IR312: Introduction to Data Analysis

University of Southern California
Spring 2026

- Location: DMC 152
- Days: Mondays & Wednesdays
- Time: 5:00pm–6:20pm

- Instructor: Valentina Gonzalez-Rostani (she/her/hers)
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- Office: DMC 303

Office Hours & Resources

Office Hours: Monday 1:30-3:30 PM (make an appointment here)

Course resources: Brightspace

1 Course Overview and Goals

Welcome to IR 312! This course will introduce you to the fundamentals of data analysis in social science, with a focus on applications in international relations and political science. We will take a hands-on, flipped-classroom approach – meaning you'll prepare with readings and tutorials at home, and we'll use class time for interactive activities, coding practice, and discussion. No prior statistics or programming experience is required – we'll start from the basics in a supportive environment. By the end of the semester, you will gain confidence using data to answer real-world questions and contribute to evidence-based discussions.
We will explore questions such as:

- How can we measure income inequality across different countries and over time?
- What factors predict election outcomes – do things like candidates' appearance or wealth matter?
- What drives minority mobilization beyond electoral participation, and what are its consequences?
- Do policy interventions (like cash transfer programs) effectively reduce poverty in developing countries?
- Do electoral rules influence redistribution within countries?
- What factors lead democracies to wage war against other democracies?
- Does assassinating a country's leader change the probability of war?
- Do female legislators provide more public goods than male legislators?

To answer questions like these, social scientists and policy-makers rely on quantitative data. In this class, you will learn how to analyze data, draw statistical inferences, and apply causal reasoning to real-world political and social issues. These skills – often referred to as data analysis or data science – are in high demand in research, policy, and industry. We will cover core topics including data manipulation, visualization, statistical inference (hypothesis testing and confidence intervals), regression analysis, and causal inference. Through hands-on coding in R and engaging examples from around the world, you will learn not just theory but also how to communicate key findings effectively.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Understand and explain how political scientists use theory and evidence (i.e., data)
- Conduct data analysis and visualization using professional tools such as R and RStudio.
- Understand uncertainty – Quantify uncertainty in estimates using confidence intervals and understand basic probability concepts behind statistical inference
- Evaluate causal claims and identify its challenges

Throughout the course, we emphasize a practical, learning-by-doing approach. This means you will get plenty of practice with real datasets and examples. Your questions and participation are encouraged – we are creating a friendly, inclusive atmosphere where we learn from mistakes and help each other improve. Don't hesitate to ask for help or clarification at any time.

2 Course Format: Flipped Classroom and Hands-On Learning

The course is organized into four main parts. Part I introduces social science, types of inference, and probability. Part II focuses on causality, emphasizing randomized experiments and observational studies. Part III provides tools for description, measurement, and sampling. Part IV introduces the concept of random disturbances and covers statistical methods for hypothesis testing.
Flipped Classroom: This course uses a flipped model, which means you prepare before class, and we use class meetings for active learning. Here's how it works:

- **Before each class**: Complete the assigned readings.
- **During class**: We will spend some time on traditional lecturing. Instead, class sessions will feature short reviews of key concepts, followed by coding exercises, group problem-solving, and discussions. You will frequently work in pairs or small groups to tackle mini-projects or problem set questions. This is a time to apply what you learned in the prep and to clarify anything you found confusing.
- **After class**: You will consolidate your learning by completing take-home problem sets and working on your project milestones. Start assignments early and practice a bit each day – consistent engagement will make the material much easier. We will also use an online forum where you can ask questions between classes, share helpful tips, and get help from peers and the instructor.

Why flipped? Learning by doing is very effective – by actively analyzing data yourself, you'll retain concepts better than by only listening to lectures. This format also allows us to cater to different skill levels: if you grasp the prep material quickly, in-class work will challenge you to go further; if you found the prep tough, class time is your chance to get unstuck with help from us. The key is to come prepared and ready to engage. If you ever struggle with the prep, just do your best and make note of questions – we will address them together in class.
Coding in R: All our data analysis will be done in R, a free and powerful statistical programming language. We will use R in RStudio, a user-friendly interface. No prior coding experience is needed – we will start from the ground up. By the end of week 1, you'll write your first R commands, and throughout the course you'll grow more comfortable. R is widely used in academia and industry, so these skills will be valuable beyond this class. We will provide resources for learning R, including guided exercises (e.g. swirl lessons) and reference code from the textbook. Feel free to experiment and even make mistakes – that's how coding skills develop.

3 Course Materials

Textbooks (required)

For this course, we will mostly use the following books:

- `DSS` - Data Analysis for Social Science: A Friendly Introduction, Kosuke Imai and Elena Llaudet [available in canvas]
- `TCD` Thinking Clearly with Data: A Guide to Quantitative Reasoning and Analysis. Princeton University Press, Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan and Anthony Fowler. 2021. [available through the library]

Additional Readings

We will supplement the textbook with application readings – short articles or research papers that show how the methods are used to address real problems. These will be provided as links or PDFs. Examples include pieces from The Washington Post's Monkey Cage blog, academic studies, and case studies from around the world. (See the weekly schedule for specific readings.) These are chosen to illustrate the week's topic in an interesting, relevant way and to expose you to diverse global cases.
Occasionally, I will post tutorials to clarify particularly tricky concepts or demonstrate extra examples (e.g. instructions on how to install R).

Optional Resources (not required, but useful)

- `QSS` - Quantitative Social Science: An Introduction, Kosuke Imai. 2018. [available through the library]
- `FPSR` The Fundamentals of Political Science Research. New York: Cambridge University Press. Kellstedt, Paul M. and Guy D. Whitten. 2018.[available through the library]
- `EFF` - The effect: An introduction to research design and causality. Huntington-Klein, N., 2021. Chapman and Hall/CRC. [available online]
- `RDS` R for Data Science, An excellent, free online book focusing on data manipulation and visualization in R (using the tidyverse approach) [available online]

- `ORT` Online R tutorials, the R community is very supportive. Websites like UCLA's IDRE R guides can help. [available online] or StackOverflow

Software

R and RStudio: Both are free. Please install them on your computer by Week 1.

4 Assignments and Grading

Your final grades will be calculated using the following weights:

Quizzes	50%
Coding	10%
Participation	15%
Final Project (Poster)	25%

The following policies apply to calculating grades:

- Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped from the calculation of the final grade.

Type of Assignments

- **Class Participation**: Active participation is expected given the interactive nature of the course. This means attending all sessions, completing the prep work, and engaging with class activities. Most sessions will include short tasks based on the day's content, which you'll complete in groups but submit individually. These tasks count as your participation. You'll also have chances to contribute through warm-up discussions, quizzes, or written exercises. Participation is not about having the right answers, but about showing consistent effort. If you attend, prepare, and complete the tasks, you will receive full credit.

- **Coding Problem Sets**: We will have approximately six problem sets throughout the semester (roughly one every two weeks) to practice the skills we learn. These are essentially homework assignments involving data analysis in R. Problem sets will ask you to analyze provided datasets or answer questions by writing R code and interpreting the results. Coding assignments will **not** be graded for accuracy; they will be graded based on completion. We will post them so you can practice and self-evaluate, and model answers will be shared one minute after the deadline.

- **Quizzes**: We will have four quizzes, approximately one every four weeks. Each quiz will be conducted online, open-material, and you will have a 24-hour window to complete it. The quizzes will include short-answer questions and small data analysis tasks (e.g., interpreting an R output or reasoning through a hypothesis test). If you have kept up with the readings and problem sets, the quizzes should be very manageable. They are designed as checkpoints to help ensure you're on track and comfortable with the foundational material.

- **Final Project - Poster**: You will complete a final research project, applying the tools learned in class to a question of your choice. You will then present your work in a poster format at the end of the semester (in a session open to the class and invited guests). This project is an opportunity to explore a topic that interests you, find and analyze real data, and practice communicating your findings visually and orally. You can work individually or

in teams of up to three. The project will be broken down into milestones to keep you on track:

- **Pre-Proposal (Week 4)**: We will dedicate class time to discuss your project ideas and the data you are considering using as you prepare to write the one-page proposal.
- **Proposal (Week 5)**: Submit a short proposal (1 page) outlining your research question, why it's important, the dataset(s) you plan to use, and which methods from class might apply.
- **Data Checkpoint (Week 8) 5%**: By this week, you should have your data collected and cleaned. You will turn in a brief progress report or preliminary analysis (e.g. some summary statistics or initial visualizations) and any challenges you're facing. We will have a in-class "data workshop" where you can troubleshoot issues and get peer feedback.
- **Preliminary Results (Week 11) 5%**: Submit a draft of your main results – this could be a few tables or graphs with explanations.
- **Poster Presentation (Finals week) 15%**: Create a research poster summarizing your study (introduction to your question, brief background, data and methods, key results with visuals, and conclusion). We will have a poster session where you display your poster and discuss it with classmates and faculty. This is meant to be a celebratory, low-stress event – a chance to show what you've accomplished! Posters will be graded on content, clarity, visual effectiveness, and your ability to explain your work.

