Public Opinion and Policy

POLSCI 4SS3

Winter 2023

Prof. Gustavo Diaz

Department of Political Science

McMaster University

popw23.gustavodiaz.org

Welcome!

This course is about **quantitative research designs** applied to **public opinion and policy**

- **Quantitative:** Data analysis using statistics and statistical programming software

- **Research design:** Thinking about how research is conducted

Welcome!

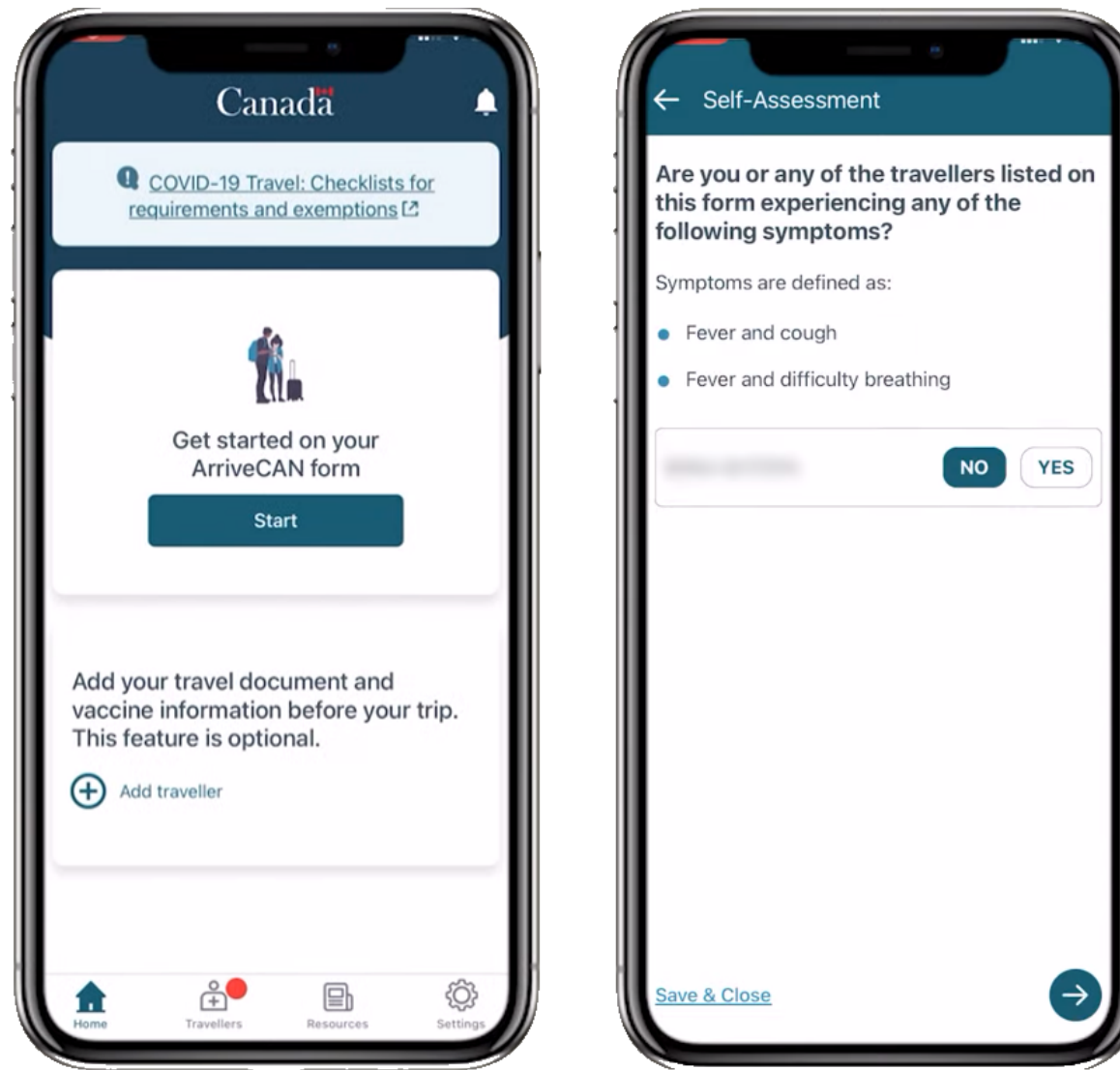This course is about **quantitative research designs** applied to **public opinion and policy**

- **Public opinion:** Views among the general[1] public

- **(Public) policy:** Government actions and how to carry them

1. Sometimes not so general

Why public opinion and policy?

