

STATISTICS IN THE REAL WORLD: ESSAY 2  
Jo Hardin

Your essay will explore how people make decisions about choices involving risk. When you do something risky, how do you calculate that risk? How do numbers inform your choices? In your own life, what are your levels of risk tolerance? Do you have personal or inherent biases? Why is it that each of us interprets the same set of numbers differently? Do your biases change how you make decisions?

The exploratory essay (“Listening to the World”) will allow you to examine a particular question of risk from at least six different perspectives, none of which—for this essay—are your own, and come to some conclusion about the nature and complexity of that risk. Your task will be to gather six opinions / perspectives associated with some question about risk. There are no boundaries for where the six perspectives come from, it might be your roommate, someone on twitter, *The New York Times*, or *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.<sup>1</sup>

The structure of the paper is to set up the question of risk at the very outset (the risk described should be the same risk for all six perspectives). The bulk of the essay will detail the six perspectives (**none** of which are your perspective). The end of the essay will contain a thesis statement which ties together what you have gotten out of the exercise listening to others describe their decision making choices. 800 - 1000 words (ish).

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pick a specific question about risk that requires a decision to be made.
2. Find six different opinions or perspectives on that topic of risk / decision.
3. Listen carefully to the perspectives and write an essay where you’ve given them each the space they need to develop. Some will need more space, others will need less space.
4. The thesis statement should come from the perspectives in the paper. What do you learn from listening? What conclusions / observations can you gather? The thesis statement goes at the end in this paper! Bonkers.

ASSIGNMENT TIMELINE

**Micro-essay.** Provide your own take on the risk question. The micro-essay is the place to report on all your personal opinions related to the essay. You won’t get a chance to share your personal opinions in the full essay as it is a listening and exploring exercise. Be sure to explain to the reader what the risk in question is. 500 words maximum.

*Tuesday, October 12, midnight to Sakai.*

**Version 1.** This is a complete and polished essay. Your thesis statement (which goes after the perspectives) should tie together the essay; ideally the thesis will be the sentiment which the reader falls into after having listened to the different perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup>Thanks to Gizem Karaali and Kara Wittman for their ideas and suggestions for the essay prompt.

*Tuesday, October 19, midnight to Sakai.*

**Peer review.** Groups of three. Same format as Essay 1.

*Thursday, October 21.*

**Essay conference.** Please arrange to meet with me or with Chris Meng to discuss your essay. If you didn't meet me for Essay 1 then you meet with me for Essay 2; if you didn't meet with Chris for Essay 1, then you meet with Chris for Essay 2. You may also arrange to meet me or Chris at other times in the process, check our schedules.

*Monday, October 25 - Wednesday, October 27.*

**Version 2.** This is a complete and polished essay. The thesis statement should come together at the end of the paper.

*Thursday, October 28, midnight to Sakai.*

#### ANNOYING FORMATTING DETAILS

Really annoying requirements that will again make it easier to read many papers:

- Identify your overall thesis (the core argument around which the entire essay is organized) **and bold-face it.**
- Identify the topic sentence of each paragraph and underline or *italicize* it.
- Name the file you upload to Sakai like this: Paper#.LastName.doc, as in Paper2.Gallup.doc.
- Be sure that your name, title of the paper, and date are on the manuscript itself.
- Double-spaced with 12 point type and at least 1 inch margins to write comments in.
- Any reference / citation formatting is fine, but please be consistent. Be sure to include references for all the perspectives you write about.
- Print a word-count at the end of your paper.