

Syllabus for Statistical Methods in Psychology

Psych 3000 Section 090 (Online Class)
University of Utah

Summer 2009

Please read the entire syllabus before the semester begins.

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Personnel

Instructor: Janelle Seegmiller

Office: Behavioral and Social Sciences #1022

Fax: (801) 581-5841

Office Hours: By Appointment

EMail: Janelle.Seegmiller@psych.utah.edu

Phone: (801) 581-4743

Technical Help: Jake Jensen

Phone: 585-6218

Email: jake.jensen@psych.utah.edu

Jake Jensen is the expert on the technology used in the class, if you have any technical problems please first consult the [technical resource page](#) and then if you still need assistance contact Jake.

Online Material

All of the online course material should be accessed through the course's 'OLMS' site (the university's 'open learning management system'). There is more than one OLMS site on campus, please be aware that the OLMS site for this class can be found at www.psych.utah.edu/olms. Always go through the OLMS site to get to any online material (rather than linking directly to the material). The OLM site has the latest and most complete list of course material (which may change as the semester progresses), it has an important 'Announcement' area where I post announcements to the class, and the software which grades much of your work can record your grade only if you access the software through the olms site. **Please note that this is *not* a Web CT course.**

A. Accessing the OLMS site: When you go to the [OLMS](#) page indicate the semester and year and it will list the OLMS classes in which you are registered. Note: it takes up to 24 hours after you register for the class before the OLMS site knows you are in the class. If you have trouble accessing the OLMS site please contact the technical help person (listed above).

B. Announcements: Before the semester begins I will primarily be using email as a way to communicate with everyone. After the semester begins I will be using the 'Announcement' area on the OLMS site to communicate important information, please check the announcement area every time you access the site.

C. OAK Homework: This is the internet-based software that will present and grade both your homework assignments and your online quizzes, it is written in a computer language called 'Java' and is designed to run in your browser. If you want to take this class you must have access to a computer that will run the software. If you use computers in a lab on campus you shouldn't have any problems *if* you select the correct browser. If you are running it anywhere else you may need to download Java or a new version of a specific browser or both to get the software to run. Detailed information on these issues and others can be found on the [Technical Information and Help](#) page. I strongly encourage you to find a computer that will run the software before the semester begins. As an incentive for you to not wait until the last moment I have a policy that if you wait until right before the first homework assignment is due (roughly two weeks into the semester), and then can't find a computer that will work for you, then the deadline for the assignment will *not* be extended (please see the policy on homework assignment deadlines later in this syllabus).

d. Technical Information and Help: The [Technical Information and Help](#) page contains information that I hope will be of help to you, including information on how to get the homework/quiz software to run on a computer (i.e. what browsers work on what platforms and how to download what you might need) and general advice on how to solve common problems. We have an excellent resource person for help on any technical problems that might arise for you, his phone number and email address are listed at the beginning of this syllabus. Please be aware that I probably will not be able to help you with technical problems and contacting me first just slows down the process, please contact the technical help person directly.

General Course Information

A. Course Description: Applying statistical methods to psychological research, including basic descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, and correlation. This is an online course and does not include a separate laboratory section.

B. Prerequisites: PSY 1010 and MATH 1030 or higher

C. Course Goals:

- To teach the basic concepts and formulas of statistical methods used in psychology. By the end of the semester the student should be able to perform the basic statistical procedures expected of undergraduate psychology students.
- To develop a sufficient understanding of statistics for the student to become an informed reader of statistical analyses. Statistics plays an important role in modern life and is a fundamental tool of inquiry in the field of psychology. Even if the student does not have to perform statistical procedures after this course he or she will benefit from having the ability to evaluate the statistical work of others.

D. Textbook (required): Statistics for Psychology (Second Edition), Oakley E. Gordon, Pearson Publishing, ISBN 0-536-42297-4. This is the text written for this class. The various chapters in the book are referred to as 'lectures' as they were written in a more conversational style than is common for a text book.

E. Workbook (required): Statistics for Psychology Workbook (Second Edition), Oakley E. Gordon, Pearson Publishing, ISBN 0-536-42308-3. The workbook provides an organized way to take notes while reading the text. Taking notes is highly recommended for four reasons: 1) the information gets in at a deeper level if you write out the important parts rather than just reading it; 2) the lectures in the text contain a great deal of supporting material (explanations and examples) and the most important parts of the lecture can be lost in the forest of details, the workbook will help you to pull out and notice the essential information; 3) the workbook is much shorter than the text, making it easier to find the information you need when doing the homework assignments, quizzes, and exams; and 4) the workbook is the only written material you may take with you into the offline exams. For more information please see the section on exams later on in this syllabus.

F. Calculator: You will need a calculator for this course, but it does not need to be anything very fancy, just make sure that it does square roots. You may take a calculator into the offline exams (you'll need it).

