

Hey class,

I'm looking forward to getting started with the course and meeting each of you very soon! Over the next semester, we'll take a comprehensive look at Data Science as a hybrid field of Computer Science and Statistics. We'll discuss its basic concepts and develop the skills necessary to conduct independent data analysis that will likely serve you all well in your respective careers. The world runs on data, and the ability to work with and communicate about data is paramount in the modern workforce. Besides gaining marketable career skills, your understanding of data analysis will spill over into your personal lives, from perceiving analytical bias in news articles to noticing trends in your discretionary spending. I hope that this class will be the launching point of a lifelong (perhaps career-based) interest in analytics for some of you and that it will at least not be a total snooze-fest for the rest of you.

This is my third semester teaching this course, and each time I've come out with lots of ideas on how to make the course more engaging for the next cohort of students. However, the student is inevitably the one with the power to choose whether to engage with the subject. If you put forth a reasonable effort into this class, you will find it rewarding and useful.

I have a couple of initial points for you all as we begin:

- This class will rely on online communication primarily (and perhaps exclusively at times), so be sure to check D2L and your student email regularly.
- While the class is registered as in-person (in GC-2A03), there will be an option to attend synchronously online. It will happen from 5-6 pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. If you have a recurring issue with any of the regular class times, let me know, and we'll work something out. Attendance is still mandatory and can have a material impact on your final grade (a university policy).

- I've designed the course such that you shouldn't have any out-of-pocket expenses. The textbook is free and open to the public at the following link: [R for Data Science](#)
- I will be adding preliminary material to the D2L section of this course tomorrow, so that by the first class meeting (Friday 1/22 at 5 pm), you should have all the meta-content (e.g., the syllabus, schedule, etc.) that you will need for the duration of the course. I will continue to add new articles and assignments as we work our way through the course.
- Because I work full-time during the day, I tend to schedule office hours by appointment. If you want to meet with me, reach out, and we will find the soonest time that fits our schedules. Remember that you are paying for my time, so don't be bashful about scheduling meetings.

And lastly, if you need to reach me:

- Non-urgent: email me at [dhowell@oru.edu](mailto:dhowell@oru.edu)
- Urgent: text or call my cell at 318-278-3442

See you all soon!

Prof. Howell (AKA, Drew)