

Checklist for the midterm project

PLS 397

Due Date: March 24, 2025

The goal of the mid-term project is to practice the data visualization skills you’ve learned, practice working with data, and practice integrating text and figures into a coherent narrative. You’ll also be able to share this project with potential employers or graduate programs to show off your skills.

For Honors students: please see the section below.

The project will be graded out of 100 points.

Basics (10 points)

- ☐ I have a title that is informative and engaging.
- ☐ I have an author name, date, and “tag” that describes the topic of my project.
- ☐ I have a summary sentence that highlights the main takeaway of my project.
- ☐ My text fits on one page (this is hard! And requires careful editing).
- ☐ The final document is in a compiled PDF document using the provided template.

Text and Substance (40 points)

- ☐ The text is well-organized and follows a logical flow.
- ☐ There’s a clear puzzle, tension, or question that the project addresses.
- ☐ The text includes takeaways or things the reader should learn.
- ☐ The text is *not* just a description of the data—it makes an argument or tells a story.
- ☐ The text only describes the figures when necessary (e.g., to point out a key feature) or explain a tricky data transformation. It does not include a detailed description of every figure. (Assume your reader is smart and knows how to read basic figures!)

Figures (50 points)

- ☐ The main figure includes 2-3 figures combined into one patchwork plot.
- ☐ The figures address the main puzzle, tension, or question of the project and provide evidence for the argument or story.
- ☐ The geoms are well suited to the data (e.g., line for time series, bar for categories, etc.)
- ☐ The figures are well-labeled and have informative titles.
- ☐ When needed, the figures are annotated with text or arrows to highlight key features.
- ☐ The axes and scales are appropriate for the data.
- ☐ The figures are polished and publication-ready.
- ☐ The figures are saved at high resolution and look good in the compiled PDF.

Extra credit

I’ll provide 5 points of extra credit to anyone who agrees to let me (1) use their project as an example in future classes and (2) share their project with the authors of the CCC dataset. The projects will not be posted publicly without your permission.

If you’re interested, please let me know in the comments of your submission.

Honors

The honors assignment involves a second part. You'll complete the PDF template as the rest of the students and turn it at the same time. You'll then expand your writeup into a longer blog post (800-1000 words), due the following Monday (March 31). You should include one additional figure, and the text should be expanded to include more detail, more context, and more explanation of the figures. You'll want to present each figure on its own, rather than in a combined patchwork figure.

For inspiration and examples, see the CCC blog posts here: <https://ash.harvard.edu/programs/crowd-counting-consortium/#ash-feed>. You can also look at the Washington Post blog posts by one of the researchers, Erica Chenoweth, here: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/people/erica-chenoweth/>.

You'll submit the blog post as either a PDF document or HTML.

Submission checklist:

Upload the following to D2L

- ☐ The final, compiled PDF
- ☐ Your Rmd file
- ☐ A comment in your Rmd file indicating whether you'd like the extra credit.
- ☐ A brief description (1-2 sentences) about how you used GPT or other LLMs (see below).

Note on ChatGPT/LLMs

To reiterate the syllabus, you are welcome to ask ChatGPT/Claude/other LLMs for assistance with coding. In fact, I encourage you to use these tools to debug your code or help you figure out how to do something with your code.

However, you *may not* include **any** text generated by an LLM in the writeup of your project. This is a simple rule that will help you avoid any potential issues with academic integrity.

You may also **not** ask an LLM to tell you which figures to make. This is a key cognitive skill you're developing in this class, and I want you to practice it.

Examples of allowed use:

- "I pasted my code into ChatGPT and asked how I could add a horizontal line to my plot."
 - This is a good use because you're thinking about what you want in the figure and asking for help with the specific code to do it. This helps your learning, because you can focus on the big picture ('what should my figure look like?') and get coding help from an LLM.
- "I got an error message saying `error: closure not subsettingtable` and I wasn't sure what to do. I pasted the error message into ChatGPT and it explained how to fix the error."
 - This is a good use because you're using the LLM to help you debug your code. You're not asking the LLM to write the code for you, you're asking for help with a specific error message.
- "I found some code online that I wanted to adapt for my project. I didn't understand it, so I asked Claude for line-by-line comments on how it works."
 - This is a good use because you're using the LLM to help you understand how to adapt code for your project.
- "I uploaded my figure to ChatGPT/Claude and asked for suggestions on how to improve it."
 - This is a good use because you're asking for feedback on a figure you've already made. You're not asking the LLM to tell you what figure to make.

Examples of **disallowed** use:

- **X** "I asked ChatGPT to write the text for my project."
 - This is disallowed because you're asking the LLM to write the text for you. If an LLM wrote the text, you cannot include it in your project.
- **X** "I put a sample of data into ChatGPT and asked it to make me an interesting figure in ggplot"

- This is disallowed because you’re asking the LLM to make the figure for you. You should be coming up with the ideas for what figures to use. Then, if you have specific questions about how to write the code, you can use the LLM to help you with that.
- X “I asked ChatGPT what my project should be about.”
 - This is disallowed because you’re asking the LLM to do the thinking for you. You should be coming up with the main ideas of your project on your own.