

Data Collection I

(JOUR 861: Fall 2017)

Instructors

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We will be co-teaching this course, so either of us can answer questions about assignments, expectations, grading, or course structure. We can also help with basic technical issues.

Schedule

We won't have live class meetings, but most assignments will be due on either Wednesdays or Sundays.

Contacting us

We won't have online office hours, so if you let us know if you would like to talk by phone. See the Communication section below for more details.

What this course is about

This is the first data-focused course in the Digital Content Strategy program. It will introduce students to the structure, evaluation and use of pre-existing data; provide a deeper understanding of secondary research methods; explore ways of finding existing data; and provide a framework for understanding research credibility.

In more general terms, this course will help students find, evaluate and use data that others have made available. Collectors of data have their own language and their own way of structuring data and making it available. We will work to demystify that process and help you make better decisions in choosing sources of data and using that data to answer questions. In doing so, the work for the course is intended to elevate students' abilities as critical thinkers, helping them explore new ideas and think through problems more systematically.

This is not a top-down class. We provide structure for the class but rely on students to identify areas important to them, to pursue those areas on their own, and to share their ideas with the class. The goal is to empower students and to help them develop a mindset of constant learning.

The course will be entirely online and will primarily use Blackboard and Slack for course materials and communication. (See below for more details.) Online learning requires much self-discipline on your part. You will need to schedule time to do readings, listen to podcasts, watch videos, engage in online discussions, and complete assignments. We will have no quizzes or tests. Rather, students will demonstrate their mastery of course material through written work, online discussions, and other assignments.

We will not have any required live meetings online, but you will have deadlines each week and will have to communicate with colleagues on a group project. It is important to keep up. If you run into difficulties, please let us know so we can head off problems early.

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Course goals

By the end of this course, students will achieve these goals:

- ❖ Demonstrate ability to locate, gather and create datasets from existing data that address a problem or question.
- ❖ Critically assess the value of data sources relevant to a specific project.
- ❖ Establish data quality standards and apply these standards when evaluating available datasets.
- ❖ Demonstrate strong critical thinking skills.

Expectations and roles

For any class to work, instructors and students must have a shared understanding of goals, expectations and roles. Here's what you can expect from us:

- ❖ To provide resources and common areas of study for all students, and an online structure that promotes learning and builds community.
- ❖ To provide feedback on ideas and assignments.
- ❖ To help troubleshoot problems and point students to appropriate resources.
- ❖ To help students learn.

Here's what we expect of you:

- ❖ To complete all the required work, and to participate thoughtfully in online discussions and to post comments in a timely manner.
- ❖ To keep an open mind and to share resources and ideas that help everyone in the class learn about data.
- ❖ To demonstrate respect toward your colleagues (including us) as we delve into sometimes difficult problems.

Communication (or, how to reach us)

We will do our best to answer your questions promptly, but please don't expect an immediate response. Give us up to 24 hours to respond, though we will respond much sooner whenever possible. Here are some general guidelines for communicating with us:

Slack: Use this for general questions about the class, and for class discussions. When you have a question, go to Slack first. It is where you will a response the soonest. There is a private chat function that can be used for direct communication with either or both of us.

Email: We prefer that you use Slack, but if you need to contact us by email, feel free to do so. We will reply within 24 hours.

Phone: Feel free to call either of us at our offices during the day. We rarely check voicemail when away from the office, so if you need either of us immediately use Slack direct messaging or email.

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Days and times you can expect a response: You will be most likely to get a quick response on a weekday, though we will plan to monitor Slack and email on the weekend.

Dates instructor will not be available: We have no plans to be out of the office for long stretches during this class session. If this changes, we will let you know.

Grading expectations: Providing meaningful feedback will take time, especially with a large class, so give us up to a week for grading on most assignments.

Required materials

We will not have a textbook for this class. Rather, we will provide readings, podcasts, videos and other materials on Blackboard. To make the class run smoothly, you will need a few resources:

Blackboard. This will be the repository of most course materials, including the syllabus, grade contract, and general class instructions. The **Weekly assignments** folder on Blackboard has separate folders for each week of the class. That's where you will find all assignments, readings, podcasts, videos, and other material you will need to complete your work for the week. You will also find links for help and additional information on the panel on the left side of the page in Blackboard. These include help files for Blackboard, a link to KU Libraries, and a link to Slack, where you can post general questions.

Slack. This will be the primary means of class communication, including announcements, class discussions, and general questions. Slack will be used to create a sense of community (one of our goals for this class). We highly recommend making copies of all your important Slack posts, just in case we reach our data limit on the platform and start to lose older posts. We will See guidelines for how Slack's discussion channel and post/files will be structured for this class will be in the Blackboard section Syllabus and Course Docs.