Meeting the checkpoints is important – it will greatly improve your final product and ensures you don't rush everything at the last minute. You are welcome to use international or local data, historical or current, as long as you can apply quantitative analysis. If you're unsure about a topic, come talk to me and we'll brainstorm. This project is your chance to be a researcher – have fun with it and show us what you've learned.

Grading policies

Grading Scale: Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter Grade	Numerical Point Range
A	95–100
A–	90–94
B+	87–89
B	83–86
B–	80–82
C+	77–79
C	73–76
C–	70–72
D+	67–69
D	63–66
D–	60–62
F	59 and below

Re-grade

- You have one week after you receive your graded work to request a re-grade. You need to include a written statement about why you think your work needs to be re-graded and which

part(s) I should re-grade. Remember that after re-evaluating your work, your grade may remain the same, go up or go down.

Regarding Late Assignments

- No late coding assignment or attendance task will be accepted.
- Because we will drop your lowest quiz score, no make-up quizzes will be accepted. Also, coding assignments and exam model answers will be uploaded one minute after the deadline, so neither late assignments nor exams will be accepted. For special accommodations, see sections below.
- Late papers/drafts: Late papers will be penalized 10% points per day including weekends and holidays.
- No Late penalization in the case of an emergency or medical excuse. In order for the penalty for tardiness to be waived, you must contact me before the due date. I will be as flexible as I can to accommodate you.

Regarding Special Situations
I am open to being flexible should life events arise that make it hard for you to keep up with the class. Please note that to be able to support you, I need to know about the problem when it starts, not after it has already derailed your ability to keep up with class.

5 Course Policies

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).
This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.
Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.
Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion. For more information about academic integrity see the Student Handbook, the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.
Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Use of AI and Online Tools

I encourage you to use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) and other online resources such as Stack Overflow to support your learning in this class—particularly for troubleshooting code, brainstorming ideas, or proofreading your work. Learning how to effectively use these tools is a valuable skill, and I am happy to provide guidance during office hours or after class.
Please keep the following in mind:

- AI and online tools may be used to assist with troubleshooting, idea generation, and revision, but not to complete full assignments on your behalf. The goal is to support—not replace—your own problem-solving and learning process.
- Prompts or questions with minimal effort will often yield poor-quality answers. Take the time to refine your queries and critically evaluate the responses you receive.
- Do not assume that AI-generated or crowd-sourced information is accurate. You are responsible for checking the correctness of any material you include in your work.
- For any assignment where you use AI or external help (including code from sites like Stack Overflow), include a brief paragraph at the end explaining what tools or sources you used, how you used them, and why.
- Attribution is required. Failure to disclose the use of AI or online resources may be considered a violation of academic integrity.
- Be thoughtful about when and how to use these tools. Some tasks are best done independently to reinforce your skills and understanding.

Please ask me if you are unsure whether a specific use of AI or other external tools is appropriate. All work submitted should reflect your individual mastery of the course material unless explicitly designated as a group project. As a reminder, submitting work written by others or generated by tools without disclosure is considered plagiarism and may result in a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, as well as disciplinary action from the university.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation, is not allowed. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).
Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is also prohibited. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information that has been distributed to students or in any way displayed for use in relation to the class—whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Inclusivity and Respect

Our classroom is a safe and inclusive space for everyone. I am committed to creating an environment where a diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences is not only respected but seen as an asset to learning. Please treat your classmates with courtesy and respect during discussions and group work. Disagreement is part of academic debate, but it must be expressed civilly – no personal attacks or derogatory remarks. Help foster a climate where all students feel comfortable participating. Harassment or discrimination of any kind (whether based on race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, etc.) is not tolerated. If you experience or witness any form of bias, please reach out – you can talk to me, or contact USC's Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) to report concerns and get support.