- Both are important for the operation of government and adjacent organizations

- Why *together*?

- Both are important and difficult/expensive to get right

- Minimize mistakes **before** conducting a study

Was this a mistake?

No wrong answers!

Content warning ☠

- We will rely heavily on **math** and **statistics** to think about the properties of a research design

- You will be asked to:

  - Read technical writing

  - Understand and explain statistical concepts

  - Apply them in writing and coding

  - Write a statistics-heavy final project

Materials

Course website

popw23.gustavodiaz.org

Public Opinion and Policy   Syllabus   Schedule   Assignments   Content   Resources   Avenue   ☁   🔍

Public Opinion and Policy

POLSCI 4SS3 – Winter 2023 – McMaster University

Welcome!

This course explores quantitative research designs to answer questions about public opinion and policy in academia, government, and industry. In this website you will find all the course materials. Assignments must be submitted through Avenue.

Instructor

- 👤 Dr. Gustavo Diaz
- 🏛 Kenneth Taylor Hall 711
- ✉ diazg2@mcmaster.ca
- 🗓 Schedule a meeting

Course details

- 📅 Wednesdays
- 🕐 8:30–11:20
- 📍 Kenneth Taylor Hall B121
- 🗓 January 11–April 12, 2023

Contact

Send an email or schedule a meeting. I usually respond to emails within 24 hours. Please schedule meetings at least 8 hours in advance.

Required reading

book.declaredesign.org

- Blair, Graeme, Alexander Coppock, and Macartan Humphreys. 2022. *Research Design: Declaration, Diagnosis, Redesign*. Forthcoming at Princeton University Press