Excel. If you do not have this already, it is available free from KU.

Finally, an open mind and a willingness to think broadly about finding, accessing, and analyzing data.

Schedule and deadlines

See Blackboard for a detailed list of readings, assignments and deadlines. Please pay attention to the weekly messages we send and to the Blackboard assignments. We'll stick to the Blackboard schedule as much as possible, but we reserve the right to make changes to fit the needs of the class.

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Due dates

The table below provides an overview of assignments and deadlines. For the most part, your work will be due either Wednesday or Sunday evening (11:59 p.m. in your time zone). You will find more detailed information about assignments below. This schedule may change as class needs and circumstances change.

Week	Discussion Questions	Journals & Assignments	Data Set Descriptions & Final Project
Week 1 (Aug. 21-27) <i>Foundational Concepts</i>	By Wed 8/23: Introductions & Initial Posts. By Sunday 8/27: Two more posts for each question.	By Wed 8/23: 3-2-1 assignment in your journal; complete survey listed on Blackboard	None
Week 2 (Aug. 28-Sept. 3) <i>Demographic Data, PPI & Metaphors</i>	By Wed 8/30: Initial post for each question. By Sunday 9/3: Two more posts for each question.	By Wed 8/30: 3-2-1 assignment in your journal; census & Pew exercise	By Sunday 9/3: Data Set Description 1 (Census) [Word document]
Week 3 (Sept. 4-10) <i>Open Data (Gov. & Research) & Metadata</i>	By Wed 9/6: Initial post for each question. By Sunday 9/10: Two more posts for each question.	By Wed 9/6: 3-2-1 assignment in your journal. By Sunday 9/10: Word to Excel exercise	By Sunday 9/10: Data Set Description 2 (open data) [Qualtrics survey form]
Week 4 (Sept. 11-17) <i>Data Evaluation & Data Catalogs</i>	By Wed 9/13: Initial post for each question. By Sunday 9/17: Two more posts for each question.	By Wed 9/13: 3-2-1 assignment in your journal. By Sunday 9/17: Qualtrics export Excel exercise	None
Week 5 (Sept. 18-24) <i>Enterprise Data (Admin & Research) & Legal Issues</i>	By Wed 9/20: Initial post for each question. By Sunday 9/24: Two more posts for each question.	By Wed 9/20: 3-2-1 assignment in your journal. By Sunday 9/24: Group Work (Codebook & Metadata Mapping)	By Sunday 9/24: Data set description 3 (enterprise data)
Week 6 (Sept. 25-Oct. 1) <i>Syndicated Data, Data Quality & Ethics</i>	By Wed 9/27: Initial post for each question. By Sunday 10/1: Two more posts for each question.	By Wed 9/27: 3-2-1 assignment in your journal. By Sunday 10/1: Data cleansing & gaps [data sets 1-4]	By Sunday 10/1: Data set Description 4 (syndicated data)

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Week 7 (Oct. 2-8) <i>Big Data & Linked Data</i>	By Wed 10/4: Initial post for each question. By Sunday 10/8: Two more posts for each question.	By Wed 10/4: 3-2-1 assignment in your journal. By Sunday 10/8: Peer review of draft Paper	By Wednesday 10/4: Submit draft paper for peer review By Sunday 10/8: Data set description 5 (scraped data)
Week 8 (Oct. 9-13) <i>Data Literacy</i>	By Wed 10/11: Initial post for each question. By Friday 10/13: Two more posts for each question.	By Wednesday 10/11: 3-2-1 assignment in your journal. By Friday 10/13: Reflective paper	By Friday 10/13: Final project/paper

Breakdown of graded assignments

You will be graded on completion of three types of assignments: discussions, group work and written assignments. In most cases, you will be able to resubmit unsatisfactory work for reconsideration. That won't be possible with discussions and with the project you turn in on the last day of class, though.

Group Discussions: Two questions on Slack most weeks	20%
Data set descriptions: You will complete five, submitting them on Blackboard	20%
Journals and short exercises: Submitted on Blackboard	30%
Final project/paper: Submitted on Blackboard	20%
Final reflective paper: Submitted in your journal on Blackboard	10%

Discussions (20% of final grade)

All class discussions will take place on Slack. We will provide topics and readings on Blackboard and a copy of the questions in Blackboard (for reference only.) You will have two discussion questions most weeks, though only one on xx and xx. You will post once by Wednesday each week for each question and then two more times for each question by Sunday night.

