Feminist Approaches to Measurement and Evaluation
Course Reference Number (4): 10165
Fall Quarter: Tuesdays 5–9 pm
Room 104, TESC Tacoma
4 Credit Hours

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This syllabus is subject to revision.

Course Description: Measurement and evaluation are foundational to the data and statistics used in public administration practice. But can these concepts be understood and practiced through a feminist lens? How does feminist theory and practice inform the collection of public data, the data questions public administrators ask, and the way that data is used in decision making? Acknowledging the social situatedness of this data, we will explore how feminist principles can be used along with “traditional” data science tools to improve understanding of current issues facing citizens.

This is a course about developing applied skills in data analysis for public administration officials, while engaging directly with the social implications of public data science. Students will learn and practice basic statistical data analysis skills and concepts, including probability distributions, mean and median, variance, standard deviation, standard error of the mean, hypotheses and P-values, type I/II errors and power, t-tests, one-way ANOVA, chi-square test and Fisher’s exact test, and odds ratios.

This class will include weekly skills assessments and hands-on workshops to reinforce learning concepts. While understanding these statistical concepts is critical, we will focus on applying these concepts to actual public administration data in a practical way. Through cooperative practice and shared learning, we will learn the most effective ways to explain key concepts and limitations of public data with a non-technical policymaker audience, and incorporate the questions of data feminism.
into decisions about data collection and reporting.

NOTES ON READINGS:
Two texts are available online through Canvas: D'Ignazio and Klein (2019) and Perez (2019)
All journal articles or web links will be posted to Canvas
There is one book to purchase: Huck (2011)
All (printed) books are also available on Open Reserve through the Evergreen Library.

Readings


Course Policies:

- **Evaluations**
  - Students will be evaluated based on regular attendance and reading, timely and thoughtful submission projects, and active engagement with their classmates.
  - Students are required to submit a self-evaluation and a faculty evaluation. You can submit these evaluations via the College’s online evaluation system at [my.evergreen.edu](http://my.evergreen.edu). Students are not required to submit self-evaluations to their transcripts. An evaluation conference is optional.

- **Assignments**
  - No late assignments will be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances. Please contact me as soon as possible if this occurs.
- **Attendance and Absences**
  - Regular attendance is expected. You are allowed to miss 1 class (four hours of instruction time) during the quarter without penalty.
  - Students are responsible for all missed work, regardless of the reason for absence. It is also the absentee’s responsibility to get all missing notes or materials.

**Academic Honesty Policy Summary:**
From the TESC Statement on Academic Honesty: “Academic honesty is essential in a learning community. It makes coherent discourse possible and is a necessary condition for all sharing, dialogue and evaluation. All forms of academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabricating, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism, are violations of the Social Contract. Cheating is defined as using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise. Fabrication is defined as faking data, footnotes or other evidence. Plagiarism is defined as representing the works or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise. It includes, but is not limited to, copying materials directly, failure to cite sources of arguments and data, and failure to explicitly acknowledge joint work or authorship of assignments.”

TESC Statement on Academic Honesty
http://www.evergreen.edu/advising/academic-honesty

TESC The social contract – College philosophy

TESC Student Conduct Code

**Authorship**
The student must clearly establish authorship of a work. Referenced work must be clearly documented, cited, and attributed, regardless of media or distribution. Even in the case of work licensed as public domain or Copyleft, (See: http://creativecommons.org/) the student must provide attribution of that work in order to uphold the standards of intent and authorship.

**Laptop and Electronic Device Policy**
Laptops and Electronic Devices are *not permitted* during class presentations and discussions. They will be *essential* for in-class exercises, which will be announced. Research indicates that the use of laptops during class decreases interferes with the learning process for students, leading to lower levels of understanding and engagement with the learning community. Further, research indicates that the presence of laptops is distracting to other students, harming their ability to learn as well. For more information on the rationale for this policy, please read: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html

The following are the only exceptions to this policy:
- Students with Accommodation Letter from Access Services.
- Specific in-class exercises which require use of a laptop, only as noted by the instructor.
Written Assignments (See Course Schedule for Due Dates)

All writing assignments should strictly follow the page limit guidelines, and be submitted in 1.5 spaced, 12 point font. No matter what the format, students should consistently work to become better writers. Readers both academic and professional will always appreciate a clear, straightforward writing with short paragraphs that avoids the use of jargon. I recommend having on hand *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White, which is small, inexpensive, and available in many editions.

Assignment 1: Reflective Memo

2 pages

Feminist pedagogy relies less on a traditional model of teacher-focused lecture and assessment and more on shared knowledge production, empowerment, and inclusion. This is an opportunity for me (the faculty) to learn from you (the student) so that we can develop shared learning goals for the class.

- Based on the readings for the first day of class and your own personal life experiences, discuss your reasons for taking this class, and what you want to achieve in the field of public administration.