- **FREE ONLINE. DO NOT BUY**

- Chapters are short but include math and code

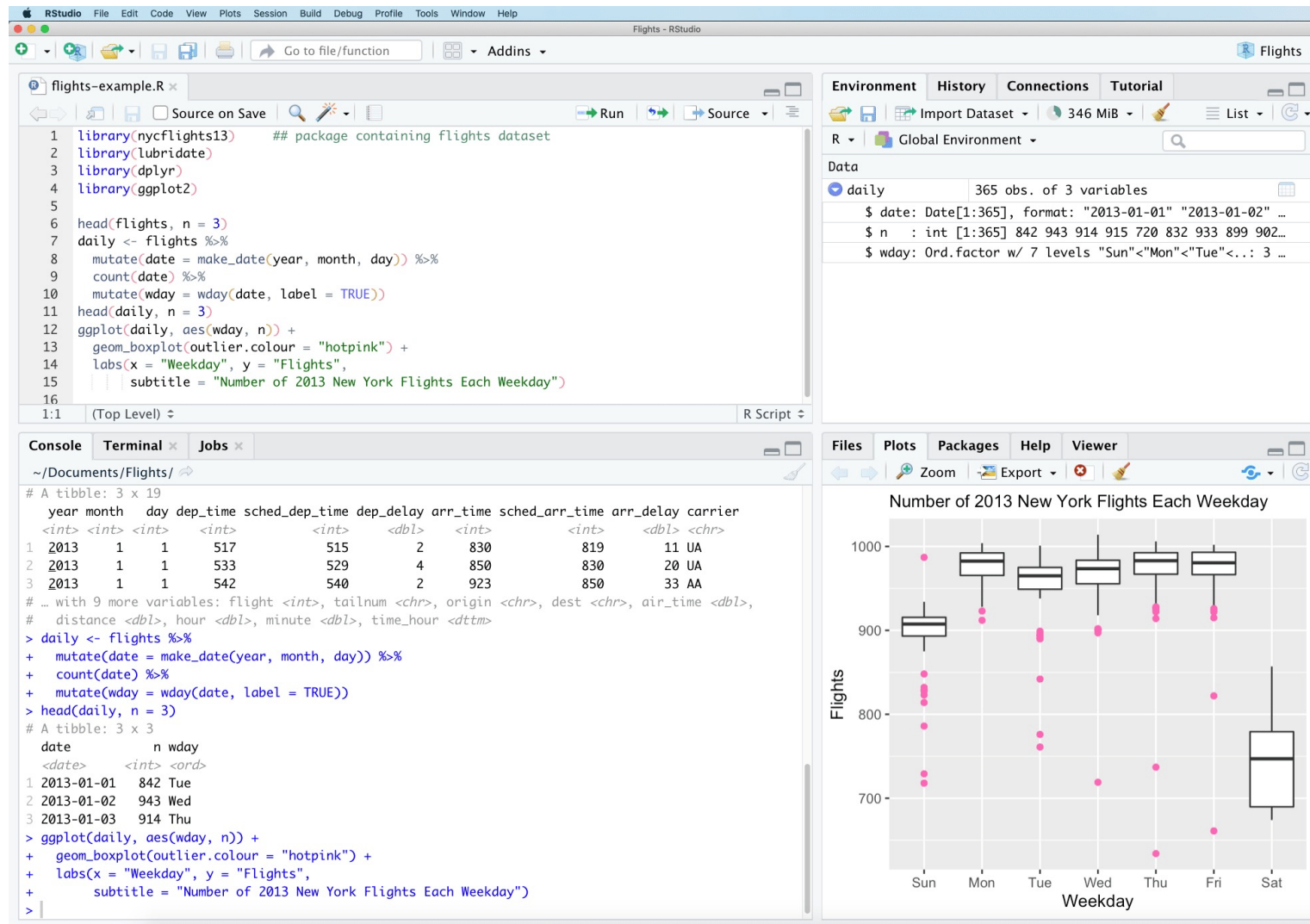- Read 1-3 sections + 1-2 research articles per week

Suggested reading

r4ds.had.co.nz

- Grolemund, Garret and Hadley Wickham. 2017. *R for Data Science*. O'Reilly Media Inc

- **ALSO FREE ONLINE. DO NOT BUY**

- Good to consult while working on lab assignments

Software

R and RStudio

Computer access

- You will need a computer to work on during our weekly meetings and beyond

- R + RStudio works on most laptops and has a cloud option

- See popw23.gustavodiaz.org/resources.html for installation guides

- Computers in the classroom should have the most recent version

- Computer labs open to students whenever courses are not scheduled ↗

Evaluation

Assignment	Percent
Attendance and participation	10%
Weekly lab assignments (best 10)	30% (3% each)
Response papers (best 3)	30% (10% each)
Final project meetings	10%
Final project: Pre-analysis plan	20%

Schedule

Semester at a glance

- **First half:** Focus on designs for public opinion (surveys)

- **Second half:** Focus on public policy (experiments, RCTs, AB testing)

- Weekly **reading** and **lab assignments**

- Choose when to write **response papers** (at least 3)

- Schedule at least **two** final project meetings (before and after mid-term recess)

Class meeting

- Brief lecture (< 30 min)

- Discussion (~ 40 min)

- Break (10 min)

- Lab (Remaining time)

Tips

Doing well in this course

- Content is cumulative. Stay engaged!

- Work with others, especially on coding

- Come to class prepared to work backwards from **findings** to **research design choices**

- See also popw23.gustavodiaz.org/resources.html

Stay in touch!

- 🏛 Kenneth Taylor Hall 711

- ✉ diazg2@mcmaster.ca

- 📅 https://calendly.com/diazg/student-hours

Lab

Take home part: Research interests survey

- Link available before the end of today

- Due on Friday, January 13, at 5 PM

- I will use this to create group categories that you will sign up for

Now: Install and play around with R

popw23.gustavodiaz.org/resources.html