Discussions will generally take this format:

- ❖ Each week will begin on Monday, with your first post for each question due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday (in whatever time zone you are in). You should post at least twice more by 11:59 p.m. Sunday.
- ❖ Keep in mind this is an online dialogue with your colleagues, not just a dump of notes. If everyone waits until late Sunday to post, we won't have time for genuine discussions.

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As with all live and online discussion, please be considerate of others. Don't berate others' thoughts or comments. By all means, challenge assumptions and interpretations, but do so in a collegial manner. Great ideas often evolve from disagreement, but no one is served by put-downs and snarky commentary. We all have different levels of knowledge depending on the topic, so be helpful and use common sense. Also keep in mind that written comments can come across in unintended ways. Again, be considerate.

This policy from a site called The Conversation is an excellent guide to interacting online: <https://theconversation.com/us/community-standards>.

We want our conversations to be free-flowing, and we don't anticipate any problems. We reserve the right to take down comments that use vulgar language, that are hurtful or show disrespect to others. Discussion that is not germane to a specific discussion question should be added in the open discussion sections in Slack rather than in comments to the discussion post.

A separate rubric for evaluating discussion posts is posted in the Syllabus & course docs folder on Blackboard.

Late policy. All discussion comments must be posted by deadlines to be considered for credit.

Data set descriptions (20%)

Each student will complete descriptions of five types of data sets, looking for patterns and describing what data is accessible and how it can be used.

- ❖ Week 2: census and demographic data
- ❖ Week 3: government and open data (non-census)
- ❖ Week 5: enterprise and academic research data
- ❖ Week 6: syndicated data
- ❖ Week 7: scraped data

We will provide additional information about these assignments in the Syllabus & course docs folder on Blackboard.

Journals and short exercises (30%)

These will have three main components:

3-2-1 papers

Journal entries each week will take the form of a 3-2-1 assignment over the readings, videos, podcasts and tutorials. This type of assignment takes this format:

- ❖ List the 3 most important things you took away from the assigned material.
- ❖ List 2 questions you have about the material.
- ❖ List 1 thing you would like to follow up on.

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These shouldn't be long, but they should have substance. The idea is to help you focus your thoughts for discussions, help us understand problem areas, and help you think about how you might better apply data to a capstone project and to other work you do. Post these in your journal on Blackboard.

Group project

This will involve meshing Excel sheets that each members of your group has created and setting standards for a collective data set catalog. As part of this, you will review classmates' drafts of data set descriptions and provide feedback. We will provide details on this process closer to the deadline.

Peer review

You will review drafts of classmates' individual projects, providing feedback so they can improve their work before a final version is turned in. We will provide guidelines on how to approach these reviews.

Individual project (20%)

For the individual project you will write a report that documents both your thought processes and evidence that supports your secondary data collection strategy and assessment.

Project Goals

1. Demonstrate ability to discover and gain access to existing data.
2. Demonstrate awareness and command of ethical dilemmas and legal issues associated with the collection, dissemination, discovery, access and use of specific data from a variety of sources.
3. Demonstrate expert-level data literacy skills through analysis, synthesis and evaluation of your research problem and the datasets relevant to that problem.
4. Identify and use the terminology applicable to your purpose and audience.

We will grade these projects using several criteria: quality of writing or production, effectiveness of the ideas and innovation involved, and the depth of understanding the project displays. We want this to be something meaningful, something that evolves during the semester rather than just thrown together the last week of the semester. We will add details and a rubric to the Syllabus & course docs folder on Blackboard.

Final reflection (10%)

Reflection is one of the most important aspects of learning. It allows you to think through how you approached your work, how you overcame obstacles, and how you applied key concepts to your work. That reflection reinforces your learning and helps prepare you to learn more effectively in the future.

For your final assignment in the class, we would like you to reflect on your learning. We will provide more detailed guidelines later, but the reflection will address these types of questions:

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- ❖ What did you hope to accomplish in your work in this course?
- ❖ Where have you most succeeded? Why?
- ❖ What could you have done better?
- ❖ What data literacy skills have you learned in this course?
- ❖ What data literacy skills will you need to work on in subsequent data classes?

Late Policy. No late work will be accepted. If you run into snags, please let us know in advance. The flow of the class depends on your getting your work in on time, and late work hurts both you and your colleagues.

The fine print

Academic Misconduct: We will strictly follow the code of Academic Misconduct detailed in the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). University policies covering academic misconduct are spelled out in the current Student Handbook.

Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification: The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the teachers of this course.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Academic accommodations

The Office of Disability Resources, 22 Strong Hall, 785-864-2620 (v/tty), coordinates accommodations and services for KU students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not contacted the Office of Disability Resources, please do so as soon as possible. Please also contact your instructors privately about your work in this course.