Data Collection I

(JOUR 861: Fall 2019)

Instructor information

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Teams: @dbward

Schedule

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

Contacting me

I won't have online office hours, so let me 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 you 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 your ability as a critical thinker, helping you explore new ideas and think through problems more systematically. The first part of the class will focus on data literacy and related concepts you will need to understand as you search for and gather data. After that, we will look more closely at how to find and prepare data for analysis.
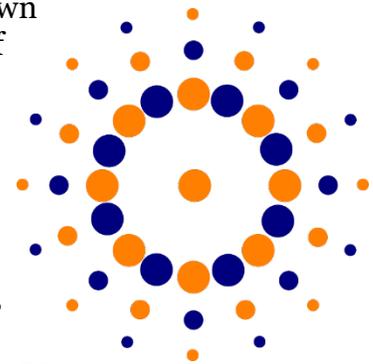
This is not a top-down class. I provide structure for the class but rely on students to identify areas important to them, to pursue those areas on their own, and to share their ideas with the class. The goal is to empower students and to help them develop a mindset of constant learning.

The course will be entirely online and will primarily use Blackboard and Microsoft Teams 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 need to communicate with colleagues for discussions and peer review. It is important to keep up. If you run into difficulties, please let me know so we can head off problems early.

Data Collection I
(JOUR 861: Fall 2019)

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

- ❖ Demonstrate ability to locate, gather and create datasets from existing sources.
- ❖ Critically assess the value of data sources relevant to a specific project.
- ❖ Demonstrate an ability to create meaningful questions and use appropriate tools to explore existing data.
- ❖ 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 me:

- ❖ To provide direction, structure and resources that promote learning and build community among class members.
- ❖ To create an inclusive environment that helps all students learn.
- ❖ To provide timely feedback on ideas and assignments.
- ❖ To help troubleshoot problems and point students to appropriate resources.
- ❖ To keep an open mind about new ideas and possibilities.

Here's what I expect of you:

- ❖ To complete all the required work on time, 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 me) as we delve into sometimes difficult problems.
- ❖ To let me know of any problems that are impeding your learning.

Communication (or, how to reach me)
I will do my best to answer your questions promptly, but please don't expect an immediate response. Give me up to 24 hours to respond, though I will respond much sooner whenever possible. Here are some general guidelines for communicating with me:

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

Email: I prefer that you use Teams, but feel free to contact by email. I will reply within 24 hours.

Data Collection I
(JOUR 861: Fall 2019)

Phone: Feel free to call me at my office number during the day. I rarely check voicemail when away from the office, so if you need me immediately use Teams direct messaging or email.

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

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

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

Times I may be hard to reach: I will be away at a conference during the last week of class (Oct. 14-18). I'll do my best to check in frequently, but I will be slow to respond.

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 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 Teams, where you can post general questions.

Teams. This will be the primary means of class communication, including announcements, class discussions, and general questions. I've found that platforms like Teams help create a sense of community (one of our goals for this class), largely because they are always on and easily accessible on any device. This will be the first time I have used Teams for a class, so please be patient. I have frequently used Slack, but I chose Teams this time because university IT now supports it. Expect some bumps and glitches, and please let me know if you are having problems with Teams or have ideas on how to better use it for the class. Teams is available free from KU. We may also use OneNote in conjunction with Teams. It is another free Microsoft application. (I say "may" because I

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.

Data Collection I
(JOUR 861: Fall 2019)

Schedule and deadlines

See Blackboard for a detailed list of readings, assignments and deadlines. Please pay attention to the weekly messages I send via email and to the assignments posted on Blackboard. We will stick to the Blackboard schedule as much as possible, but I reserve the right to make changes to fit the needs of the class.

Due dates

See Blackboard for an overview of assignments and deadlines. For the most part, your work will be due either Thursday 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.

Breakdown of graded assignments

You will be graded on completion of four types of assignments: discussions, short exercises, journal entries (including a final reflection), and an individual project. 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 Teams most weeks	25%
Short exercises: We will usually have one each week, submitted on Teams	25%
Journals and peer review: Submitted on Blackboard	20%
Final project/paper: Submitted on Blackboard	25%
Final reflection: Submitted in your journal on Blackboard	5%

Discussions (25% of final grade)

All class discussions will take place on Teams. I 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. You will post once by Thursday 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. Thursday (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.

Data Collection I
(JOUR 861: Fall 2019)

As with all live and online discussion, please be considerate of others. Appreciate others' differences and differences of opinion. 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.

I want our conversations to be free-flowing, and I don't anticipate any problems. I reserve the right to take down comments that use vulgar language, that are hurtful or show disrespect to others. I also want you to share things you find that are relevant to the class or that you just think your colleagues will find interesting. Use the Random channel for those types of post and leave the other sections for their specified uses.

A separate rubric for evaluating discussion posts is posted in the Syllabus & course docs folder on Blackboard. I don't fill out the rubric for you. Rather, I offer it to help you understand what I'm looking for in the discussion posts and what you should aim for.

Short exercises (25%)
We will have a series of short exercises that involve such things as finding data sources, data scraping from websites, downloading data from websites and repositories, cleaning and preparing data in Excel, and converting PDFs into spreadsheets. I will provide additional information about these in the weekly assignments folder on Blackboard. You should turn these in a journal entry on Blackboard. I would suggest that you upload documents to the journal area rather than copy and paste into a journal entry. Blackboard tends to get wonky when you paste from Word or similar sources because it tries to use the formatting from those documents. So just create a journal entry with the appropriate name and attach the documents.

Journals and peer review (20%)
The journal entries will provide reflections on the readings, videos, podcasts and tutorials each week. Unless otherwise instructed, use a 3-2-1 format:
- ❖ In a bulleted format, list the 3 most important things you took away from the assigned material.
- ❖ List 2 questions you have about the material or weaknesses you found in the arguments of the readings.
- ❖ List 1 thing you would like to follow up on.

These shouldn't be long, but they should have substance. As a rule of thumb, each bulleted item should be a short paragraph. The idea is to help you focus your thoughts for discussions, help me 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.

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

Individual project (25%)

The project will take the form of a written report that documents a meaningful approach to finding and evaluating secondary data. I provide guidelines for this project in the Syllabus & course docs section of Blackboard

Final reflection (5%)

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, I would like you to reflect on your learning. I will provide more detailed guidelines on Blackboard, but the reflection will address these types of questions:

- ❖ 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. I realize that life sometimes gets in the way, so if you are having trouble meeting a deadline, let me know so we can find a solution. The flow of the class depends on your getting your work in on time, and late work hurts both you and your colleagues. Similarly, if you need an accommodation or need additional time because of a religious holiday, let me know.

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.

Data Collection I

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.