommended readings as the semester goes on.

# 6 Required Software

The course makes heavy use of the R statistical programming language, and several related tools, most especially the RStudio development environment. Every bit of this software is free to use, and open-source.

You will need access to a computer to do your work for this class, not just an iPad or other tablet, but an actual computer. You do not need a state of the art machine, nor should you need any special hardware to run things for this course.

- There will be many people in the course for whom R is a new experience. I assume no prior R work in the course. You will know a fair amount of R (and some other things, too) after taking the course, though.
- We'll be using [Quarto](#) for most of our work, as well, which can be used to generate reproducible reports that appear as .html websites, PDF files or Word documents, among other things.
- For some people, working with R and Quarto is the best part of the class, and the part that they're most excited about.
- For others, it's a real source of anxiety. We understand and encourage patience. There will definitely be some pain, but our experience is that things are much smoother for most people by early October than they appear to be in August.

## 6.1 R and RStudio

You will do all of your analysis with the open source (and free!) [programming language R](#). You will use [RStudio](#) as the main program to access R. Think of R as an engine and RStudio as a car dashboard. R handles all the calculations and the actual statistics, while RStudio provides a nice interface for running R code.

R is free, but it can sometimes be a pain to install and configure. Information about getting R and RStudio on your computer is provided below, and [also on our main website](#).

Learning R can be difficult at first - it's like learning a new language, just like Spanish, French, or Chinese. Hadley Wickham-the chief scientist at Posit (makers of Rstudio) and the author of some amazing R packages you'll be using like `ggplot2` [made this wise observation](#):

It's easy when you start out programming to get really frustrated and think, "Oh it's me, I'm really stupid," or, "I'm not made out to program." But, that is absolutely not the case. Everyone gets frustrated. I still get frustrated occasionally when writing R code. It's just a natural part of programming. So, it happens to everyone and gets less and less over time. Don't blame yourself. Just take a break, do something fun, and then come back and try again later.

If you're finding yourself taking way too long hitting your head against a wall and not understanding, take a break, talk to the teaching assistants, talk to classmates, ask questions, e-mail Professor Love, etc.

I promise you can do this.

Some of this material is also borrowed from Andrew Heiss.

## 6.2 Getting the Software

Everything is free, but it does require some patience to get control over your computer.

### 6.2.1 System Requirements

You will need access to a computer to do your work for this class, not just an iPad or other tablet, but an actual computer. Whether or not you want to bring that computer to class is up to you. All of the software we will use in this class is either free and open source, or available to you for free through your affiliation with CWRU, so there is nothing to buy in terms of software.

- We've made some effort in terms of course requirements to set the bar low. You do not need a state of the art machine, nor should you need any special hardware to run things for this course.
- You will need a computer, either PC (running Windows 10 or 11, ideally) or Macintosh (running a reasonably recent OS), but your choice should be determined by your personal preferences and how you believe you will use the machine in your research life. RStudio and R will look and work the same on either a PC or a Macintosh.
- We **do not** recommend the use of a Chromebook for 431 or 432.
- R and RStudio Desktop also run on Linux systems but Professor Love knows essentially nothing about that. Consult the documentation [at CRAN for R](#) and [at the download page for RStudio](#).

### 6.2.2 What will I need for 431?

These instructions are also available on [the Software page](#) at our main course website: <https://thomaselove.github.io/431-2025/>.

## 6.3 Installing R and R Studio

The steps you need to complete are:

1. Download and install **the latest version of R** (version **4.5.1 or later**) from <https://cran.case.edu/> or, if you prefer, from <https://cloud.r-project.org/>, which automatically chooses a fast, nearby mirror for you.
  - If you have a pre-existing installation of R and/or RStudio, you will need to re-install both to get current.
2. Download and install **RStudio Desktop** (Open Source Edition - the free version **2025.05.1+513**) by visiting <https://posit.co/download/rstudio-desktop/>.

## 6.4 Installing R Packages and Data/Code for 431

After you've completed steps 1 and 2 above, move on to these tasks:

3. Install some **R packages** - an R “package” is a collection of functions, data, and documentation that extends the capabilities of R, and is the critical way to get R doing interesting work.
  - Visit <https://github.com/THOMASELOVE/431-packages> for details and the list of packages we'll be using in 431.
4. Download **data and code** (functions) we've developed specifically for 431 at <https://github.com/THOMASELOVE/431-data>.
  - Follow the instructions you'll find there.

## 6.5 Need Installation Help?

If you need more help, you might look at [this terrific resource for Installing R and RStudio](#) from Jenny Bryan and the STAT 545 project. These are the people responsible for the great [Happy Git with R](#) project, which will also be worth your time when we are using Git and GitHub.

- If you’re having trouble with installation before our first class, don’t worry too much. The TAs and Professor Love will be available to help once the class gets going.
- Once the class starts, if you’re having installation problems or problems getting started in R, please consider visiting TA office hours or perhaps asking a question on Campuswire. We want to hear from you!

## 6.6 Updating Your R Packages

Every once in a while, it’s a good idea to update your R packages. To do so,

1. Go to the **Packages** tab on the right side of your RStudio screen, and click on **Update**.
2. This will bring up a dialog box. I usually click **Select All**, then click **Install Updates**.
  - A popup box may appear, asking “Do you want to install from sources the packages which need compilation?” to which I usually answer **No**. A **Yes** response leads to a slower installation, but can solve problems if you still have them after updating.
  - This may take a few minutes. As long as you’re seeing activity in the Console window, things are progressing.
  - Eventually, you’ll get a message that “The downloaded source packages are in ...” with a directory name. That’s the sign that the updating is done.
  - Updating packages is something you’ll do occasionally throughout the semester, mostly when a problem happens.
3. Finally, choose **File ... Quit Session** from the top menu, and accept or deny (I usually deny) RStudio’s request to save your workspace. Then close RStudio, and re-open it if you want to do some work.

## 6.7 Why do we teach R in 431-432?

Why do we teach using R, rather than SAS or SPSS or Python or whatever?

1. Because it is by far the better choice for what we’re trying to do, which is to help you become effective data scientists. And effective scientists, period.
2. Because being a data scientist means writing code and actually doing (not just talking about) replicable research, which R facilitates in an immense variety of ways.
3. Because R is free to you, me and everyone, and its community is a daily delight.

To read comments from other people on the subject, I suggest reading [Why R?](#) from Chester Ismay and Patrick Kennedy.

