

PHC4792: Data Visualization in the Health Sciences (3 credits)

Spring: 2025
Delivery Format: Hybrid
Course Website: Canvas

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Room Number: HPNP G-312
Meeting Times: Thursdays 3:00 PM - 3:50 PM
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Preferred Course Communications: email/Canvas inbox

Prerequisites

An introductory course in statistics such as STA 2023 or equivalent.

PURPOSE AND OUTCOME

Course Description

In this course, students will learn the foundations of information visualization and sharpen their skills in communicating using public health data. Throughout the semester, we will primarily use R to explore concepts in graphic design, storytelling, data wrangling and plotting, biostatistics, and artificial intelligence as they apply to data-driven communication.

Course Overview

The world is growing increasingly reliant on collecting and analyzing information to help people make decisions. Because of this, the ability to communicate effectively about data is an important component of future job prospects across nearly all disciplines. Unlike any other courses in biostatistics, students will learn the foundations of information visualization and sharpen their skills in communicating using health science data. Throughout the semester, we will use R and related software to explore concepts in graphic design, storytelling, data wrangling and plotting, biostatistics, and artificial intelligence as they apply to data-driven communication. In addition to techniques covered in other biostatistics courses, we will explore new tools such as the Common Online Data Analysis Platform (CODAP) and R packages tidyverse and plotly. Whether you are an aspiring data scientist or want to learn new ways of presenting public health information, this course will help you build a foundation in how to communicate with data.

Course Objectives and/or Goals

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

- 1) Implement functions in R, RStudio, and R Markdown to create data displays.
- 2) Construct data displays that express the meaning of public health and health science data.
- 3) Point out graphical elements that are useful for assessing graphical excellence and integrity.
- 4) Use visualizations to aid in the presentation of scientific data to a diverse audience.
- 5) Recommend the best types of data visualizations to use for common data types in public health contexts.

Instructional Methods

This course is divided into a series of modules that each contain a list of instructions for completing the module, learning objectives covered in the module, content, and assignments. Foundational learning objectives (FO) typically

include skills and definitions specific to a particular module, while mediating objectives (MO) typically require the applications of FOs to more complex problems. These learning objectives culminate to the ultimate objectives (UO), which are listed in the previous section. This course will use lectures, discussions, and activities (individual and group) to build an active learning environment to foster your ability to create data displays that are effective in contributing to your data's story.

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE CONTENT

Course Schedule (subject to change with advanced notice)

| Week | Date(s) | Topic(s) | Readings |
|------|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 1/13-1/17 | Introduction to Data Viz | Syllabus |
| 2 | 1/20-1/24 | Making Health Data More Meaningful | TED Talk; VT Ch. 1 |
| 3 | 1/27-1/31 | Making Health Data More Meaningful | continued |
| 4 | 2/3-2/7 | Getting Started in R | R Studio Primers |
| 5 | 2/10-2/14 | Introduction to RMD & Prog. Basics | R Studio Primers |
| 6 | 2/17-2/21 | Handling Health Data and Data Verbs | VT Ch. 2; R4DS Ch. 5, 12 |
| 7 | 2/24-2/28 | Handling Health Data and Data Verbs | continued |
| 8 | 3/3-3/7 | Basic Plotting | VT Ch. 5, 6; R4DS Ch. 3 |
| 9 | 3/10-3/14 | Theory of Data Graphics | VDQI Ch. 1-3 |
| 10 | 3/17-3/21 | Spring Break | |
| 11 | 3/24-3/28 | Theory of Data Graphics | VDQI Ch. 4-5 |
| 12 | 3/31-4/4* | Enhancing Plots | VDQI Ch. 9; R4DS Ch. 28 |
| 13 | 4/7-4/11 | Displaying Data Over Time | VT Ch. 4 |
| 14 | 4/14-4/18 | Creating Maps with Data | VT Ch. 8 |
| 15 | 4/21-23 | Visuals for Modelling and AI | R4DS Ch. 22-25; VT Ch. 7 |

*Data Challenge due

Course Materials and Technology

Students will need a laptop that can run R statistical software, R Studio ([min. requirements](#)), and an internet connection. Installation of all required tools will be covered in the first week of class. If you have specific questions about these technology requirements, please contact the instructor. Additionally, students will need access to the following textbooks:

