**IDH 2939, Section # 3G71**

**Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics**

**Full Fall Course**

Instructor: Dr. Tim Jacobbe Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVE**

Mark Twain popularized this phrase to suggest that people could strengthen their arguments, or even lie, with statistics. This course will explore Joel Best’s book entitled, *Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists*. The goal of this course is to highlight the importance of statistical literacy for everyday citizens so others are unable to pull the wool over their eyes. Students will be expected to prepare brief written reactions to readings as well as occasionally bring in examples of uses/misuses of statistics in the media and politics. Class discussions will center on the importance of statistical literacy given today’s political and social climate.

**REQUIRED COURSE TEXT**

Best, J. (2012). *Damned lies and statistics: Untangling numbers from the media, politicians, and activists*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.

Additional readings will be selected by students in the course.

**Assignments and Grading**

**Readings, Participation, and Talking Points (40%)**

* Readings: Each week students should come to class having read whatever has been assigned.
* Participation: This course is dependent upon your participation in discussions.
* Talking Points: Each Friday (by noon) students are expected to post one paragraph on canvas of a topic in the reading you found especially interesting that you would like to see further discussed/debated during class time. If you read ahead, you are welcome to post your topics for each reading as early as you would like.

**Lead a Class Discussion (20%)**

* Each group will be responsible for leading a class discussion at one point during the semester. As a group, you will read through all of the talking points for the week and choose one or more topics you would like to prepare to lead a 10-15 minute discussion/debate/activity with the class. Creativity is encouraged to actively engage the class. If your group feels you need more time to lead the discussion please communicate that in advance.

**Selecting an Article of Interest (20%)**

* Each student will find an article of interest that displays many of themes that emerge from the course (Importance of Social Statistics, Sources of Bad Statistics, Methods for Mangling Numbers, Inappropriate Comparisons, Conflicts over Social Statistics). Students are encouraged to find an article in their particular major or focused on a particular topic that is of importance to them.

**Culminating Assignment (20%)**

* There will be a culminating activity in the course where you will be expected to develop a poster/slide show/graphic to highlight what you learned in the course. This assignment will be discussed over the course of the semester but you would be welcome to develop an overview of all you learned in the course while making connections to several examples that have been used in the course. Another idea would be to expand upon the article you selected and highlight how it connects to your field and/or a topic we explored in the class.

FINAL GRADE DETERMINATION

The purpose of this course, as is all education, is to learn – not just to “work for a grade.” While all students should be capable of earning an A in the course, merely completing the work does not constitute A work. Instead, the final determination of a course grade relies primarily on the **quality** of work presented for the various assignments. Please note that to receive full credit, all work must be submitted on time.

## GRADING SCALE

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Grade | Percent |
| A | 93 – 100 |
| A- | 90 – 92 |
| B+ | 87 – 89 |
| B | 83 – 86 |
| B- | 80 – 82 |
| C+ | 77 – 79 |
| C | 73 – 76 |
| C- | 70 – 72 |
| D+ | 67 – 69 |
| D | 63 – 66 |
| D- | 60 – 62 |
| E | 0 – 59 |

More information on grades and grading policies is [here](https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/).

Please Note: The instructor reserves the right to change any part of this syllabus during anytime in the semester. Students will be adequately notified whenever changes occur.

**IDH 2930 – Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics**

Class Meetings/Due Dates/Tentative Topics

Fall 2018

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Class** | **Date** | **Topic** | **Assignment Due** |
| 1 | 8/28 | Introduction/Nature of Statistics | Bring Syllabus |
| 2 | 9/4 | The Worst Social Statistic Ever &  The Importance of Social Statistics | Read Chapters 1 and 2 |
| 3 | 9/11 | Sources of Bad Statistics | Read Chapter 3 |
| 4 | 9/18 | Methods for Mangling Numbers | Read Chapter 4 |
| 5 | 9/25 | Inappropriate Comparisons | Read Chapter 5 |
| 6 | 10/2 | Conflicts over Social Statistics | Read Chapter 6 |
| 7 | 10/9 | The Critical Approach | Read Chapter 7 |
| 8 | 10/16 | Student Selected Discussions | Student Selected Reading |
| 9 | 10/23 | Student Selected Discussions | Student Selected Reading |
| 10 | 10/30 | Student Selected Discussions | Student Selected Reading |
| 11 | 11/6 | Student Selected Discussions | Student Selected Reading |
| 12 | 11/13 | Student Selected Discussions | Student Selected Reading |
| 13 | 11/20 | No Class - Thanksgiving Week (Prepare Presentations) | |
| 14 | 11/27 | Student Presentations |  |
| 15 | 12/4 | Student Presentations |  |

Please note: The instructor may modify this schedule depending upon how the course is proceeding in order to make the learning experience as positive as can be possible.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with the university policies at

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

As stated there are "acceptable reasons for absences from class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official University activities. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved."

In the event of an excused absence, the instructor will consider the individual circumstances and work with the student to determine a timeline for makeup work, assignments, and exams. In the case of a valid conflict such as those listed in the university attendance policy, the instructor will work with the student to determine a process and timeline for makeup work, assignments, and exams. Otherwise, for all unexcused late assignments, one-half letter grade will be deducted for each additional day unless other arrangements are made with the instructor.

**Students Requiring Accommodations:** Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter; which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Class Demeanor:** Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones unless you are posting about class-related material. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

**Materials and Supplies Fees:** There are no additional fees for this course.

**University Honesty Policy:** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

**University Counseling Services:** Phone number and contact site for university counseling services and mental health services: (352) 392-1575, <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

**Incomplete Grades**

An incomplete grade is described in the Undergraduate Catalog. It is the instructors’ discretion as to what extenuating circumstances warrant adequate excuse for not completing required course work.

**Course Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu