

POLSCI 798

Advanced Topics in Quantitative Methodology

Winter 2021

(Preliminary draft. All course details described below are subject to change.)

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This course is an introduction to modern Bayesian data analysis with emphasis on applications in political science. While the course is largely an applied course, it is intended to teach students modeling and computational tools so that they will be able to develop new models for analyzing original data in their own research projects. Models covered include Bayesian regression models, discrete choice models, hierarchical models, item response theory models, topic models, and Bayesian nonparametrics. Methods for posterior inference, such as Monte Carlo and Markov chain Monte Carlo methods, the expectation-maximization algorithm, and variational inference, are also covered in applied contexts. Prerequisites are POLSCI 599 and 699, or familiarity with basic mathematical statistics and regression analysis equivalent to these courses. Evaluation will be based on a few problem sets and a final project.

1 Contact Information

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2 Logistics

- Lectures:
 - Monday, 4:00–5:20pm, 2333 Mason Hall
 - Wednesday, 4:30–5:50pm, 2469 Mason Hall
- Sections: Wednesday, 6:00–7:00pm, 2455 Mason Hall
- Yuki’s office hours:
 - *CoderSpace Office Hours*: TBA
 - * <https://datascience.isr.umich.edu/events/coderspaces/>
 - Stop by anytime
- Fabricio’s office hours:
 - TBA

3 Questions and Announcements

In addition to sections and office hours, please use the **Piazza Discussion Board** when asking questions about lectures, problem sets, and other course materials. This allows all students to benefit from the discussion and to help each other understand the materials. Both students and instructors are encouraged to participate in discussions and answer any questions that are posted. Engagement in **Piazza** discussions is part of course requirements (see Section 5). All course announcements will also be made through **Piazza**. **Canvas** will still be used for hosting all class materials.

You should have been received an invitation to the POLSCI 798 **Piazza** site. Once you create your account, the **Piazza** course page can also be accessed by logging in from <https://piazza.com> or its mobile apps.

4 Prerequisites

There are three prerequisites for this course:

- Foundations of mathematical statistics covered in POLSCI 599 or equivalent. In particular, students are assumed to be familiar with the topics covered in Chapters 1–5, 6.1–3, 7.5–6, 8.1–5, 8.7–8 of *For probability theory, an alternative reference is Chapters 1–5, 7, 8.1–2, 9–10 of*
- Regression analysis covered in POLSCI 699 or equivalent. In particular, students are assumed to be familiar with ordinary least squares (OLS), maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) of linear and discrete choice models, instrumental variables, and fixed and random effects models for panel data. For those topics, the following references are recommended:
- Proficiency in **R** at the level of

5 Course Requirements

The final grades are based on the following items:

- **Participation** (10%): The level of engagement in lectures, sections, and **Piazza** discussions.
- **Problem sets** (50%): There will be several problem sets throughout the semester. Each problem set will equally contribute to the final grade and contain both analytical and data analysis questions. The following instructions will apply to all problem sets:
 - *Collaboration policy*: Collaboration on the problem sets is encouraged, because it provides opportunities for learning from each other. However, to facilitate individual learning, you should try all problem set questions before working together with other students, and you are required to submit your own answers for each problem set. Copying any part of someone else’s code or answers is considered as academic misconduct.
 - *Submission policy*: Submit your answers individually through **Canvas**. All answers must be typed via **L^AT_EX** and your **R** source code should be included as part of the **L^AT_EX** document. Please ensure your code adheres to the Google’s **R** Style Guide rules available at <https://google.github.io/styleguide/Rguide.xml>. No late submission will be accepted, unless the instructor’s permission is given in advance.
- **Final project** (40%): The final project must be reanalysis and extensions of a published study in the field of your interest. If you have your own data analysis project (e.g., part of your dissertation), you may use it instead of a published study pending the instructor’s approval. In

either case, you are required to use Bayesian methods (not limited to the methods covered in the course). In the project, you start with reanalysis of the empirical results that you choose. The chosen empirical study does not need to involve Bayesian methods, but your reanalysis should approach the study's empirical question in the Bayesian manner. After the reanalysis, your goal is to improve the original analysis either methodologically or substantively (or ideally both). During the entire process, the instructor and the GSI are available to help you with both substantive and technical questions.

Be aware of the following key deadlines. Late submission will be penalized.