- 1) Required Materials:
 - a. Tufte, E. R. (2001). *The visual display of quantitative information* (Vol. 2). Cheshire, CT: Graphics press. ISBN-13: 978-1930824133 (**VDQI**)
- 2) Reference Materials:
 - a. Wickham, H., Golemund, G. *R for Data Science*. <https://r4ds.had.co.nz/> (**R4DS**) – free resource
 - b. Yau N. *Visualize This. [Electronic Resource]: The FlowingData Guide to Design, Visualization, and Statistics*. Wiley Pub.; 2011. [Available for free through the UF Library](#). (**VT**)
 - c. RStudio Cloud Primers (2020). (<https://rstudio.cloud/learn/primers>)

For technical support for this class, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

ACADMIC REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Assignments

Skills and Readiness Checks (10%) – This course will involve individual/group activities, discussions of course readings, and short readiness quizzes that will aid in learning and ensure all members of the classroom are prepared to be actively engaged in the content. Therefore, completion of these activities is a part of the final grade. These assignments will each be worth 2 points and will receive full credit if all parts of the instructions are completed. Failing to participate in the assignment will result in a 0, and 1 point will be given for partial completion. All these activities will take place inside of the topic modules on the course Canvas page and will be due during the corresponding date ranges for that topic above.

Homework (40%) – These assignments will involve exercises in coding/graphing in R, critiquing graphs, and more thorough responses to course readings to evaluate progress toward the course learning objectives. Most of these assignments will be out of 10 points and will be graded for completion and accuracy. Formative feedback will be provided to aid students in achieving the learning objectives. These assignments are similar to standard homework and will be worked on throughout a topic module. These assignments will be announced at the beginning of each topic module along with their due dates. There will be roughly one assignment for each week, but in some cases, there will only be one per topic module.

Data Challenge Group Project (20%) – In small groups, students will use data visualizations to understand a problem associated with a provided data set. Groups will work to develop a data-driven proposal for a solution to the provided problem that will be summarized and presented to the class. The presentation should include a minimum of 2-3 data visualizations that help describe the data and/or help describe the group’s proposed solution. These projects should be no more than about 10 slides and will be graded on the appropriateness of the proposal and the quality of the data graphics used, according to concepts learned in the course. The presentation and code used to generate visualizations will be submitted via the course Canvas page. A detailed breakdown of the weekly progress checkpoints for this project will be provided on the course page.

Data Visualization Reviews (15% each, 30% total) – This assignment group will consist of two submissions due before the end of final exam week. For this assignment, students will find a data visualization from current-events media or an academic journal and write a review of the visualization. Each review should be approximately one-page long (double spaced). The review should consist of an analysis of the graphical elements and design choices made by the creator and should address concepts covered in the course including graphical excellence, graphical integrity, and appropriateness of the graph type used.

Grading

| Requirement | Due Date | % of final grade |
|--------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Skills and Readiness Checks | As assigned | 10% |
| Homework | As assigned | 40% |
| Data Challenge Group Project | 4/6 | 20% |
| Data Visualization Reviews (2) | 4/29 | 30% |

**University of Florida
College of Public Health & Health Professions Syllabus**

| Percentage Earned | Letter Grade |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 93-100 | A |
| 90-92 | A- |
| 87-89 | B+ |
| 83-86 | B |
| 80-82 | B- |
| 77-79 | C+ |
| 73-76 | C |
| 70-72 | C- |
| 67-69 | D+ |
| 63-66 | D |
| 60-62 | D- |
| Below 60 | E |

| Letter Grade | Grade Points |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| A | 4.0 |
| A- | 3.67 |
| B+ | 3.33 |
| B | 3.0 |
| B- | 2.67 |
| C+ | 2.33 |
| C | 2.0 |
| C- | 1.67 |
| D+ | 1.33 |
| D | 1.0 |
| D- | 0.67 |
| E | 0.0 |
| WF | 0.0 |
| I | 0.0 |
| NG | 0.0 |
| S-U | 0.0 |

More information on UF grading policy may be found at:

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

Policy Related to Make Up Work

If you miss class or know you will be missing class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss a schedule for making up missed work. In general, if you know ahead of time that you will be missing class for an [acceptable reason](#), it is preferred that you turn in the missed work ahead of time. There will be no penalty for late work if you contact me ahead of the due date with an acceptable reason. Late work will receive a 0 if the due date arrives and you have not contacted me about requesting an extension.