- Briefly describe your experience with statistics and data in your personal and professional life, the good and the bad. Not what classes you took, but what you *learned*. What did you enjoy? What did you find frustrating? What do you wish you knew more about?

- *Think about a class or two in the past two years from which you feel you learned a lot*: Write down what work you did (or what assignments were given) that helped you learn the course material and/or developed lasting thoughts or skills.

- *Reflect on a subject or topic (any topic) you think you know well*: Write down what it is and what types of things you know about it such that you think you know it well. Then write some ways you think a stranger could test how well you know it.

We will use these memos on the first evening as the basis of a shared plan for goal-setting and skill-building for the rest of the class.

Assignment 2: Washington State Data Book

2 pages

*First Year MPA students *must* select a different dataset than selected for The Context of Public Administration Week 5 assignment!*

In this class, we will be learning measurement and statistical concepts as much as possible by working with real-world data. This assignment asks you to go find that data and select a dataset that you will be using to test, learn, and explain concepts on. This data will be the basis of your in-class presentation in *Assignment 10*, so be sure to select data that is interesting to you from a policy perspective. *With instructor approval, if you wish, you are welcome to select a dataset from a source other than the Washington State Data Book, for example, data from your own workplace. This data must be public and able to be shared with the class and instructor.*
Go to the Washington State Data Book and, based on your interests, download one of the data tables in Excel. Make sure to save it to your computer.

Open the data table and make sure you can see all the tabs.

Select one of the tabs with data.

Based on your understanding of the concepts outlined in today’s reading (Huck 2011, Chapter 2), tell an interesting written story about the data on this tab.

1. What is the most important single piece of information? Write one paragraph about this piece of information, and why it is the most important part of this data.

2. What is the maximum value, and what does it mean in plain language?

3. What is the minimum value, and what does it mean in plain language?

4. What are the is the median and mean values, and what does that mean (plain language)?

5. What kind of visualization (What Huck calls “picture techniques”) would be the most effective for telling the story of this data? Why?

Now, think about what you read in D’Ignazio and Klein (2019, Chapter One), and how it relates to the data tab you selected. What is “Missing Data” from this tab, and why is it important for public policy? How would you go about collecting this “Missing Data”?

Assignment 3: Proposal for Presenting Your Data to a Non-Technical Policymaker Audience

2 pages

One of the most important challenges for public administration professionals in all fields is the need to clearly explain data to the non-technical policymaker audience – this could be someone like the director of a small non-profit, an elected official, or a city council member. Such individuals may or may not be comfortable with data and numerical concepts, and it is your job to explain these concepts in a way that is truthful, accurate, and easy to understand. This requires being cognizant and sensitive to the needs of your audience, and making sure that you are providing the information in a way that is the most effective and useful to them.

For this assignment, your goal is to write a draft proposal of your plan for making your final in-class presentation (Assignment 10). Your final presentation is based on the data you selected from the Washington State Data Book. Write your presentation proposal, being sure to address all of the following questions:

1. Who, specifically, is your audience? This is not a general “position” but an actual individual.

2. What do you know about this person’s background? Do they appear to have experience with data analysis?

3. What would be the most effective way to present your data to this person? Why?

4. If this individual were to remember just one thing about your data presentation, what would it be and why?
5. What is your plan for presenting this data? Do you plan to use tables, charts, data visualizations? Will you have to make the data visualizations or will you use the work of others?

6. How, specifically, do you plan to incorporate feminist principles about data and research into your presentation?

Once submitted, your proposal will be shared with another student in preparation for Assignment 5. You will also be given another student’s proposal for your own Assignment 5.

**Assignment 4: Data Visualization**

**Links or Files plus two paragraph discussion**

For this assignment, you will find two data visualizations – one that is good (effective, clear, relevant) and one that is bad. Find your data visualizations of any kind, from any source, and submit them (as a link or file) through Canvas.

Write one paragraph describing each data visualization – why did you select it? Where did it come from? Who was the audience for this data visualization? What changes would you make to this data visualization to improve it?

Please note that this assignment is due early (the day before) so that I can print them out for class.

**Assignment 5: Preliminary Presentations and Constructive Feedback**

**Part 1: Constructive Feedback**

You will be the discussion leader for one of your classmates tonight as they give a preliminary presentation about their selected data. Based on the proposal given to you, conduct research on the non-technical policymaker audience that the proposal is addressed to, as you will be role-playing this person as you ask questions of the presenter.

Your paper should answer the following questions:

- Who is the non-technical policymaker that is being addressed? What is their role?
- Why would they be interested in this data?
- Who does this person answer to? How could they explain this data after seeing the presentation?
- What do you think would be the most effective way to share data with this person? Would they prefer visual aids, data visualizations, technical reports?
- Does this proposal adequately incorporate feminist data principles? Why or why not?