Also, the question of “Why R and not SPSS?” was nicely addressed by Greg Snow in [this 2010 post at StackOverflow...](#)

When talking about user friendliness of computer software I like the analogy of cars vs. busses: Busses are very easy to use, you just need to know which bus to get on, where to get on, and where to get off (and you need to pay your fare). Cars on the other hand require much more work, you need to have some type of map or directions (even if the map is in your head), you need to put gas in every now and then, you need to know the rules of the road (have some type of drivers licence). The big advantage of the car is that it can take you a bunch of places that the bus does not go and it is quicker for some trips that would require transferring between busses. Using this analogy programs like SPSS are busses, easy to use for the standard things, but very frustrating if you want to do something that is not already preprogrammed. R is a 4-wheel drive SUV (though environmentally friendly) with a bike on the back, a kayak on top, good walking and running shoes in the passenger seat, and mountain climbing and spelunking gear in the back. R can take you anywhere you want to go if you take time to learn how to use the equipment, but that is going to take longer than learning where the bus stops are in SPSS.

## 6.8 Additional Resources

If you're interested in getting started with the tools you'll be using in 431 before the class gets rolling, the great folks at [RStudio Education](#) provide [these 6 ways to begin learning R](#). Pick the one that appeals to you, and give it a shot.

- Note that if you're having trouble installing things, you can still learn a lot about R, RStudio and Data Science basics with the interactive tutorials at <https://rstudio.cloud/learn/primers>.
- If you're already a strong coder, and have some R experience, there are also [learning pathways for intermediates at RStudio Education](#) which might be appealing to you.

Our goal is to get everyone well into the intermediate level by December. Some people will get there in September, for others it will take longer. But you can do this, and we'll be there to help you.

In addition, there are many, many online resources to help you with working in R and in [Quarto](#), and we'll point you to some of the best of them during the semester.

## 7 Professor Love



Thomas E. Love, Ph.D.

Hi. I am Thomas E. Love, Ph.D. and I have at least three different jobs.

- I am a Professor in the Departments of Medicine and Population & Quantitative Health Sciences at Case Western Reserve University. I teach three courses per year there (PQHS 431, 432 and 500) and also lead the Health Care Analytics track of the MS program in Biostatistics.
- I direct the [Biostatistics and Data Science Division](#) at the [Population Health Research Institute](#) and at the Center for Health Care Research & Policy, which are jointly supported by The MetroHealth System and by CWRU.
- For ten years, I was the (founding) Data Director for [Better Health Partnership](#), an alliance of people who provide, pay for and receive care in Northeast Ohio. I now serve as Chief Data Scientist there.
- I am a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, and am the 2025 Past Chair for its Council of Sections Governing Board, among other things.
- I have won numerous awards for my teaching and my research, including the 2018 [John S. Diekhoff Award for Graduate Teaching](#) from CWRU.
- I have been teaching at CWRU since 1994, and have taught every manner of CWRU student over the years, especially students in biostatistics, medicine, and management.

In research, I use statistical methods to look at questions in health policy and in particular the provision of health services. I mostly work with observational data, rather than data that emerge from randomized clinical trials, and I have a special interest in working with data from electronic health records.

- For example, you may be interested in a [study in Health Affairs](#) showing the impact of a [Medicaid-like expansion plan on care and outcomes of poor patients in Cleveland](#).
- Or you might be interested in our [New England Journal of Medicine study](#) of the effect of electronic health records on the care and outcomes of people with diabetes.
- In 2011, [James O'Malley](#) and I chaired the [Ninth International Conference on Health Policy Statistics](#), here in Cleveland. Here's a [recap](#).
- I've also worked on many projects involving the use of propensity scores to make causal inferences from observational studies, particularly in heart failure.

If you want to see a [pretty complete list of my publications](#), knock yourself out.

I hold degrees from Columbia University in the City of New York and from the University of Pennsylvania. My dissertation adviser was Paul Rosenbaum. I am married to a brilliant woman who is an attorney at Savant Systems, and we have two terrific sons, the older of which recently completed the MS in Data Analytics for Science at Carnegie Mellon University, while the younger is starting his second year of law school at Fordham University. I live in Shaker Heights. I also sing and act occasionally in [community theater](#).

## 7.1 Email

- **Thomas dot Love at case dot edu** (for matters related to grades or individual concerns)
- Professor Love is best reached via email in an emergency.

## 7.2 Offices

- Wood WG-82J on the ground floor of the Wood building (Tuesday and Thursday afternoons)
- Rammelkamp R-229A at MetroHealth Medical Center (Friday mornings)

At other times, Professor Love works from his home in Shaker Heights.

Professor Love is available for the 10 minutes before and approximately 20 minutes after each class for drop-in discussions and otherwise by appointment (send email to schedule).

### **7.3 Name, Pronouns, Social Media**

- Professor Love uses he/him/his pronouns, and identifies as male.
  - Most students refer to him either as Professor Love or Doctor Love, and he prefers this in class.
  - He prefers his given name to be written “Thomas” as opposed to “Tom”.
  - Most of his friends and colleagues call him “Tom”. You are welcome to do so, outside of class time, if it makes you comfortable.
- At Github, he is [THOMASELOVE](#).
  - The Github repository [for this syllabus is here](#).

# 8 Teaching Assistants

All of this year's stellar group of teaching assistants have been in your shoes - they've taken the course in the past, and they enjoyed it enough to come back for more. They are volunteering their precious time and energy to help make the course happen, and we couldn't be more delighted to welcome you to the course. All office hours and all teaching assistant work will be done remotely.

There is a lot to learn in this class. Don't suffer in silence - talk to us! As mentioned earlier, **you shouldn't spend more than 15 minutes struggling with anything in this class without asking for help.**

Visit Getting Help (Chapter 9) of this Syllabus for more details.

## 8.1 TA office hours

TTA office hours are held via Zoom, and will begin on **Wednesday 2025-09-03** and will continue through **Tuesday 2025-12-09**. The weekly schedule will appear on our [Contact Us page](#) as well as our [Course Calendar](#).

Our Shared Google Drive (431 Fall 2025 Dr Love and Students) will display Zoom links for all TA office hours in a document called **TA office hours schedule and Zoom links**. No appointment is necessary. Please just drop in.