Policy Related to Required Class Attendance

Since this course will include group work and in-class discussions, attendance is highly encouraged. More than one unexcused absence will result in a 1% drop per absence towards the “In-Class Assignments” grade category. Please note all faculty are bound by the UF policy for excused absences. For information regarding the UF Attendance Policy see the Registrar website for additional details:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS, ROLES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT

Expectations Regarding Course Behavior

Students are expected to participate and engage in classroom discussions in a professional manner. The nature of these discussions will often have elements that depend on personal preference and further, due to the nature of statistics, may have more than one acceptable answer/solution. Therefore, students are expected to be considerate of others’ responses that may not align with their own.

Communications Guidelines

Please follow general [netiquette guidelines](#) in all course communications with the instructor and fellow students.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to act in accordance with the University of Florida policy on academic integrity. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge:

“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.”

You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit 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.”

It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For additional information regarding Academic Integrity, please see Student Conduct and Honor Code website:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Please remember cheating, lying, misrepresentation, or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and inexcusable behavior.

Online Faculty Course Evaluation Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Policy Related to Guests Attending Class

Only registered students are permitted to attend class. However, we recognize that students who are caretakers may face occasional unexpected challenges creating attendance barriers. Therefore, by exception, a department chair or his or her designee (e.g., instructors) may grant a student permission to bring a guest(s) for a total of two class sessions

per semester. This is two sessions total across all courses. No further extensions will be granted. Please note that guests are **not** permitted to attend either cadaver or wet labs. Students are responsible for course material regardless of attendance. For additional information, please review the Classroom Guests of Students policy in its entirety. Link to full policy: <http://facstaff.php.ufl.edu/services/resourceguide/getstarted.htm>

SUPPORT SERVICES

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Counseling and Student Health

Students sometimes experience stress from academic expectations and/or personal and interpersonal issues that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing issues that have the potential to or are already negatively affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and/or seek help through University resources available to you.

- The Counseling and Wellness Center 352-392-1575 offers a variety of support services such as psychological assessment and intervention and assistance for math and test anxiety. Visit their web site for more information: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>. On line and in person assistance is available.
- You Matter We Care website: <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>. If you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, you can reach out for help through the You Matter We Care website, which is staffed by Dean of Students and Counseling Center personnel.
- The Student Health Care Center at Shands is a satellite clinic of the main Student Health Care Center located on Fletcher Drive on campus. Student Health at Shands offers a variety of clinical services. The clinic is located on the second floor of the Dental Tower in the Health Science Center. For more information, contact the clinic at 392-0627 or check out the web site at: <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>
- Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from:
 - Alachua County Crisis Center: (352) 264-6789
 - <http://www.alachuacounty.us/DEPTS/CSS/CRISISCENTER/Pages/CrisisCenter.aspx>

Do not wait until you reach a crisis to come in and talk with us. We have helped many students through stressful situations impacting their academic performance. You are not alone so do not be afraid to ask for assistance.

Inclusive Learning Environment

Public health and health professions are based on the belief in human dignity and on respect for the individual. As we share our personal beliefs inside or outside of the classroom, it is always with the understanding that we value and respect diversity of background, experience, and opinion, where every individual feels valued. We believe in, and promote, openness and tolerance of differences in ethnicity and culture, and we respect differing personal, spiritual, religious and political values. We further believe that celebrating such diversity enriches the quality of the educational experiences we provide our students and enhances our own personal and professional relationships. We embrace The University of Florida's Non-Discrimination Policy, which reads, "The University shall actively promote equal opportunity policies and practices conforming to laws against discrimination. The University is committed to non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations, genetic information and veteran status as protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act." If you have questions or concerns about your rights and responsibilities for inclusive learning environment, please see your instructor or refer to the Office of Multicultural & Diversity Affairs website: www.multicultural.ufl.edu

