Introduction

(1) Write down your top 3 topics of interest and include why you are interested next to each of them (one short paragraph each):

1. Military-connected student enrollment: I am interested in understanding the relationship between factors that impact a university’s military-connected student enrollment. I am interested in this topic because I am a military student myself at American University and work directly with military students in my day job. Specifically, I want to know if universities dedicate resources to supporting military students, does that lead to an increase in military student enrollment.
2. Social security: I am interested in understanding if people that receive social security benefits are more or less likely to live in poverty. I find the social security administration extremely fascinating. The social security administration accounts for a huge proportion of government spending, and if the program was better understood, we could save countless taxpayer dollars. Additionally, my mother and I relied heavily on social security when I was growing up.
3. Government Contracting: Every year, the government awards hundreds of billions of dollars in contracts. Once announced, private and non-profit organizations compete for these contracts. In fact, a substantial proportion of folks living and working in D.C. rely on these contracts for their livelihood. I am interested in understanding which, and what type of organizations are most likely to win a government contract. Do larger firms, like Accenture dominate, or is more advantageous to compete under the nomenclature of a small, service disabled veteran firm? Using

(2a) Write down one dependent variable (the phenomenon you want to understand) and one independent variable (factor explaining phenomenon) associated with your first topic of interest.

Yellow Ribbon Scholarships (independent variable) 🡪 Military-connected student enrollment (dependent variable)

 (2b) Write down one dependent variable (the phenomenon you want to understand) and one independent variable (factor explaining phenomenon) associated with your second topic of interest.

Social security beneficiary (independent variable) 🡪 annual income (dependent variable)

 (2c) Write down one dependent variable (the phenomenon you want to understand) and one independent variable (factor explaining phenomenon) associated with your third topic of interest.

 Contract won (yes | no) 🡪 award amount + organization\_type + awarding agency.

 (3) Create a research question related to each of your topics of interest. For example, say you are interested in the QAnon movement and you would like to understand better who supports it, you make come up with a research question: (A) Who are those Americans more likely to support the QAnon movement? Or (B) Why do Americans support the QAnon movement? Note: these are two different questions, but the purpose is to encourage you to start thinking about your research topics:

1. Is there a positive relationship between the amount of support offered to military-connected students and the number of military-connected students enrolled at a university?
2. Are people who receive social security benefits less likely to live in poverty?
3. What type of organizations are most likely to win a government contract?

(4) Would you like to work on your research paper in a group or on your own:

On my own, please.

 (5) Write a brief paragraph indicating what do you want to accomplish at the end of this class and what will be your expected grade. So, something like "At the end of the class, I want to XXXXX. I expect my grade to be XXXX because I will be missing some class meetings due to XXX this Fall XXXX":

At the end of this class, I want to be better prepared to formulate and investigate a research question. Additionally, I would like to improve my coding skills. Specifically, I want to get better at acquiring data from the web or from an API. Therefore, rather than download data in an Excel file, I will try and get data from an open-source API like USASpending or from a government website. Lastly, I would like to improve my ability to communicate findings by getting better at Quarto or Rmarkdown. I have completed assignments in Rmarkdown, but it would be great to learn how to complete a polish research paper in R. Regarding my grade, I hope to receive an A, as I very rarely, if ever, miss class and I complete all assignments and readings on time. That said, I am more concerned that I can walk away from this class with something useful or tangible that I can use in my professional life.