- **March 7 (Project identification and data acquisition):** By this date, you should identify your project and acquire the data to be analyzed (e.g., by downloading the data from a replication archive or requesting the data from the original authors). Upload one paragraph (up to 150 words) description of your project and the data set to Canvas.
- **March 21 (Descriptive analysis):** By this date, you should finish your descriptive analysis. Turn in a brief summary of your descriptive analysis of the data (up to three pages including figures and tables). This memo should not simply list tables of descriptive statistics and graphs of variables. Rather, you should describe the aspect of the data upon which you aim to improve the original analysis. Look into the details of the data, and if there are any discrepancies or irregularities in the data, you should find them at this stage.
- **April 4 (Reanalysis and proposed extensions):** By this date, you should finish your Bayesian reanalysis of the data (e.g., the Bayesian replication of the original results) and come up with your proposed extensions of the analysis. Turn in a brief summary of your replication and proposed extensions of the original analysis (up to five pages including tables and figures). Meet with the instructor to get feedback for your memo by **April 8**.
- **April 25 (Final write-up):** You must electronically submit a final write-up to Canvas. *Note that the write-up should not be a paper.* Instead, it should consist of the title, the abstract, the introduction, and tables and figures with informative captions. In the introduction, you should concisely summarize the motivation, research question, methods, contributions, and empirical findings of the project. The write-up must be no longer than 10 pages. The project will be graded based on its overall quality. Specifically, we will look at the novelty of substantive and methodological contributions as well as the effectiveness of presentation and writing.

- **Incomplete Policy:** No incompletes will be given.

6 *CoderSpace* Office Hours

Instead of standard one-on-one meetings, we are going to engage in weekly virtual hackathons to create an open, inviting and supportive space for computational social science programming. The weekly hackathons will convene at **time and location TBA**. To successfully participate in these weekly hackathons, students should identify the programming tasks on which they intend to work. As the faculty and graduate student instructors accompanying our hackathons, we will offer assistance with regard to data analysis including, but not limited to, assignments for this course. While the instructors is available for help, participating students are strongly encouraged to help each other. In addition, these *CoderSpaces* will be open to attend for anyone in the ISR community

at the University of Michigan. Our objective is to engage graduate students, research fellows, and faculty to share their expertise via peer programming as well as to receive assistance in their own data-intensive projects. As such, these weekly *CoderSpaces* are designed to benefit anyone in the ISR community who engages in computational social science projects and seeks to advance their programming skills, be it with regard to parallel computing in **R**, **OpenMP** and **Rcpp**, web scraping using Python, using high performance computing clusters, and other computational methods.

7 COVID Safety Protocols

The following protocols are based on the University policies as of August 2021. They may change depending on the COVID situation over the semester.

- **Vaccination Requirement:** The University of Michigan COVID-19 Vaccination Policy requires faculty, staff, and students to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and submit their proof of vaccination information to U-M no later than August 30, 2021.¹ The University policy also requires a COVID-19 vaccine booster, and the completion should be reported by February 4, 2022.
- **Face Covering:** The University of Michigan Face Covering Policy for COVID-19 requires all students, staff, faculty, and visitors to wear a face covering that covers the mouth and nose when indoors on U-M property.² Therefore, everyone attending in-person POLSCI 599 lectures and sections must wear a face covering, unless exceptions set by the Policy apply. When choosing your face covering, please see CDC's guidance available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>. In particular, surgical masks are recommended over cloth masks.
- **Social Distancing:** The instructors may ask students to keep proper social distance during lectures, sections, and office hours.
- **Ventilation:** The instructors may open doors and windows to ventilate the room during lectures, sections, and office hours.
- **Class Attendance and Assignment Submission Flexibility:** Everyone should not hesitate to avoid attending a class in case there are any symptoms of COVID-19. Missing classes or submission deadlines due to infection prevention measures will not be punished in grading. Lectures will be recorded and posted on the Canvas course site.

8 Other Course Policies

- **Student Sexual Misconduct Policy:** Title IX prohibits sex discrimination to include sexual misconduct: harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can receive confidential support and academic advocacy at the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC). SAPAC can be contacted on their 24-hour crisis line, 734-936-3333 and online at sapac.umich.edu. Alleged violations can be reported non-confidentially to the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE) at institutional.equity@umich.edu. Reports to law enforcement can be made to University of Michigan Police Department at 734-763-3434.³

¹https://ehs.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/COVID-19_Vaccination_Policy.pdf

²<https://ehs.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/U-M-Face-Covering-Policy-for-COVID-19.pdf>

³This statement is taken from: <https://sapac.umich.edu/article/faculty-resources-sample-syllabus-language>.

