Best Practices for the Political Scientist

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Fall 2015

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 - Helps you in six months (or tomorrow)

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- Bonus: plain text files are usually much smaller than their Word/pdf counterparts

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- ► These source files (for example, .R for R scripts or .do for Stat do-files) should be liberally commented
- Comments explain what you are doing to your future self, collaborators, and others

Comment example

```
# This code creates Fig 1
# I use the mtcars dataset (included with R)
library(ggplot2)
ggplot(mtcars, aes(mpg, wt)) +
   geom_point() +
   geom_smooth(method="lm") # Adds OLS line with SEs
ggsave("fig/fig1.pdf")
```

Save this code snippit as fig1.R (or similar)

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 - The paper itself (document.tex or similar)
 - the script to create the figure (fig1.R or similar)
- ▶ What if we could combine these to have everything in one easy-to-read file?
 - ▶ This is what literate programming is all about!

Literate programming example (using knitr and LATEX)

\section{Introduction to Literate Programming} This is an example paragraph, written in \LaTeX. Using knitr, we can include R code in the following manner I can reference the figure number by calling ref: Figure \ref{fig:mpg-and-weight}.

% NOTE: updating that figure with x^2 doesn't change it \begin{figure} \centering <<fig1plot, echo=FALSE>>= # Starts R code, labels it `fig1 # I use the mtcars dataset (included with R)

library(ggplot2) ggplot(mtcars, aes(mpg, wt)) + geom point() +

geom_smooth(method="lm") # Adds OLS line with SEs

@ % closes R code

\caption{Miles per gallon and weight}

\label{fig:mpg-and-weight}

\end{figure}

Version Control

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 - Requires saving a new file each time you edit

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 - ((show example paper))

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 - I included the PDFs, which is unusual since they aren't plain text

Bonus best practice - Test your code!

▶ If you write your own function, it is important to test it to make sure it does what you want it to do!

```
my_mean <- function(dat){</pre>
  the sum <- numeric()
  N <- length(dat)
  for (i in 1:N){
    if(i==1){the_sum <- dat[1]}
    else{
    the sum <- the sum * dat[i]
 }}
  my mean <- the sum / N
  my_mean
mean of zero <-c(-2, -1, 1, 2)
my mean (mean of zero)
```

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 - ▶ Google "Sweave for Stata" or "reproducable research and Stata"

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