G. Hardware and software requirements: this course uses special software to present and grade homework assignments and quizzes (see above). You must have access to a computer that can handle the software in order to take this class.

H. Special Announcement Concerning Students with Disabilities: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification.

I. Important Dates:

Last Day to Drop Classes: May 27, 2009

Last Day to Withdraw from term length classes: June 26, 2009

J. Registering for the Exams. The exams are not given online, they are administered in a proctored environment by [U-Online](#), you need to contact U-Online to arrange for a time and place to take the exams. It is first come first serve, so go to U Online soon to grab a time and place that will work for you (this is usually available beginning the first day of the semester). If you live out of the area you can make arrangements with U-Online to take your exams in the area in which you live.

K. Changes in course procedures. Occasionally changes in course procedure are necessary during the semester due to unforeseen circumstances; these will be announced in the Announcements Area in the course OLMS site.

Grades

A. Overview: the class will involve numerous graded activities: homework assignments, simulations, quizzes, and proctored exams, each of these is described below.

B. Weights: your grade in the course will be based upon the following.

25% Homework Assignments

5% Simulations

20% Quizzes

50% Exams

C. Letter grades: your total numerical grade at the end of the semester will be assigned a letter grade using the following scale:

	A	92+	A-	90-91	
B+	88-89	B	82-87	B-	80-81

C+ 78-79 C 72-77 C- 70-71
D+ 68-69 D 62-27 D- 60-61
E 0-59

D. Incompletes: I follow the guidelines on incompletes provided by the university. To receive an incomplete the student must: a) request it; b) receive approval from the instructor; c) have completed 80% of the material to be covered during the semester; and d) be passing the class at the time. The latter two requirements are particularly relevant to online courses, where some people struggle to keep on task.

E. Homework Assignments: Each lecture has an accompanying homework assignment. The assignments serve several important functions: 1) 'statistics' is a topic that you can only understand by doing it, just reading the lectures is not enough; 2) after reading a lecture you may not be sure whether or not you really understood the material, if you can answer the questions on the assignments then you will know that you understand the material well enough, if you can't, then you will know you didn't understand the material and further studying is necessary; 3) the quizzes and exams cover the material from the homework assignments, so the assignments serve to prepare you for the quizzes and exams.

The homework assignments are performed online using an applet (i.e. a Java-based computer program that can run over the internet using a browser). The applet presents the questions and asks for answers. The answers are immediately graded and feedback is given so that you may determine whether you answered the question correctly as well as what the correct answer is. At the end of the homework assignment you will be shown your grade, which you may choose to 'hand in' at that time or not. You may do the homework as many times as you would like to better learn the material and to improve your grade on that homework. In any event, you must submit a grade for a homework if you wish to get credit for your work. If you have already handed in an assignment and then attempt to hand it in again the computer will compare your new grade with your old one, and will only change your grade if your new grade is better, thus there is no risk in doing a homework over again and submitting a new grade.

Homework Deadlines: Homework assignments are due about two-weeks (sometimes a little earlier sometimes a little later) after they are assigned. The due dates for each assignment are listed on the 'Course Materials' page as well as in the software that presents the assignments. The homework assignments are spread out over the duration of the semester so that you move steadily through the material. To encourage you to move through the material at a steady pace the deadlines on homework assignments are strictly enforced. Do not wait until the last day to do an assignment, for if something arises at the last moment (e.g. the server is down for a couple of hours) you will not be able to hand the homework in on time. *To encourage you to not wait until the last day to do a homework or quiz, deadlines extensions will not be granted for technical problems that arise on the last day the homework or quiz is due.* Also note that the day you turn in the homework is determined by when (Mountain Time) you press the submit button at the end of the homework, thus if you start a homework 10 minutes before midnight on the day it is due (several students do this every semester) you probably will be handing it in late as the date is determined by when you hand it in.

Grace Period: The week after a deadline is called the 'grace period'. Starting the day after the deadline a 10% penalty per day is assessed (e.g. handing in a homework assignment on the second day after the deadline will result in 20 points taken off of your grade for that assignment....all assignments are worth 100 points), until a week has passed at which time the assignment may not be handed in for credit. The score you see at the end of the homework will include any late penalties, thus that score is what gets recorded.