- **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://ssd.umich.edu>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.⁴
- **Religious-Academic Conflicts:** While the university does not observe religious holidays, it is the policy of the University of Michigan to make every reasonable effort to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to make-up missed academic work. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates on which they will be absent. When the absence coincides with an exam or other assignment due date, the options to make up that missed work may be limited and will be determined by the instructor within the boundaries of the respective class.⁵
- **Academic Misconduct:** The University of Michigan community functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The college promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity, and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. All cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education. Being found responsible for academic misconduct will usually result in a grade sanction, in addition to any sanction from the college. For more information, including examples of behaviors that are considered academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see <https://lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/academic-integrity.html>.⁶
- **Student Mental Health and Wellbeing:** The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact *Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)* at (734) 764-8312 and <https://caps.umich.edu/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult *University Health Service (UHS)* at (734) 764-8320 and <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs>, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see <https://www.uhs.umich.edu/aodresources>. For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: <http://umich.edu/~health>.⁷

⁴This statement is taken from: <https://ssd.umich.edu/article/syllabus-statement>.

⁵This statement is taken from: *Handbook for Faculty and Instructional Staff 2018*, p. 17.

⁶This statement is taken from: *Handbook for Faculty and Instructional Staff 2018*, p. 16.

⁷This statement is taken from: *Handbook for Faculty and Instructional Staff 2018*, p. 16.

9 Textbooks

There is no single required textbook for this course, but lectures are based on relevant chapters and sections of the following books:

Also, the following books are useful for supplementary readings on some of the topics covered in the class:

10 Course Outline

10.1 Part I: Introduction to Bayesian Data Analysis

Part I covers the foundations of applied Bayesian data analysis in social sciences. The topics of this part are the building blocks that anyone conducting Bayesian statistics needs—simple models and computational algorithms.

Bayesian Models:

1. Election predictions
2. Bayes' theorem
3. Prior and posterior distributions
4. Monte Carlo sampling methods
5. The two-parameter Gaussian model

Supplementary readings: Gelman et. al. 1–3, and 10.

Bayesian Linear Regression:

1. Linear regression with Gaussian errors
2. The Gibbs sampler
3. Posterior predictive distributions
4. Asymptotics and Gaussian approximations
5. Comparison with maximum likelihood inference

Supplementary readings: Gelman et. al. 14, 11.1, 6, and 4.

Discrete Choice Models:

1. Probit models
2. Data augmentation
3. Ordered probit models
4. The Metropolis-Hastings algorithm
5. Multinomial probit models (time-permitting)

Supplementary readings: Murphy 9.4; Gelman et. al. 11–12.

Hierarchical Models:

1. Overdispersion
2. The Poisson and negative binomial models
3. Fixed and random effects models for grouped data
4. Robust standard errors under model misspecification
5. The incidental parameter problem
6. Hierarchical regression models

Supplementary readings: Gelman et. al. 5, 15, and 17. Journal articles will be assigned.

Measurement Models:

1. Item response theory models
2. Ideal point estimation using roll call data
3. EM algorithm and variational inference
4. Ideal point estimation of the U.S. Supreme Court judges
5. Dynamic linear models

Supplementary readings: Bishop 9–10; Murphy 12.1. Journal articles will be assigned.

10.2 Part II: Extensions

Part II covers a selection of more advanced topics listed below. We begin this part of the course with text analysis, and progress as time permits. This part of the course aims to open up potential for the students' future research using these methods.

Text:

1. Latent Dirichlet allocation and its variants
2. Variational inference and collapsed Gibbs sampler

More on data augmentation:

1. Logit models
2. Bayesian support vector machines

Bayesian variable selection:

1. Bayesian Lasso
2. Spike-and-slab regression

Networks:

1. Mixed membership stochastic blockmodels
2. Latent space models

Mixture models:

1. Finite mixture models
2. Hidden Markov models
3. Change point models

Bayesian nonparametrics:

1. The Dirichlet process
2. The beta process.