MEJO 570 Data Driven Journalism
Fall 2022

MW 9:30-10:45, CM 301
Instructor: Ryan Thornburg Office: CA 215
Office hours: https://calendly.com/rtburg/meet-with-ryan
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Course Overview

Data Driven Journalism is an introduction to basic statistics and numerical and mathematical literacy, as well as a look at professional data-driven journalism projects. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to acquire, organize, analyze, and present data to a general news audience.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to

- identify and critique the use of data in news stories
- find and acquire newsworthy data sets
- evaluate data sets for errors and omissions
- clean and organize data
- "interview" data using spreadsheet software and descriptive statistics
- create data visualizations that highlight newsworthy elements of a data set
- use data to find and write news stories for a general audience

Required Materials

Textbooks
- Practical R for Mass Communication, by Sharon Machlis
- Readings as assigned on Sakai
- Readings on digital reserve

Hardware
- You should have a clean, working laptop that meets CCI specifications. I recommend 8GB RAM and 256 GB SSD drive if possible. Your operating system must be Window 10 or later, or mac OSX 10.15 or later

Software
- You will need to install R and R Studio on your computer
- You will need to sign up for a student account at GitHub if you do not already have one
- I support the Firefox browser. If you use Chrome or Safari you need to understand how to download and open files onto your computer

Attendance Policy

1. Please don't come to class if you suspect you could get other people sick.
2. Much of our learning will be in hands-on class workshop sessions. Absences will likely make it harder for you to learn the material you need to complete the assignments.
3. If you know you'll be absent for any reason, it will be easier for me to help you with more advance notice.

Unless your absences become chronic, I won't ask you for an explanation.

I am not able to recreate these experiences for students who miss class. If I'm able to record class sessions I will post them to the course Sakai page.

University Policy:

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Late Work

Regardless of class attendance, all assignments are due on the dates posted to Sakai. I accept late assignments with a 10% reduction in grade for up to a week after the original due date. If you have a University Approved Absence or other circumstances that you think will prevent you from doing your best work by deadline, please let me know in advance. I will rarely if ever extend deadlines after they have passed. No late assignments will be accepted after the last class meeting.

Determination of Grade

In-Class and Homework Exercises	40% of course grade
Reverse Engineering Data Story Midterm	20%
Midterm Data Story Pitch	20%
Final Campaign Finance Story	10%
Glossary of Terms	10%

Your stories will be graded on objective and subjective criteria, as will whether you're hired and subsequently retained by a news or sports operation or marketing firm after you graduate. I will assess both the quality and quantity of your work.

Grading Scale

Percentages will be converted to letter grades according to the following scale.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Meaning
A	93–100%	Excellent: Far exceeds standard
A-	90–92%	
B+	87–89%	
B	83–86%	Good: Exceeds standard
B-	80–82%	
C+	77–79%	
C	73–76%	Fair: Meets standard
C-	70–72%	
D+	67–69%	Poor: Shows growth but falls below standard
D	60–66%	
F	0–59%	Failing: Deficient

HONOR CODE:
I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (http://honor.unc.edu). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean C. A. Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

SYLLABUS CHANGES
The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

ARS
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: https://ars.unc.edu or email ars@unc.edu.
(source: https://ars.unc.edu/faculty-staff/syllabus-statement)

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

TITLE IX
Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment

or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/.

DIVERSITY

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on prohibiting harrassment and discrimination. In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

ACCREDITATION:

The School of Journalism and Media's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:

http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps

 No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on the last six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.

NOTE: Always be professional in your dealings with your fellow workers and the people you meet as you gather news. News directors and editors say they want people with good attitudes as well as solid journalism skills