Deadline Extensions: Statistics is a class where it is crucial that you make steady progress and not attempt to cram together large chunks of information in a short period of time. This is particularly important as you need time to assimilate the information before you move on to new material. The homework deadlines have been established to enforce (as much as possible) steady progress through the material. This is an online course and I realize that some of you are taking it online specifically because you have to work the class around a busy schedule. Providing two weeks to do a homework (plus another week at reduced credit) is meant to provide you with enough flexibility to complete the material on time *if you plan ahead*. I will get the homework

assignments up and available as soon as possible so that in many cases you can do the homework assignments several weeks before they are officially assigned, and thus clear up a good chunk of time if you need to not work on the material for a while. There may be times when some of you will need more flexibility than that, I would like to meet your needs without destroying the purpose of having strict deadlines. In general, *I am likely to grant extensions on deadlines if: 1) you contact me and request an extension at least a day before the deadline; 2) you have an adequate reason for requesting the extension; and 3) you have not overused this privilege by asking for it too many times.* This policy rewards students who take responsibility for their education. Please note: *I am unlikely to grant an extension after a deadline has passed.*

F. Quizzes: Quizzes are similar to the homework assignments (they are presented online by the same software as the homework assignments) but unlike the homework assignments the program does not display the correct answer when you are taking a quiz. At the end of the quiz you are shown your grade and you can decide to hand in that grade or not. As long as the deadline has not passed you may return to a quiz to attempt to improve your score. Deadlines for the quizzes operate the same as they do for the homework assignments.

G. Simulations: The simulations (which I refer to as 'Sims') take advantage of the unique abilities of computers to teach and test information in an interactive manner. I have designed them to introduce some important concepts at a more intuitive level through hands-on learning. Deadlines for the simulations operate the same way as they do for the homework assignments.

H. Gates: 'Gates' are a new feature introduced this semester. Gates don't have a deadline nor is a score recorded for them. At the beginning of the semester all the gates are 'locked'. To unlock a gate you will need to answer a few questions correctly, you can have as many tries as you would like. Until a gate is unlocked all homework assignments, quizzes, and simulations after the gate are unavailable. The questions that open the gates aren't difficult; everyone should be able to answer them. The purpose of the gates is as follows. There are a few simple concepts that are very basic to statistics. Every semester roughly 10% of the students never bother to learn those concepts, despite the concepts being on numerous assignments, quizzes, and exams. These students don't bother to look at the answer keys to the exams to find out what the correct answers are, and some of them still manage to eek out a passing grade. Rather than coming up with a way to insure these students fail the class I would rather create a situation where they will have to find out the correct answers to this small set of simple yet important questions. I think the gates will serve nicely; we will give it a try this semester and see how it goes. If there is some unforeseen problem I can always modify or get rid of the gates.

I. Exams: The four exams are the only aspect of the class that you cannot take online, you will need to go to a proctored testing area and complete the work using pencil and paper. The exams are supervised by "[U Online](#)", and you will need to contact them to schedule a time and place to take the exams (do so as soon as possible). The four exams each cover roughly 1/3 of the material in the course; the final exam is not comprehensive. The only material you may bring into the exams is your workbook (where you have written all of your notes) and you will definitely need it, you will also need a calculator and something with which to write (you'll be writing on the exams themselves as well as on scantron sheets which should be provided by U Online). While the exams are essentially 'open book' (i.e. the workbook) it is important that you prepare for them, as you are likely to run out of time if you don't. I will provide study guides for the exams as well as software that will allow you to practice the computations you will be asked to perform. If you put sufficient effort into preparing for the exam you should be able to complete it in time without being rushed (even those of you who are rather slow at doing math).

Dates for the exams (the following dates have yet to be confirmed by U Online)

Exam 1: June 18 or 20

Exam 2: July 9 or 11

Exam 3: August 6 or 8

How To Succeed In This Course

A. Make steady progress through the material. If you hand all of the homework assignments in on time then you will be making steady progress. Don't fall behind and then rush to catch up, if you fall behind you will dig yourself a hole that even the most mathematically inclined would have a hard time climbing out of. To reinforce this advice, I have the following policy: 1) I will do all that I can to help you understand the material if you ask for help in a timely fashion (i.e., before the deadline on that material has passed), that is my job and I enjoy it; 2) If, however, you fall way behind in the class before you seek my help I am likely to just direct you back towards the online course material and wish you luck.

B. Use the homework assignments wisely. Do your best to get the correct answers on your own in the homework problems. If you simply write down the correct answers and then go through the homework again, or if you have someone else do the homework assignments for you, then you have turned them from being a teaching tool to being 'busy work', and you will fail to learn the material and will subsequently fail the exams.

The most effective way to learn the material is to do the homework assignment soon after reading the lecture and before you go on to the next lecture. The nature of the assignments is to help you understand the material as much as to evaluate your understanding, you will be much better prepared to learn the next topic if you have first completed the homework on the previous topic.

C. Use the workbook. The workbook provides an organized way for you to take notes from the course material. This is an important part of the teaching strategy for this course and will be your only resource in the exams.

D. Don't wait until the last day to do homework or a quiz. If you have any technical problems at the last second you'll get frustrated or panicky and that is not a good way to succeed in statistics. Remember that deadline extensions will probably not be granted for problems (technical or otherwise) that arise on the day the assignment is due (or later).

E. Always look for new messages from me in the 'Announcement Area' when you enter the OLMS site.