- Professor Love will also hold “drop-in hours” for 10 minutes before and for 30 minutes after each class on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- As noted on our [Calendar](#), TA Office hours are canceled on 2025-10-20 and 2025-10-21 (Fall Break) and from 2025-11-22 through 2025-11-28 (Thanksgiving)

## 8.2 Getting To Know The TAs

The Fall 2025 Teaching Assistants for 431 are:

TA Name	For more, visit	Current Roles and CWRU Experiences
Monika Strah	Section 8.2.1	PhD candidate, Clinical Translational Science

TA Name	For more, visit	Current Roles and CWRU Experiences
Carly DaCosta	Section <a href="#">8.2.2</a>	PhD Candidate, Epidemiology & Biostatistics
Katherine Papahadjopoulos	Section <a href="#">8.2.3</a>	MPH graduate, Research Coordinator, Cleveland Clinic
Kathryn Menta	Section <a href="#">8.2.4</a>	PhD Candidate, Epidemiology & Biostatistics
Mahsa Sheikh	Section <a href="#">8.2.5</a>	PhD candidate, Clinical Translational Science
Marie Masotya	Section <a href="#">8.2.6</a>	PhD candidate, Clinical Translational Science
Morgan McLoughlin	Section <a href="#">8.2.7</a>	PhD candidate, Clinical Psychology
Ria Tilve	Section <a href="#">8.2.8</a>	MPH at CWRU, Medical Student
Sarah Albalawi	Section <a href="#">8.2.9</a>	MPH Candidate
Tatchaporn Ongphichetmetha	Section <a href="#">8.2.10</a>	PhD candidate, Clinical Translational Science
Wala'a Alshaia	Section <a href="#">8.2.11</a>	PhD candidate, Clinical Translational Science

### 8.2.1 Monika Strah



Figure 8.1: Monika Strah

Monika Strah is a Ph.D. candidate in Clinical Translational Science and a graduate of CWRU's Biostatistics M.S. program. She is looking forward to returning as a Teaching Assistant for PQHS 431/432 and also enjoyed working as a TA for PQHS 453. Monika's research has

included mathematical approaches to questions in population genetics and human evolution, examining dietary factors associated with lung cancer risk and analysis of multiple sclerosis related fatigue management strategies. Monika enjoys reading, hiking and is a member of the National Ski Patrol.

### **8.2.2 Carly DaCosta**

Details to come.

### **8.2.3 Katherine Papahadjopoulos**



Figure 8.2: Katherine Papahadjopoulos

Katherine Papahadjopoulos is a recent graduate of CWRU's IGS MPH program with concentrations in Population Health Research and Health Promotion & Disease Prevention. She is currently a Research Coordinator at the Cleveland Clinic in the Pediatric Cardiology department. The skills and knowledge she obtained from 431/432 have been instrumental in her work and research. Outside of work and research, Katherine enjoys photography, cooking, traveling, reading, and playing with her dogs.

#### **8.2.4 Kathryn Menta**



Figure 8.3: Kathryn Menta

Kathryn Menta is a third year PhD student in Epidemiology and Biostatistics within the Department of Population & Quantitative Health Sciences. She worked as a crime scene investigator and forensic DNA technician for about seven years before returning to school to complete a new BS in mathematics and statistics at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. She then completed both a Master's in mathematics and a Master's in statistics at the same institution before coming to CWRU to start her PhD. Her current research is in dynamic treatment regimens focusing on clinical decision making for multiple sclerosis drug treatments. Outside of school, Kathryn enjoys spending time with her husband and two cats, crafting, and binge watching numerous true crime shows and podcasts.

### **8.2.5 Mahsa Sheikh**



Figure 8.4: Mahsa Sheikh

Seyyedeh Mahsa Sheikholeslamian, DDS, MSc, is a second-year PhD student in Clinical Translational Science at the Department of Quantitative and Population Health Sciences, Case Western Reserve University. She has worked with the Evidence Foundation on methodology research, contributing to projects involving critical appraisal, data extraction, interpretation of complex results, and preparing guidelines and evidence summaries for decision-making. Before joining the CTS program, she earned her DDS from Guilan University of Medical Sciences and a master's degree in Restorative Dentistry from Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences. She also has nearly a decade of experience teaching as an assistant professor in dental schools. This semester, she looks forward to supporting students in PQHS/CRSP/MPHP 431 as a teaching assistant. Outside of academics, she enjoys cooking Persian food, visiting museums, and spending time with her daughter and spouse.

### **8.2.6 Marie Masotya**



Figure 8.5: Marie Masotya

Marie Masotya, MPH, is a PhD student in the Clinical Translational Science program. She is Senior Research Coordinator at University Hospitals (UH) Rainbow Center for Child Health and Policy where she manages research, quality and community-based projects. She represents UH Rainbow on several multi-sectoral community partnerships focused on child health and health equity. These include Better Health Partnership, Lead Safe Cleveland Coalition, and the Community-Based Participatory Research Network. Marie took full advantage of TA support in Fall 2022 when she took 431. She looks forward to returning that support to others this semester. When not doing research, you will find her enjoying live theater, music, and adventures with her spouse and 3 children.

### **8.2.7 Morgan McLoughlin**

Details to come.

### **8.2.8 Ria Tilve**

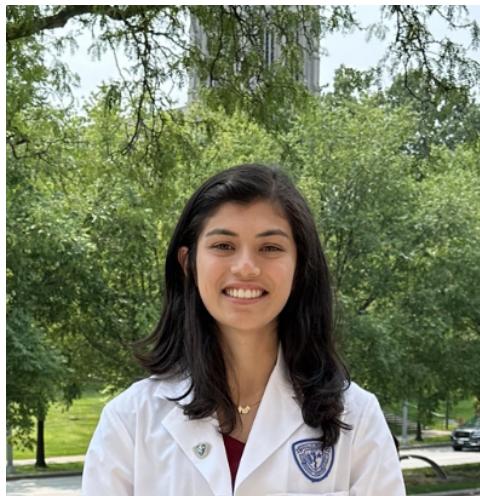


Figure 8.6: Ria Tilve

Ria Tilve is a third year medical student at CWRU. After completing her bachelor's in Biochemistry, she obtained her MPH in Population Health Research at CWRU. Her current research focuses on musculoskeletal health and biomedical imaging. Ria took 431 and 432 during the 2021-2022 school year, and she is applying those skills in her research projects. Outside of studying, Ria enjoys spending time with her family, running, watching sports, and exploring new places.

### **8.2.9 Sarah Albalawi**



Figure 8.7: Sarah Albalawi

Sarah Albalawi is a general dentist who is currently pursuing a Master of Public Health at Case Western Reserve University. She earned a Bachelor of Dental Medicine from King Saud University in her home country, Saudi Arabia. Her research focuses on improving oral health outcomes for medically compromised patients and expanding dental services in rural communities. Outside of academia, Sarah enjoys baking and floral photography.

### **8.2.10 Tatchaporn Ongphichetmetha**



Figure 8.8: Tatchaporn Ongphichetmetha

Tatchaporn Ongphichetmetha is a Ph.D. student in Clinical Translational Science at CWRU and a research fellow at the Cleveland Clinic Mellen Center for Multiple Sclerosis. Her research interests include autoimmune neurological disorders and multiple sclerosis. She completed her medical degree and neurology training in Thailand. During the 2024-2025 academic year, Tatchaporn took 431 and 432, and she is now applying those skills to her own research projects. Outside of her studies, she enjoys spending time with her family, traveling, and baking.