6 Curriculum Outline / Schedule:

Detailed Weekly Schedule

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings	Assignments / Notes
1	Jan 12, 14	Intro to Social Science	DSS 1, TCD 1–3	Install R; Canvas tour
2	Jan 21	Probability, Data Types	DSS 6	Practice 1 **No class Jan 19 – MLK Day**
Quiz 1 – January 26				
3	Jan 28	Causality I: Counterfactuals	DSS 2	DAGs; Coding Assignment 1
4	Feb 2, 4	Causality II: Experiments	DSS 2 (cont'd)	HW 1 Due; Randomization
5	Feb 9, 11	Measurement & Concepts	DSS 3, TCD 4	Practice 2
6	Feb 18	Descriptive & Visualization	TCD 9, DSS Examples	**No class Feb 16 – Presidents' Day**
Quiz 2 – February 18				
7	Feb 23, 25	Correlation & Regression I	DSS 4	HW 2 Due
8	Mar 2, 4	Regression II: Inference	DSS 5	Practice: Linear Models
9	Mar 9, 11	Hypothesis Testing	DSS 6–7	HW 3 Due
Quiz 3 – March 9				
Spring Recess – No Class - Mar 16–18				
10	Mar 23, 25	Multivariate Regression	DSS 7	Practice: Confounding; SRP Intro Draft
11	Mar 30, Apr 1	Omitted Variable Bias	DSS 7 (cont'd)	HW 4 Due
12	Apr 6, 8	Internal & External Validity	Supplementary Readings	Poster Planning
Quiz 4 – April 6				
13	Apr 13, 15	Project Development	Peer Materials	Share Drafts; Peer Feedback
14	Apr 20, 22	Review & Wrap-Up	–	Poster Submission
Quiz 5 – April 22				
15	Apr 27	Posters improvement	–	HW 5 Due; Final Q&A
Final Poster Session – April 29				

Detailed Schedule

Week 1

- Required
  - DSS 1
  - TCD 1
  - R Installation guide
  - Is Everyone a Little Bit Racist - The New York Times 8-28-2014
- Optional
  - FPSR 1: Intro Social Science
  - QSS 1: extra help with R
  - EFF 1 & 2: research design and research question
- Required
  - DSS 1
  - TCD 2 & 3
  - R Markdown, The Definitive Guide - Chapter 2 (up to section 2.6).
  - Why do we analyze data in Social Science? by Elena Llaudet and Kosuke Imai.
- Optional
  - FPSR 2: especially useful to think about the short research project.

Week 2

- Required
  - DSS 6
  - How to Think Like an Epidemiologist - The New York Times 8-4-2020
- Optional
  - FPSR 7: Probability and statistical inference

Week 3-4

- Required
  - DSS 2
  - Enos, R.D., 2014. Causal effect of intergroup contact on exclusionary attitudes. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111(10), pp.3699-3704.
  - Random Acts: What Happens When You Approach Global Poverty as a Science Experiment - Slate, 3-26-2014.
  - What would happen if we randomly gave $1,000 to poor families? Now we know. The Washington Post. 12-3-2019

- Optional
  - FPSR 3 & 4: Research design and causal relationship
  - QSS 2: extra help with R

Week 5-6

- Required
  - DSS 3
  - TCD 4 & 9
  - Campante, F. and Yanagizawa-Drott, D., 2015. Does religion affect economic growth and happiness? Evidence from Ramadan. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 130(2), pp.615-658.
  - Measuring Ramadan, New York Times, 7-13-2014.
  - Is There a Connection Between Undocumented Immigrants and Crime? The New York Times, 5-13-2019
- Optional
  - FPSR 4-6: measuring concepts, and data.
  - QSS 2.5-2.6 & 3: extra help with R and data description.
  - EFF 3 & 4: describing variables and relationships.

Week 7

- Required
  - DSS 4
  - TCD 5
  - Polling Problems and Why We Should Still Trust (Some) Polls. The Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy, Vanderbilt University, 11-01-2021.
- Optional
  - EFF 13: regression analysis
  - QSS 4.1-4.2.3: extra help with R

Week 8

- Required
  - DSS 5
- Optional
  - FPSR 9: Regression analysis
  - QSS 4.2.4-4.2.63: extra help with R

Week 9-11

- Required
  - DSS 7
  - TCD 10
- Optional
  - FPSR 10: multiple regression
  - QSS 7.2: inference, hypothesis testing
  - EFF 13.1.3: Hypothesis testing in OLS
- Required
  - DSS 7
  - TCD 10
- Optional
  - QSS 7.3: Uncertainty in regression
- Required
  - Gerber, A.S. and Green, D.P., 2000. The effects of canvassing, telephone calls, and direct mail on voter turnout: A field experiment. American political science review, 94(3), pp.653-663.
  - What Do We Know About British Attitudes Toward Immigration? A Pedagogical Exercise of Sample Inference and Regression

Week 14

By this deadline, you must complete all empirical analyses and prepare the necessary tables and figures to display your findings. Using these results, create a poster that succinctly describes the substantive and methodological justifications for your study, the techniques employed, and the outcomes you obtained. Your poster, formatted in A0 size (33.1 $\times$ 46.8 inches), should be uploaded to Blackboard in PDF format by noon.
Additionally, you are required to submit an initial draft of your report electronically to Blackboard by noon. This document should include the title, abstract, introduction, and all tables and figures, each accompanied by clear and informative captions.

