

PPOL 603 – Foundations II- Empirical Foundations Course Outline

Course:	PPOL 603 Foundations II Empirical Foundations	Term:	Fall 2018
Time:	August 20-24, 2018 Monday to Friday 9:00-12:00 and 1:30 to 4:30	Section:	01
Instructor:	Daniel Dutton	Place:	Nexen Technology and Conference Center, DTC (Downtown Campus: 5 th Floor, 906-8 th Avenue SW)
Office:	5 th floor of DTC	Telephone:	
Office Hours:	After class or by appointment	E-mail:	djdutton@ucalgary.ca

Required Textbooks: None

Recommended Textbook(s):

Statistical Reasoning for Everyday Life, J.O. Bennet, W.L. Briggs, M.F. Triola, 5th Edition, Addison Welsey, 2017

Struck by Lightning: The Curious World of Probabilities, J.S. Rosenthal, Harper Perennial, 2006

Additional readings and supplemental material will be made available via links posted on Desire2Learn.

Desire2Learn:

Desire2Learn, a web-based course management tool, will be used in this course. Students registered in this course can log in at: <https://d2l.ucalgary.ca/>. Note that D2L features a class e-mail list that will be used. I will use this email list to communicate with you as required. It is your responsibility to ensure that D2L uses the e-mail address of your choice.

Required Software:

Microsoft Excel or a similar program. There are free copycat versions online.

Course Description:

Evidence based policy making requires information and sensible interpretation of what the information means. This week long course will focus primarily on quantitative data but will also introduce the basics of qualitative analysis. The course will begin with topics addressing data gathering and communication. This involves understanding how sampling and surveys are done, how to present data, and how not to be fooled by misleading presentations of data. Once we examine data, it is natural to ask questions such as, “Are male and female average earnings really different or are the differences we see in the data just arising from the fact we are using small samples?” Trying to answer questions of this sort is referred to as inference, which constitutes the final stages of the course.

The objectives of this course are:

- a) To develop an understanding of data collection, data manipulation, data communication, describing data with sample statistics and making inferences with statistical methods.
- b) To acquaint the student with the issues around appropriate and inappropriate uses of data for informing policy making.
- c) To develop a set of analytical tools to assess and evaluate various policy options.
- d) To acquaint students with basic statistical analysis in Excel.

Our main statistical topics will include:

- Data collection (Survey and census data and where they come from). This will include issues relating to the population of interest, how to select a sample to get unbiased estimates, and how to design and implement a survey.
- Indices and percentages. Working with the data to represent relative and absolute movements.
- Data Communication. Graphing and tabular presentations of data. How the presentation can affect the reader’s interpretation.
- Sample statistics. How to characterize the data in terms of its central tendency, spread and the shape of its distribution
- Inference. Establishing and testing hypotheses about underlying relationships in the data.

Classes and Readings:

The classes will consist of a combination of lectures, class discussion and application of course concepts through in-class group work. A schedule of class topics and readings is appended to this outline. These may be updated closer to the time of the course and updates will be noted on D2L.

Grade Determination:

5 Assignments (Pass/Fail)

Due dates: Start of Class the next day.

These will be assignments that will be circulated at the end of class each day and due the following morning. The grades for the assignments will be either “PASS” or “FAIL”. To pass the course, each student must achieve a “PASS” on all five Assignments.

Schedule of Topics for 10 Sessions (Each Session is 2.5 hours in duration):

Session 1: Populations, samples and studies

Topics include sampling methods, types of statistical studies and what makes for credible studies

Policy Discussion: From mandatory long form of the census to voluntary survey for 2011

READINGS: Text Chapter 1; David A. Green and Kevin Milligan “The Importance of the Long Form Census to Canada,” *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de politiques* 36(3) 2010: 383-388.

<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/stable/20799664>

Michael R. Veall, “2B or Not 2B? What Should Have Happened with the Canadian Long Form Census? What Should Happen Now?” *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de politiques* 36(3) 2010: 395-399. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/stable/20799666>

Chapter 7: White Lab Coats: What Studies Do and Don’t Show in Jeffrey S. Rosenthal *Struck by Lightning: The Curious World of Probabilities* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2006).

Session 2: Measurement in Statistics

Data types, levels of measurement, errors in measurement, counts versus rates

Policy Discussion: Measuring Health with QALY’s

READINGS: Text Chapter 2, Macgregor article from 679; Chapter 5: Murder Most Foul: Measuring Trends in Jeffrey S. Rosenthal *Struck by Lightning: The Curious World of Probabilities* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2006).

Session 3: Economic Measures, Sources of Error, Index Numbers, Present Value

Topics include measuring policy targets like Standard of Living, Index numbers, and making comparisons or describing changes

Policy Discussion: The Consumer Price Index and quality changes in goods – are cars more expensive today than 20 years ago?

Readings: Text Chapter 2. Matthew Brzozowski, “Does One Size Fit All? The CPI and Canadian Seniors,” *Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de politiques* 32(4) 2006: 387-411.