### **8.2.11 Walaa Alshaia**



Figure 8.9: Wala'a Alshaia

Wala'a Alshaia is a PhD student in the Clinical Translational Science program. She earned her undergraduate degree in Clinical Nutrition from Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University and a Master of Science in Human Nutrition from Columbia University. Her current research focuses on the dynamic interplay between modifiable lifestyle factors and cancer risk in individuals with inherited genetic predispositions. Wala'a remembers the impact of TA support when she was a student in 431 in Fall 2023 and is excited to offer that same guidance this semester. Beyond her academic work, she enjoys practicing Arabic calligraphy, brewing coffee with a good friend, and embracing new adventures.

# 9 Getting Help

Data science and statistical programming can be difficult. Computers are stupid and little errors in your code can cause hours of frustration (even if you've been doing this stuff for years!). **You shouldn't spend more than 15 minutes struggling with anything in this class without asking for help.**

We are fully committed to making sure that you learn everything you were hoping to learn from this class. If you tell us you're having trouble, I will not judge you or think less of you. I hope you'll extend me the same grace. You never owe us personal information about your health (mental or physical). If you need extra help, or if you need more time with something, or if you feel like you're behind or not understanding everything, do not suffer in silence! Talk to us! We will work with you.

In general, we don't have a way to diagnose your problem with R, RStudio or Quarto if you don't show us what you're typing that causes an error, or a lack of results. If you wrote a Quarto file, we need to see it, along with a specific question (or series of them) about specific error messages or strange results you are getting. We need to replicate the problem in order to know how to fix your problem, and it also helps if we know what error message you're seeing, or what strange result you are getting.

## 9.1 TA Office Hours is the place to get one-on-one help for 431

You are strongly encouraged to visit TAs during office hours that are convenient for you, whenever you need help with the course. This is the best way to get one-on-one help, or try out a new idea.

TA office hours are held via Zoom, and will begin on **Wednesday 2025-09-03** and will continue through **Tuesday 2025-12-09**.

The weekly schedule will appear on our [Contact Us page](#) as well as our [Course Calendar](#).

Our Shared Google Drive (431 Fall 2025 Dr Love and Students) will display Zoom links for all TA office hours in a document called **TA office hours schedule and Zoom links**. No appointment is necessary. Please just drop in.

- The schedule for TA office hours will appear on the [Course Calendar](#), and on our [Contact Us page](#).

- Office Hours are held for your benefit. Please visit the TAs, especially if you have questions about how to do things in R, or about the content of the class slides or course notes. They're volunteering their time to help you, and most of them have been in your shoes in previous years. They want to help you!
- More information on the TAs is found in Chapter 8.

## 9.2 How We'll Use Canvas

The course's primary listing on [Canvas](#) is PQHS 431, but students in CRSP 431 and MPHP 431 should find the same information. We'll use the Canvas platform for (at most) two things:

- (definitely) turning in lab and project assignments
- (maybe) providing information about (and maintaining recordings of) our class sessions

Visit <https://canvas.case.edu/> to log in and see what's available there.

## 9.3 How We'll Use Google Drive

Professor Love will share some data and some other materials (answer sketches for lab assignments, for example) through a Shared Google Drive. You will need to log into Google through your CWRU account in order to view and use these materials.

## 9.4 Meeting with Professor Love

Professor Love does not hold regular office hours. He will arrive 10 minutes before each class, and stay afterwards, as well, to address any drop-in student concerns and questions.

- If you have any unique concerns about the course, need special accommodations or have any other issues you want to discuss with Professor Love specifically, please email him (**Thomas dot Love at case dot edu**) and he'll respond as quickly as possible.

## 9.5 Other Sources of Help

In addition, there are many, many online resources to help you learn R beyond those we provide.

- Building internet searches (“googling”) effectively is an important skill that requires practice. Don't be afraid to use search engines to figure out how to code things in R, for example.

- The [RStudio Community](#) at Posit is a forum specifically designed for people using RStudio and the tidyverse (and that will be you.)

# 10 Assignments

Course assignments include (in increasing order of importance):

- minute papers (and class participation)
- labs
- quizzes, and
- projects

The Assignments page linked on the [main course website](#) provides links to additional information on these assignments.

## 10.1 Deadlines for Assignments

All deadlines are posted as part of the [Course Calendar](#), and the Calendar is the final word for all deadlines.

- On every assignment, Lab, Quiz, project-related task, whatever, we will be delighted to respond to questions **up to 12 hours before** the assignment is due. After that time, you may wind up on your own. The reason for this is that Professor Love and the teaching assistants will regularly post responses to frequently asked questions about assignments, and we need sufficient time to accomplish this task.

## 10.2 Using Artificial Intelligence Tools

See Section [12.4.4](#) for details on this course's policies on using AI composition software (such as ChatGPT) for assignments in this course.

## 10.3 Minute Papers

During the semester, there are several Minute Papers scheduled. In this class, a Minute Paper is a short survey (completed using a Google Form) where you will answer a few questions about how the course is going for you. To complete the Minute Paper, you'll need to log into

Google with your CWRU account. The [Welcome to 431 Survey](#) uses a similar format, but is more extensive than a typical Minute Paper.

Each Minute Paper ideally takes less than five minutes to complete, and is best done right at the end of Tuesday's class. The Minute Papers are actually due at noon Wednesday to give you some time to reflect, if you'd like, or if you're in a hurry at the end of Tuesday's class. The Minute Papers are linked on the [431 Minute Paper page](#).

You **should** complete the Minute Paper even if you weren't able to attend the most recent class.

Only Professor Love sees the results of the Minute Papers with identifying information. He then summarizes findings without identifying people and addresses those as part of the README discussion in the Thursday class whenever possible.

Professor Love reserves the right to change the number of minute papers depending on how the class is going during the semester.

## 10.4 Class Participation

We cannot emphasize enough how much we want to hear from you about things that are relevant to this course.

1. If you're not shy, ask questions during class. Come to the (virtual) TA office hours if you need help.
2. Contribute to Campuswire with questions, answers and helpful comments. That'll help us recognize you as someone trying to improve their understanding.
  - If you find **typos** in the materials (code, slides, the Notes, this syllabus) send them to us on Campuswire.
  - See a cool visualization online? A nice use of statistical methods or design in a paper? Share them with us on Campuswire.
3. Email Professor Love if you want to discuss something that doesn't fit on Campuswire or in a conversation with a TA. Visit with him before or after class. Make an appointment to talk with him if you have something to discuss that doesn't work well in email.
  - It's always helpful if Professor Love knows who you are, and this is an especially difficult thing to achieve with a large class and masks.

## 10.5 Labs

During the semester, there are **seven** main lab assignments (called Labs 1-6 and Lab X) scheduled. Professor Love reserves the right to adjust the number of labs depending on how the class is going during the semester.