Week 15

The poster session will take place from noon to 2 pm in Wallace 300. During the session, faculty members and fellow students will provide feedback on your poster. You should incorporate this feedback into your final report. Additionally, all posters will be shared online after the session.

7 University Academic and Support Systems

Students and Disability Accommodations:
USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.
Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:
To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the Financial Aid Office webpage for undergraduate- and graduate-level SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.
Support Systems:

- **Counseling and Mental Health:** (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call. Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
- **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** Dial 988 for 24/7 calls and texts. Offers free and confidential support for people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress across the U.S.
- **CARE-SC:** (213) 740-9355 (WELL) – 24/7/365 on call. Offers confidential advocacy, prevention education, and professional counseling to address gender- and power-based harm.
- **Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX):** (213) 740-5086. Provides resources and reporting options related to harassment, discrimination, and protected class rights.
- **Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment:** (213) 740-2500. Reports are directed to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX for appropriate investigation and support.
- **USC Campus Support and Intervention:** (213) 740-0411. Helps students and families address complex personal, financial, and academic issues affecting student success.
- **USC Emergency Information:** emergency.usc.edu. Offers updates and plans in the event of an emergency that disrupts campus access.
- **USC Department of Public Safety:**
  - Emergency: UPC (213) 740-4321, HSC (323) 442-1000
  - Non-Emergency: UPC (213) 740-6000, HSC (323) 442-1200
- **Office of the Ombuds:** UPC (213) 821-9556 / HSC (323) 442-0382. A confidential place to explore and resolve university-related issues with a trained Ombuds.
- **Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice:** (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu. Offers confidential Lifestyle Redesign services to help students improve well-being and academic performance.

Lastly, I want you to know that my door is always open. If something is going on that impacts your performance in class, please communicate with me. Whether it's an illness, personal challenge, or you just need an extension on an assignment, reach out – we can usually work something out. I am invested in your learning and well-being. Let's have a great semester learning how to make sense of data!

8 Free Suggestions

The class is designed to give you tools for explaining and performing social science research using quantitative methods. This requires active participation on your side. We will be there to help you, but you should work independently and with your peers, following some comments about how to prepare for this course.

1. Read the material and watch the recorded lecture in advance. During the class, we will have a short review of the overall idea, but we will go at a fast pace. If you are not familiar with the material before, you will find it hard to follow.

2. Organize well the materials of the class. Have a folder of the course, do not let data, slides, rmd files sleep in downloads. Learn about file management will be useful not just for the course.

3. Attend all classes and be actively engaged. We will work in groups. I will propose exercises related to the lecture (in-class lecture) and R practices. At the end of the class, you should submit the practices, and we will orally discuss the answers (do not be afraid to commit mistakes). If there is extra time, you can start working on the assignment. Also, the group assignment aims to be a good opportunity to learn from others, and explain and help others. Take advantage of learning with and from your peers too. I will visit every group and help you too.

4. Ask questions –do not get stuck– and participate. There will be plenty of opportunities to ask questions, such as canvas discussion boards, during class, and during office hours. Your questions will not just help your understanding; they will also be helpful for your classmates. In this class, there are no "dumb" questions or comments. We will learn from mistakes and help each other.

5. Do assignments and practices. The books have many exercises that you can do as extra practice. Also, it would help if you started the homework early, so there are more opportunities to ask for help. I strongly suggest having study groups. It is a great idea to help each other and ensure you keep up the work. Remember to write your answers. Working together does not mean copying and pasting solutions. You can think of the exercises together, but you must understand and complete them. Finally, review the model answers. I know that by that time, you have already submitted your assignment, but I will include notes and suggestions that you may need for later homeworks.

6. Use the optional resources that there are available. They will help add examples or explain similar topics but in a different way. We all learn with different styles so that they may help you.

7. Come to my office hours. We can review the material if there are questions, discuss strategies to keep up with the workload of the course, look at the HW, or solve extra exercises.

8. Follow up, once you submit assignments, check the model answers, and make sure you understand them. Ask for help from your classmates or the instructor if you have questions.

9. Outside the classroom: read the news, and discuss with your friends by applying concepts from the class. Try to link what you have learned with the world around you. You can bring to the class news and anecdotes about this learning process. Think about political problems that are important for society. How can you study them? Why is it hard?

10. Enjoy the course!

9 Acknowledgements

Inspired by the previous versions of this course offered by Professors Jude Hays and Matt Blackwell.