In addition, your paper must include a list of 4–6 questions for the student giving their preliminary presentation. Be critical, but supportive! What could this student do to make their final presentation more effective? What could they do to more effectively incorporate feminist principles into their presentation?
Part 2: Your Presentation

Your final assignment (Assignment 10) is a class presentation based on your research and learning about your selected data over the entire Fall Quarter. Data presentations must be careful, polished, and practiced, and you will be making an in-class preliminary presentation about your data. This is a trial run to get feedback about how you can improve your ability to communicate this data effectively to a non-technical audience.

Assignment 6: A Model for Feminist Research

1–2 pages, depending on format

In *The Power Chapter*, D’Ignazio & Klein discuss the how power is modeled in research in ways that can reinforce systematic oppression. The underlying concept of modeling is critical to developing effective research questions and being able to test these questions with data. Depending on how the model is developed, however, critical questions of power and representation can be overlooked.

For this assignment, you will develop a conceptual model of the data you will be presenting in Assignment 10: Presenting Data to a Non-Technical Policymaker Audience. Read Huck Chapter 3 (and re-read Huck Chapter 1) carefully, and use this information to inform your model. Create a visual model (see Tysick [2004] posted to Canvas) containing each of the following components:

- **Dependent Variable.** What kind of variable is it? Is it qualitative or quantitative? (Huck [2011], “Different Kinds of Correlational Procedures” in Chapter 3)

- **Independent Variable(s).** Include and note those variables which can be represented using data, and those that cannot.

- The **relationship** between each variable – Is there any connection between one variable and another?

- The **direction** of the relationship between variables. Which variables affect which other variables? In a conceptual visual map, turn your connection lines into arrows.

- The **expected correlation** between the variables – is it a positive correlation, a negative correlation? Is the relationship high, low, or moderate? (Huck [2011], “The Correlation Coefficient” in Chapter 3)

Be prepared to explain your model to your classmates in class.

Assignment 7: “Welfare Reform in Washington State (A)” : How to Approach a Research Problem When you Don’t Know Where to Start

Read the case “Welfare Reform in Washington State (A)”, including the appendix, carefully, take notes on the data and setting presented, and do your best to answer the questions based on the readings and your own approach to research. These will be the basis of in-class discussion on research and approaches to government data.

Assignment 8: TBD

This assignment will be announced in September.
Assignment 9: Checklist for Feminist Research

The second year of the MPA program generally involves and original research project and will likely include developing a research question, conducting a literature review, developing and deploying a survey, developing qualitative interview questions for interviews or focus groups, analyzing your results, and presenting your findings through written and spoken presentations.

The goal of this assignment is to help you bring the principles of feminist research to this process for your own research team next year. Based on the readings so far, develop a checklist that you will use with your group to ensure that you and your team can discuss how these principles apply to every step of the process. Use the questions below as a starting point and include as much practical information as you need to make a checklist that will be useful to bring to your project teammates.

- **Research Question**: How could your research question address issues of concern from a feminist perspective, such as missing data?

- **Literature Review**: What steps could you take to incorporate non-traditional and/or feminist scholars in your literature review? How can you ensure that your research, methodologies, and other tools are properly credited, as addressed by D’Ignazio and Klein (2019, Chapter 6)?

- **Survey Questions**: (see Harnois (2013) posted to Canvas in Module 7.) How could you craft survey questions to be purposefully inclusive? Provide some examples. How could your sampling plan for survey data collection (See Huck, Chapter 5, “Types of Samples”) address the issue of underwaged work that D’Ignazio and Klein (2019, Chapter 6) point out?

- **Qualitative Questions (Focus Groups / Interviews)**: What steps can you take to ensure that your qualitative questions and research plan address feminist research principles? Which are the most important principles for qualitative research?

- **Data Analysis**: For your project, you will have to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. How could you use the analytical tools from this class in a way that will alleviate the confirmation biases D’Ignazio and Klein illustrated in Chapter 3?

- **Presentation of Results**: How can you present your written results (both final written product and presentation) in a way that is accessible, engaged with your audience, and respectful of the people that helped you collect your data?

Assignment 10: Presenting Data to a Non-Technical Policymaker Audience

PowerPoint or other Presentation of at least 10 slides and additional materials as needed

Your final assignment is a class presentation based on your research and learning about your selected data over the entire Fall Quarter. Develop an engaging presentation (slides, handouts, brochures, or whatever you see fit) that teaches your classmates and a Non-Technical Policymaker Audience about this data – how and why did you select this data? Why is this important to the citizens of Washington? What are the main takeaways from this data, and what more should policymakers want to know to address some of the issues raised by the data? How can this data be explained through a feminist lens?
Tentative Course Outline:
The weekly coverage might change as it depends on the progress of the class. However, you must keep up with the reading assignments.

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