The [Course Calendar](#) provides deadlines for all Labs, and the [431-Labs page](#) links to additional information on all Labs.

- Most labs require straightforward demonstrations of mastery for core principles and fundamental skills. Some require deeper dives into more technically sophisticated material.
- Most labs ask you to clean/visualize/analyze some data that we provide to you, and also to react to something we're reading at the same time in the Spiegelhalter book.
- You should anticipate that some coding in R **and** writing at least one essay will be required in most labs.

Lab assignments are submitted through [Canvas](#). The link to post your responses for each Lab will appear in time for you to submit the work, usually just after the deadline for the preceding Lab has passed.

Each lab is associated with a deadline. Late work is permitted, but penalized (see the [431-Labs page](#) for more details.)

### 10.5.1 A few tips for Early Lab Work

1. When writing anything for this course in English, use complete sentences, not just bullet points.
2. Clearly mark each Question in each Lab. There is no need to repeat the question before answering it, although you are welcome to do so.
3. You are welcome to discuss each Lab with anyone, including Professor Love, the teaching assistants, or your colleagues, but your answer must be prepared by you alone. We especially encourage you to take advantage of TA office hours and Campuswire.
4. Don't leave anything until the last day. Allow time for computer problems.

## 10.6 Quizzes

During the semester, you will have two quizzes to complete. Each quiz is taken online via a Google Form (like the Minute Papers or the [Welcome to 431 survey](#).) Each quiz includes both short-answer and multiple-choice items. The quizzes focus on whether you can apply the tools developed in class to address small problems.

The [Course Calendar](#) provides deadlines for each of the Quizzes, and the [431-Quiz](#) page provides links to instructions for Quizzes.

You will receive access to the quiz on the Thursday before it is due (the next Wednesday at noon), and each quiz is designed to take 4-8 hours to complete, so the time pressure should be minimal. **If you need to make alternate arrangements for a Quiz, please contact Professor Love via email as soon as possible**, at least a week before a Quiz is released.

#### 10.6.1 About the Quizzes

1. Quizzes typically involve 20-30 questions.
2. The questions are not arranged in any particular order, and you should answer all questions.
3. All questions involve relatively short responses, sometimes after working through a detailed analysis.
4. You will have the opportunity to edit your responses after completing the Quiz, but this must be completed by the deadline.
5. You are welcome (even encouraged) to consult the materials provided on the course website, but you are **not** allowed to discuss the questions on the Quizzes with anyone other than Professor Love or the teaching assistants.
6. The use of large language models (like ChatGPT) and other AI support not provided in RStudio is not permitted on the Quizzes.
7. We do not guarantee to answer questions we receive about the Quiz less than 3 hours prior to the Quiz submission deadline. As noted above, we will **not** use Campuswire for Quiz questions, but instead an alternate approach we will provide to you with each quiz.
8. Quizzes that are more than an hour late will **not** be accepted, except in truly remarkable circumstances.
9. An answer sketch for each Quiz will be made available within 48 hours of the deadline.
10. Grades for the Quizzes are usually available within 48 hours of the deadline.
11. If you feel Professor Love has made an error in grading your Quiz, please let him know directly, by email, as soon as possible.

## 10.7 Projects

During the semester, you will have two projects to complete.

- [Project A](#) anticipates you using materials from the first 10 classes, working with data Dr. Love provides to you.
- Project B anticipates you using materials from the entire term, working with either NHANES data, or a data set you identify yourself.

The [Course Calendar](#) provides deadlines for all Project elements, and each project will have a special website of its own which will provide full directions.

## 10.8 Why Two Projects?

The main reason is that I can't figure out a way to get you to think about all of the things I hope you'll learn from this course in a single Project. Another important reason is that I want you to be able to make mistakes during the semester without worrying about it too much, and having two projects spreads out this learning a bit.

1. I set different tasks for Project A and for Project B, allowing us to touch on a wider fraction of the things I hope you'll learn in 431.
2. I give much more guidance and written feedback in Project A than in Project B.
3. We have to evaluate each of your projects quickly, and there are many students in the class. Knowing the data set you'll be working with helps us manage this.
4. Having a broad range of activities to evaluate helps reduce the cost of a mistake on any one of them, so that we can build on what you do well.
5. All of Project A can be done using materials discussed in Classes 1-15.

# 11 Grading

Over the past five years, essentially all students taking the course have eventually earned either an “A”, a “B” or an “Incomplete” in 431. I don’t see a reason why this won’t also be the case this year. The course cannot be taken “pass/fail.”

## 11.1 Grading Breakdown

Grading standards apply in the same way for all students, regardless of whether they are enrolled in PQHS 431, CRSP 431 or MPHP 431. Students in this class are not in competition with each other for grades. I have no set percentage of students who will receive any particular grade. We aim for substantial and timely feedback from the teaching assistants and myself on all elements of the course.

The course grade is based on four key areas of demonstrated accomplishment.

Course grades are based primarily on performance on labs, projects and quizzes. Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

- 6 main labs (Labs 1-6, at 50 points each) but we count the top 5, for a possible score of 250 points.
- 9 minute papers (at 5 points each) for a possible score of 45 points.
  - If any lab or minute paper is more than 59 minutes late, you will lose points if it’s in by Thursday at noon (24 hours late.) After Thursday at noon, we will not accept your work.
- Welcome to 431 Survey (10 points) and Lab 7 (25 points) for a possible total of 35 points.
- Class Participation scored by Professor Love out of a possible 25 points.
- Project A is worth 120 points (20 for the plan, 100 for the portfolio).
- Project B is worth 150 points.
- Two quizzes each initially scored out of 100 points, with each score multiplied by 1.15 to get a result out of 115 points. Then, I will multiply the better grade by 1.2 and the worse one by 0.8, to reach a total of 230 possible points.

That is a total of 855 possible points, but we will pretend it is out of 850.

- In addition, there will be several bonus opportunities through the semester (including, for example, one buried in this Syllabus). Those opportunities will add up to fewer than 25 points.

The minimum necessary score to receive a B grade in the class is 600 points (that's 70.6% of 850.)

The minimum necessary score to receive an A grade in the class is 725 points (that's 85.3% of 850.)

We follow the University's Incomplete Policy, as described below.

## 11.2 Grading Class Participation

Student Class Participation grades are determined by Professor Love out of a maximum of 25 points. This determination is based on actions that help the class, as awarded during the semester

These points have a small impact, generally, but include things like:

- finding typographical or coding errors in Professor Love's slides, notes and other published materials. Professor Love makes occasional typographic and grammatical errors, which irritate him enormously. Please post to Campuswire the details of any typos or errors you find in this syllabus or any other course materials. If you are the first to let us know, and we make the change, you will receive some credit in your class participation grade.
- asking especially helpful questions in the Minute Papers or on Campuswire or in person
- providing helpful responses to questions and engaging in the discussion on Campuswire
- identifying interesting visualizations or uses of ideas we're discussing in class in the popular or scientific media (this is also done via Campuswire.)
- plus a few other things that come under the general heading of "being helpful."