<http://deslibris.ca.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/ID/251280>

Session 4: Describing Data

Topics: Measures of central tendency, dispersion and shapes of distributions

Readings: Text Chapters 3 and 4

Session 5: The Normal Distribution and the Central Limit Theorem

Topics include properties of the Normal Distribution, Expected Value, Variance, distribution shapes and the Central Limit Theorem

Policy Discussion: Statistical discrimination and Racial Profiling

Reading: Textbook Chapter 5.

Session 6: Probability in Statistics

Topics include the basics of probability theory, probabilities with large numbers, concepts of risk, insurance, and life expectancy

Reading: Textbook Chapter 6; Chapter 3: Laying Down the Law: Why Casinos Always Win in Jeffrey S. Rosenthal *Struck by Lightning: The Curious World of Probabilities* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2006).

Session 7: Correlation, Causation and Lines of Best Fit

Topics include identifying, measuring and interpreting correlations.

Policy Discussions: Does drinking alcohol cause you to earn more? Are sticks or carrots better performance incentives?

Reading: Textbook Chapter 7; Chapter 2: What are the Odds of That? Coincidence and Surprise in Jeffrey S. Rosenthal *Struck by Lightning: The Curious World of Probabilities* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2006). Kahneman and Tversky, "On the psychology of prediction," *Psychological Review* 80 (1973): 237-251.

<http://ovidsp.ovid.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&CSC=Y&NEWS=N&PAGE=fulltext&D=ovft&AN=00006832-197307000-00001&PDF=y>

Meyer, Bruce D. (1995) "Natural and Quasi-experiments in Economics" *Journal of Business & Economic Statistics*, 13, 151–161.

<https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/stable/1392369>

Session 8: Estimation – Inferring things about a population from samples

Topics include point estimation, interval estimation, estimating means and proportions.

Policy Discussions: Polls and margins of error

Reading: Textbook Chapter 8; Chapter 10: Fifty-one to Forty-nine Percent: The True Meaning of Polls and Chapter 11: Nineteen Times Out of Twenty: Margins of Error in Jeffrey S. Rosenthal *Struck by Lightning: The Curious World of Probabilities* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2006).

Session 9: Hypothesis Testing

Topics include the fundamentals of a hypothesis test, tests of population means, tests of population proportions, Type I and Type II errors

Policy Discussion: Death penalties and criminal convictions;

Reading: Textbook Chapters 9 and 10.

Session 10: Regression analysis and interpretation

No readings, this will be an in-class discussion with many examples.

Important Notes:

- The School of Public Policy expects the highest standards of professional conduct by students, faculty and staff. Abusive or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. This includes any expression of prejudice in any of its forms.
- It is the student's responsibility to be fully aware of the academic regulations outlined in the University Of Calgary Faculty Of Graduate Studies Calendar. Provisions regarding Student Misconduct (plagiarism, cheating and other academic misconduct) will be strictly enforced. Please review the University of Calgary's Regulations on Plagiarism, Cheating and Other Academic Misconduct, online:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2.html>
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>
- Students seeking reappraisal of a piece of graded term work (term paper, essay, etc.) must discuss their work with the Instructor *within fifteen days* of the work being returned to the class. If not satisfied the student shall immediately take the matter to the Director of the MPP program or the Academic Director of the School and ask for a ruling and written reassessment. Should the student wish a further appeal it must be addressed to the Director and Palmer Chair of the School within 15 days of the ruling by the MPP Director or the Academic Director. For further information see the School of Public Policy Student Appeals Process at:

<http://www.policyschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Student-Academic-Appeals.pdf>
- Examinations will not be given prior to the scheduled date.
- Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, Visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>
- All material used in this course is for the sole use of the individual and should not be recopied in either print or digital format. For copyright guidelines, including those relating to photocopying and electronic copies, please refer to the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) fair dealing guidelines.
<https://libanswers.ucalgary.ca/faq/199025>
- The University of Calgary complies with the requirements of the *Freedom of Information and Privacy Act*. The University's policy on the sharing of student information with third parties can be found here: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/files/legalservices/pg-pi->

[of-students-to-3rd-parties.pdf](#). The University's policy on the sharing of student information with the subject can be found here:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/files/legalservices/pg-pi-of-student-to-subject.pdf>

- A link for the Student Ombuds' Office is www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/
- Links to campus mental health resources include: www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/ and www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/.
- In the event of an emergency, students may be required to evacuate the building. If evacuation is ordered, follow these procedures:
 - Stay calm, do not rush, and do not panic.
 - Safely stop your work.
 - Gather your personal belongings if it is safe to do so. (keys, purses, jackets, cell phones, etc. It may be hours before you are allowed back in the building.)
 - If safe, close your office door and window, but do not lock them.
 - If directed by wardens, follow their instructions.
 - Use the closest emergency exit. Do not use the elevator.
 - Proceed to the designated Emergency Assembly point in front of the Holiday Inn on 8th avenue to the west of the Downtown Campus.
 - Do not re-enter the building or work area until you have been advised by emergency responders that it is safe to do so.

Graduate Students' Union Vice-President, Academic

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Or remain at nearest exit point

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