

WEEK 1 HANDOUT

Gov 50 Data Science for the Social Sciences

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Contact Info

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Slack: @johnkoo (in the Harvard University workspace)

Office hours: Tuesdays, 1:30pm to 3:30pm @ CGIS Café (sign-up: [jkoo.nl/meet](https://johnkoo.nl/meet))

Section materials: <https://github.com/tanxpyox/gov50-sections-jk>

Where to get help?

- For tech assistance or help with homework: **Course Assistant-led Study Halls**

Study halls are a combination of office hours and drop-in tutoring sessions. Course assistants will hold a table usually at one of the house dining halls or common rooms and help students with assignments and course material. Study halls work best if you come as a group and work on the assignments on your own while you are there and ask for help from the CAs when you get stuck.

Schedule: Mondays and Wednesdays, 5pm to 9pm (see Syllabus for location)

- For initial help with course content: ask on course Slack (accessible via Canvas sidebar) or sign up for my office hours
- For perspective and inspiration: sign up for Scott's office hours

Getting the most (grades) out of this class

- Podcast and Article Responses (5%) [one two-page doc every other week]
- Problem Sets (20%) [seven to eight in total]
- Mid-term exam (20%) [in-class, written, closed book]
- Final exam (20%) [in-class, written, closed book]
- *Final project* (25%)

Generic advice for maximising grades and efficiency

- Everything you learn should help you work towards the final project (which is the biggest chunk of your grades)
 - Take the project milestones seriously and do not wait until the last minute
- Problem sets
 - Low hanging fruit - don't miss them; Can reuse code in your projects
 - It's OK to make mistakes (each p-set is 2–3% of your final grade)
 - Work with your study group; but write up your p-sets individually
 - Start early, so you have time to get help
 - Set aside a “focus session” every week to do the problem sets; do not mull over the p-set for the whole week
- AI allowed, except in exams. Start learning how to use AI to debug your code.
- Keep your code organised in your GitHub repository - you may need them in your final project

Getting Started

- Software: R, RStudio
- Version control: Git and GitHub

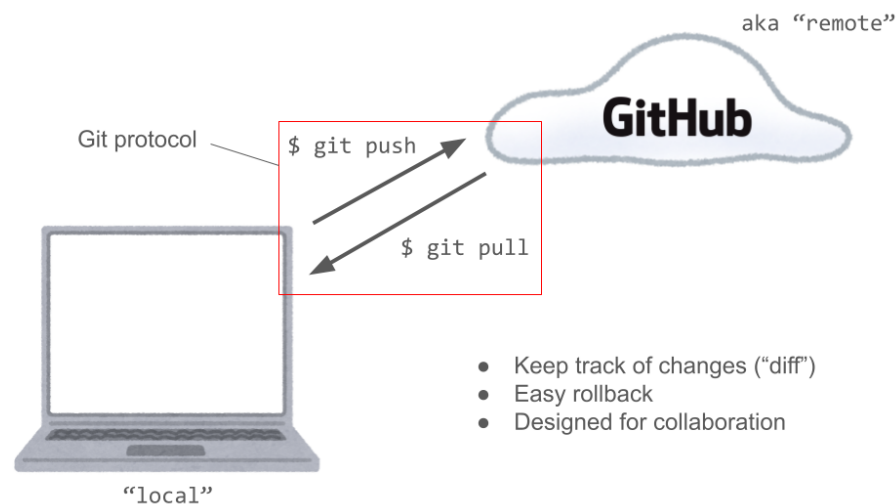


FIGURE 1: *Git and GitHub*

Problem Set 0a: GitHub Setup

Due: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 at 11:59 PM

Overview

This assignment will get you set up with GitHub, which we'll use throughout the semester to share code and track your work. Think of GitHub as Google Docs for code - it saves your history and lets you collaborate.

What You'll Do

1. Create a GitHub account
2. Create your first repository
3. Edit a README file
4. Submit proof to Gradescope

Step-by-Step Instructions

Part 1: Create Your GitHub Account

1. Go to <https://github.com>
2. Click "Sign up"
3. Choose a username (this will be public, so pick something professional)
4. Use your Harvard email (optional)
5. Complete the signup process
6. Download GitHub Desktop and log in with your new account

Part 2: Create Your First Repository

1. On GitHub Desktop, click "Add" > "Create New Repository"
2. Name the repository gov50-fall2025
3. Set the local path to a folder where you'll keep your course work
4. Choose "R" as the language
5. Click "Create Repository"
6. Click "Publish repository" to upload it to GitHub (make sure "Keep this code private" is checked; you will be make a public repo later for your projects)

Part 3: Set up RStudio

1. Open RStudio
2. Go to "File" > "New Project" > "Existing Directory" > Choose the GitHub folder you just created
3. Click "Create Project"
4. Click "New File", name it as README.md, and save it in the project directory

Part 4: Edit Your README

1. Click on the README.md file
2. Add:

Gov 50: Data Science for the Social Sciences

Name: [Your Name]

Harvard ID: [Your HUID]

This repository contains my work for Gov 50 (Fall 2025).

3. Hit save
4. Go back to GitHub Desktop, you should see the changes listed
5. In the commit message box, write “Initial setup”
6. Click “Commit changes”
7. Click “Push origin” to upload the changes to GitHub

Part 5: Submit to Gradescope

1. Go to github.com and navigate to your gov50-fall12025 repository
2. Take a screenshot showing:
 - Your GitHub username in the top right
 - Your repository name (gov50-fall12025)
 - Your edited README content

Troubleshooting

“GitHub says my username is taken”

Try adding numbers or your middle initial.

“I can’t find the edit button”

Make sure you’re logged in and viewing your own repository.

“I accidentally deleted my repository”

No problem! Just create a new one with the same name.

Getting Help

- Post questions on Slack in #problem-sets
- Come to office hours

Grading

This assignment is graded on completion only. Submit a screenshot showing you’ve created a repository with an edited README.

Learning Objectives

After completing this assignment, you will:

- Have a GitHub account for professional use

- Understand basic repository creation
- Be ready to submit future assignments via GitHub

Problem Set 0b: Slack introduction

1. Join the course Slack via Canvas
2. Post a short introduction message in the #general channel.
3. Take a screen shot of your introduction message
4. Go to Gradescope (gradescope.com) and find “Problem Set 0: Getting Started”
5. Upload your screenshots from 0a and 0b to Gradescope