I also connect with the TAs on this sort of issue, and take into account whether or not you've been completing work in a timely fashion, and either attending TA office hours or asking/answering questions on Campuswire or both.

## 11.3 Grading Labs

The six Main Labs are graded by the Teaching Assistants, according to a rubric and answer sketch. In grading labs, everything counts, including the quality of the presentation, as well as the coding and statistical work.

For each of Labs 1-6, we publish a detailed answer sketch 48 hours after the Lab's submission deadline. Later, when the grades become available (roughly one week after the deadline) you will also receive the grading rubric used by the teaching assistants. Along with the grade, on-time labs will receive modest feedback about the work.

All Labs should be turned in by the deadline specified on the [Course Calendar](#). In this class, it is far better to turn in timely, but only partially complete work than nothing at all. We don't give extensions on Labs. Instead, we use the following grading policy.

- Note that your lowest lab score (out of Labs 1-6) over the course of the semester will be dropped before we calculate your lab grade.
- To receive full credit on a Lab, it must be received on Canvas no later than 59 minutes after the posted deadline. (This allows for small issues with uploading to Canvas to occur without penalty.)
- Labs that are turned in 1-48 hours after the deadline will lose 10 points for late work.
- No extensions to Lab deadlines will be made this semester. Labs turned in more than 48 hours after the deadline will receive no credit, since by then the Lab Sketch will be posted.

Your lowest lab score (out of Labs 1-6) over the course of the semester will be dropped before we calculate your overall lab grade.

- If you decide to skip a lab, please submit a note to Canvas by the deadline saying that you are skipping the lab. You cannot skip Lab X.
- Should you run the risk of needing to miss more than one lab during the semester, contact Professor Love via email before doing so.

## 11.4 Lab Appeal Policy - Request a Review via Google Form

Clarification of concerns related to potential typographical or other errors in our Lab answer sketches is welcome at any time, but haggling over points on assignments can be a real time sink in a large class. To that end, students are **requested not to dispute** any grading on Labs during the semester, but instead to request a review using the [Lab Regrade Request Form](#).

Should you receive a lower grade on a Lab than you feel you deserve based on the feedback the TA provides, the answer sketch and the grading rubric, you can submit a request for a regrade by Professor Love as follows...

We use this form to handle almost all grading errors and regrade requests on Labs. The only exception to this policy is when you believe we've made an arithmetic error in summing up your points on a lab. If that happens, just email Dr. Love to get it straightened out. The Form is used for all other regrade situations.

- If you want Dr. Love to review your grade on one (or more) of Labs 1-6, fill out the Lab Regrade Request Form anytime before the deadline on the Course Calendar.
- When all other course work has been graded, Dr. Love will open the form. If you have requested additional points that could change your course grade, he'll review your request. If not, then he won't.
- Disputing a grade on a homework with a teaching assistant is pointless.
- Professor Love is responsible for all final grading decisions, and if you have a concern, you should submit your request through the form.

Students are welcome to ask questions of Professor Love about grading during the term. The TAs and Professor Love are happy to discuss in a general sense any questions about an assignment, but no grades will be changed until the end of the term. - The one exception is if there is a mistake in adding up points, or some similar clerical error. If you find such an issue, please bring it to Professor Love's attention via email, and such problems will be corrected immediately.

The main advantage of this system is that it saves all of us the hassle of haggling over points that are never going to mean anything anyway. It also provides “equal access” to students who are too timid to express their concerns. Finally, if there is an issue with grading a particular problem or assignment that needs to be reconsidered, Professor Love will have access to all papers and can make a universal decision<sup>1</sup>.

## **11.5 Grading the Quizzes**

Each quiz will be graded solely by Professor Love. A detailed answer sketch and grading rubric will be provided to you when grades are available, within 48 hours of the quiz deadline.

As noted above, Professor Love weights your stronger Quiz performance at 60% and your other Quiz at 40% in compiling your course grade.

## **11.6 Grading the Projects**

Some elements of each project will be graded by Professor Love, and others by the teaching assistants.

Students who cannot complete a project (either A or B) in a timely fashion will receive an incomplete grade until both Projects are completed. A stiff penalty will be applied to late work on projects.

Once the complete project instructions are available, please contact Professor Love directly if you are in any way concerned about your ability to complete a project on time.

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<sup>1</sup>I got this idea from Jessica Utts.

## **11.7 Late Assignments**

If an emergency arises that will keep you from timely completion of work that has a deadline, like a lab, minute paper, or the like, send an email directly to Professor Love saying the following:

I have an emergency that will keep me from completing (list things you're worried about completing) in a timely fashion. I will contact you again when I am able to make plans.

Professor Love will respond with “OK” and temporarily excuse you from things until you send a “re-connection” email to make plans for making up the work you missed, at which time he’ll evaluate the situation and together you can make that plan. At no time do you owe us any information about your health or the nature of the emergency.

## **11.8 Incomplete Grades**

Here is the official University policy:

The grade of Incomplete is assigned at the discretion of an instructor provided that:

1. There are extenuating circumstances, explained to the instructor before the assignment of the grade, which clearly justify an extension of time beyond the requirements established for other students in the class. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor of the circumstances preventing completion.
2. The student has been passing the course and only a small segment of the course remains to be completed, such as a term paper, for which the extenuating circumstances justify a special exception.

An Incomplete grade may not be assigned if a student is absent from a final examination, unless the dean has authorized the absence. Unauthorized absence from a final examination will result in a failing grade. When the student completes the work, the Incomplete is changed to an A, B, C, D, P, F, or NP.

All work for the incomplete grade must be made up and the change of grade recorded in the Office of the University Registrar by the date specified by the instructor, but no later than the last day of class in the semester following the one in which the Incomplete was received. A student who has a permanent Incomplete for a required course must retake the course in a later term. If the student cannot complete the work by the end of the following semester, he or she must petition for an extension which must be endorsed by the instructor, explain the reasons why the

work has not been completed, and include a new date for completion. Students will be allowed only one extension of no more than one additional semester to complete the work for an Incomplete grade.

# 12 General Policies

All Case Western Reserve University policies apply to this class, including those summarized below. To the extent that those policies are unclear, I would regard an appropriate code of conduct as mirroring [this one from the R Consortium](#).

Any concerns or questions regarding these general policies, the teaching assistants or the course itself should be directed to Professor Love, if at all possible.

## 12.1 Attendance

Things happen, and people occasionally cannot make it to class in person. For 431, we expect all students to attend at least 22 of the 25 sessions in person.

- If you need to miss a class session, or even two, just review the materials and move on, and please feel encouraged to ask for help.
- If you must miss **more than two classes** in a row, then it is your responsibility to email Professor Love as soon as possible to let him know.
  - An appropriate email would read “I am unable to attend class on [specific dates] and I will complete all necessary work while I am away.” No additional explanation is required.

## 12.2 Auditing

Enrolled students and teaching assistants are the only people permitted to attend the course, without special permission from Professor Love.

- I do not permit anyone to audit the course who has not previously taken it, without exception.

## **12.3 Recordings**

We aim to have video recordings available on [Canvas](#) after several class sessions.

- “Live” Zoom attendance can be a problem, in that remote students will not be able to interact with the class.
- Technical problems may occur during the semester with the recordings.
- You should assume that anything you say in class will be recorded.

## **12.4 University Required Language**

### **12.4.1 University Enrichment & Engagement**

It is the intent that all students regardless of their background and perspective be well-served by this class. Further, we intend to present material whose content is respectful and deliver it in a respectful manner. We expect that all students, instructors and guests will help foster an atmosphere of respect, trust and safety in the classroom.

If you have suggestions for how to make the class content or environment more respectful, or have specific incidents to report, please reach out to the instructor. If you are not comfortable reaching out to the instructor, feel free to reach out to someone else, such as the School of Medicine Graduate Education Office ([som-geo@case.edu](mailto:som-geo@case.edu)) or the [Office of Campus Enrichment and Engagement](#). More information on University policy and resources is available [on their website](#).

### **12.4.2 Disability Accommodations**

In accordance with federal law, if you have a documented disability, you may be eligible to request accommodations from Disability Resources. In order to be considered for accommodations you must first register with the Disability Resources office. Please contact their office to register at 216.368.5230 or [follow this link to get more information on how to begin the process](#). Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive.

### **12.4.3 Academic Integrity**

[Click here to obtain the PDF file describing Academic Integrity for Graduate Courses](#)

Here is the official policy of the University on Academic Integrity.

Any violation of the University's Code of Ethics will not be tolerated. All forms of academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, and obstruction are violations of academic integrity standards and will result in a minimum penalty of receiving a zero for the assignment, the potential for failing the entire course. Cheating includes copying from another's work, falsifying problem solutions or laboratory reports, or using unauthorized sources, notes or computer programs. Plagiarism includes the presentation, without proper attribution, of another's words or ideas from printed or electronic sources. It is also plagiarism to submit, without the instructor's consent, an assignment in one class previously submitted in another. Misrepresentation includes forgery of official academic documents, the presentation of altered or falsified documents or testimony to a university office or official, taking an exam for another student, or lying about personal circumstances to postpone tests or assignments. Obstruction occurs when a student engages in unreasonable conduct that interferes with another's ability to conduct scholarly activity. Destroying a student's computer file, stealing a student's notebook, and stealing a book on reserve in the library are examples of obstruction. In addition, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Academic Review Board for undergraduates or Senior Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, for Graduate Students.

#### **12.4.4 AI (Artificial Intelligence)**

Students at Case Western Reserve University are expected to uphold the highest ethical standards of academic conduct. Academic integrity addresses all forms of academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, obstruction, and submitting without permission work to one course that was completed for another course. Please review the complete academic integrity policy for additional information, including an overview of the processes & procedures for reporting academic misconduct.

In addition, we recommend that faculty clearly describe their course-specific expectations for students' use of AI tools.

Note that I have done this on an assignment-level basis.

Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor if they have any questions or concerns regarding the appropriate use of common/basic AI in this course.

Students are expected to use AI responsibly and critically evaluate the outputs of AI tools, ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethical considerations in their utilization.

Students can use basic AI tools for specific tasks approved by the instructor, such as grammar checking or citation formatting. Guidelines for AI usage will be provided to ensure alignment with course objectives and academic standards.

#### **12.4.5 Equity and Title IX**

Title IX of Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”) prohibits discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment, in education programs that receive federal funding. This includes providing support to anyone impacted by sex discrimination or sexual harassment. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for implementing Title IX and is in CWRU’s Office of Equity. The Title IX Coordinator is also responsible for making sure that the procedures in CWRU’s policy prohibiting sex discrimination and sexual harassment are followed and all persons are treated fairly and with respect. Members of the CWRU community and others should direct questions about the application of Title IX to situations impacting the CWRU community, and its educational programs and activities, to the Title IX Coordinator. Information on the Office of Equity and Title IX is located [on the Office of Equity webpage](#).

#### **12.4.6 CWRU Public Safety**

The Case Western Reserve University Division of Public Safety provides quality service, safety, and a positive educational experience for the campus community. Members of the CWRU community – students, faculty, staff, and guests – are encouraged to report all criminal actions, emergencies, or other public safety related incidents to CWRU Division of Public Safety. For an emergency, call 216-368-3333. For a non-emergency, call 216-368-3300. Members of the community are encouraged to [download the Spartan Safe app](#) which offers easy access to critical resources and safety tools.

### **12.5 Laptop and cell phone use**

Here is the official University policy:

“Although having a laptop in class opens up new learning possibilities for students, it can be used in ways that are inappropriate. It is easy for your laptop to become a distraction to you and to those around you. Laptops are to be used only when essential to the task at hand. Please turn off or silence all cell/smart phones, tablets, and other electronic devices for the duration of the course. Inappropriate uses will be noted and may affect the final grade.”

Professor Love adds that, in this class, the use of a laptop or other device is welcomed, and even encouraged, for taking notes on our slides, or following along with the presentation, or trying out ideas in R, but it is inappropriate for you to use such a machine for activities unrelated to the class during our time together. Silence your phone during class. The temptation to look at your phone or Facebook or email during class is nearly irresistible. Resist anyway, if only to avoid distracting your instructor and your fellow students.

Thank you.

## 13 Movies

Once you have read through this Syllabus, please e-mail Professor Love the poster for one of your favorite movies. Use the subject line: **431 Favorite Movie**. If he receives your poster by 9 AM Eastern time on Monday 2025-09-08, he will add some bonus credit to your class participation grade.

Thank you.

# 14 General Advice

My most important piece of general advice to people is to be kind. That's not always the thing I do as well as I'd like.



**The Meanest TA**  
@MeanestTA

Hell hath no fury like a full professor mildly inconvenienced.

11:32 AM · Jun 12, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

## 14.1 On Graduate School

For graduate students, I urge you to take as much advantage of this learning experience as you can. While I'll refer to some of the pieces below during the course, I've gathered a few favorites here.

1. From [matt.might.net...](#)
  - [12 Resolutions for Grad Students](#)
  - [How to get a great letter of recommendation](#)
  - [How to send and reply to email](#). You might also want to look at [Email Etiquette: Guidelines for Writing to Your Professors](#)
2. [Four Things You Should Do When You're Bored](#), on YouTube (the four things are Exercise / Read / Meditate / Find and Engage a Hobby with Passion). Also, [Get Up and Move. It May Make You Happier](#) by Gretchen Reynolds, in the *New York Times*, 2017-01-25.
3. [Why academics need to focus on structuring their time](#) from *University Affairs*.

4. Most people are really bad at meetings, including Professor Love. In a series of tweets, [Greg Wilson argues that](#) “the single most useful training you can give an adult is how to run a meeting and how to participate in someone else’s.” He then provides some nice tips in subsequent tweets, although the link provided there to a blog post is no longer working.
5. Some people need help taking notes. You might be interested in [Cornell Note Taking](#) or the [5 other methods described here](#).
6. You may be interested in the American Statistical Association, and its [This is Statistics](#) program.

## 14.2 On Seeking a Job

If I have a job or internship to offer, I'll be noisy about it in class. In the meantime, I'd consider joining the [American Statistical Association as a student member](#) and perhaps joining the [Greater Cleveland R Meetup Group](#).

Here are some gathered thoughts from other folks that you might enjoy:

1. [General Advice on an Academic Career Path](#) (which is filled with useful advice, especially for those studying biostatistics.)
2. [Advice for Applying to Data Science Jobs](#) from Emily Robinson
3. [Academic job search advice](#) from [matt.might.net](#)
4. [Career Advice for Data Scientists](#) was a panel at rstudio::conf 2020 focused on building a career around R.

# 15 On Writing

## 15.1 Writing, Presenting & Communicating

I write all the time. It's my job. It's yours, too. You'll do more of it here than you may be expecting in this class, and in life. So you'll need to take advantage of every opportunity you have to write more effectively tomorrow than you do today.

Here's what I find to be a compelling argument from George Cobb ...

If you want your work with data to make a difference, devote time and effort to choosing the words and pictures you use to present your evidence and conclusions. If you teach or supervise, seek to reward those - they who learn from you, and they who report to you – when they spend time crafting their message.

Think back to the last “report” you were expected to read. Is it easy to recall the main points? The answer, yes or no, depends not so much on the quality of the data, the effort, and the thinking that went into the report, nor on your own dutiful diligence in reading the report, but rather, and mainly, on whether the people who wrote the report had learned and practiced the skills of how to use words and pictures, first, to claim attention, and second, to claim retention: to deliver a message that sticks in the mind.

## 15.2 Campus Resources

The Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences provides a detailed list [on its website in the Resources section](#) of links to several important resources for improving your English and your communication skills. Also helpful is <https://case.edu/studentsuccess/academic-resources>. We strongly encourage you to take advantage of these resources.

## 15.3 Artificial Intelligence (ChatGPT)

We will discuss some of the flaws and opportunities of AI composition software as part of the Communication goals for this course. Using these tools without my permission puts your

academic integrity at risk. Our Academic Integrity Policy prohibits submitting AI-generated text as one's own, just as it prohibits claiming authorship for text that was originally produced by another person.

More on this course's policies regarding AI and Academic Writing can be found in Section Section [12.4.4](#).

## 15.4 Advice from Other People

1. [Preparing Manuscripts for Submission to Medical Journals: The Paper Trail](#) by H. Gilbert Welch, from *Effective Clinical Practice* in 1999.
  - Start early, focus on high-visibility components, develop a systematic approach to the body of the paper, finish strong.
  - Use [thinkchecksubmit](#) and [see this tweet](#) for some related suggestions when selecting a journal or publisher for your work.
2. [Writing a Scientific Paper in Four Easy Steps](#) from Claus Wilke at [The Serial Mentor blog](#).
3. [Rules to write a good research paper](#) from Daniel Lemire.
4. [Hey-here are some tips on communicating data and statistics!](#) from Andrew Gelman 2017-06-02.
5. [Writing Pet Peeves: Correctness, References, and Style](#) from Tamara Munzner.
6. Frank Harrell's [Checklist for Authors of Statistical Problems to Document and to Avoid](#)

## 15.5 A Few Tips from Professor Love

1. Statistics is a “getting the details right” business - we care deeply about details, and this applies to writing code or complete English sentences. RStudio has a spell-checker. To use it, click F7.
2. Nothing impresses us as much as a clear and concise argument, presented using well-written English sentences, effective and well-labeled figures and tables.
3. Don’t parrot back material that Professor Love wrote or said. State ideas in your own words. Stating them in my words is, technically, plagiarism.
4. Edit your more adventurous output; don’t present everything you know how to do in R, and don’t forget that someone is trying to read both your code and your results.
5. Make your work easy to evaluate. In responding to an assignment, be sure to answer the question that was asked, restating it as necessary.
6. Clearly label everything: graphs, tables, your answer to a specific question. Everything. Again, make your work easy to evaluate.
7. Simplify. Emphasize ideas in plain language. Avoid jargon. Use English well.

8. Data are plural. Use “the data **are** ...” rather than “the data *is* ...”
9. A paragraph must contain more than one sentence.
  
10. Don’t switch tenses. If you want to write in the present tense, stick to it throughout.
11. Don’t write or say random sample unless you used a random number generator. If you used haphazard sampling or convenience sampling, call it what it is, and indicate whether any problems could have cropped up as a result.
12. Similarly, don’t defend a method of data collection because it is random. Most of the time we want to represent some population, and a random sample is just one way to ensure that certain types of biases have a low probability of creeping in.
13. If you want to write that you used  $\alpha = 0.05$  as your significance level, then state that your results were obtained using a 95% confidence level, not a 95% confidence interval, unless you are actually interpreting a confidence interval.
  
14. If you find yourself in the appalling situation of writing about a  $p$ -value, then you should state something like:
  - [1] We’re using a 95% confidence level.
  - [2] We’re using a 5% significance level.
  
  - [3] We’re using  $\alpha = 0.05$ .
  
  - Don’t use more than one of these expressions.
  
15. Again, don’t use  $p$ -values in most settings, but if you must, refer to all  $p$ -values that are less than 0.001 or perhaps less than 0.0001 as  $p < 0.001$ , rather than, for instance,  $p = 0.00000001$  or, worse yet,  $p = 0$ . In a similar vein, write all  $p$ -values that exceed 0.99 as  $p > 0.99$  instead of, for instance,  $p = 1$ .
16. To the extent possible, don’t use **computer-ese** to label variables, plots or tables. R and Quarto allow you to change the labels on graphs and tables to meaningful things – do so. Use meaningful abbreviations, as necessary, explaining what they mean on the first usage.
17. When in doubt, err on the side of clarity. Clear thinking leads to clear writing.