

Description This course explores the use of statistics to shed light on policy issues. Through a variety of examples, we discuss how to translate policy questions into forms that can be analyzed quantitatively, assemble data and carry out computations, and interpret and present the results. Special attention is given to the validity of underlying assumptions and the detection of faulty analysis. The goal is not to make students into number crunchers, but to make them more informed consumers—and alert critics—of quantitative analyses. Along the way, students become proficient in using Microsoft Excel, which is an excellent general-purpose tool. The use of specific statistical techniques is unavoidable, but the larger goal is to develop certain patterns of thought and to gain a deeper appreciation for the strengths and limitations of quantitative analysis as one way of understanding policy issues and choices.

Meetings	Lecture	Monday	7:00 - 9:30 pm
	Discussion	Wednesday	7:00 - 9:30 pm

Discussion sections are optional, to help with problem sets and review concepts introduced in the lectures. All meetings are in 1207 Van Munching Hall.

Grading The course grade is determined as follows:

problem sets:	25%
midterm exam:	25%
final exam:	45%
class participation:	5%

If you must work with others on problem sets, be sure that you can solve the problems on your own. Exam questions will be similar to those on the problem sets, and must be answered without access to notes (except for one sheet of paper). Exam retakes and incompletes will be granted only in exceptional circumstances (e.g., illness, or death in your family).

Textbook Gerald Keller, *Applied Statistics with Microsoft Excel* (Duxbury, 2001) is available at both bookstores, and from *amazon* for less. This textbook is recommended, but not required. See the author's web page at <http://www.globalserve.net/~gkeller> for corrections and data sets; see also the publishers web page.

If you would like a less-expensive book, I recommend Kenneth N. Berk and Patrick Carey, *Data Analysis with Microsoft Excel* (Duxbury, 2004); see publisher and *amazon*. This book focuses more on how to use Excel than statistical theory.

Software Microsoft Excel (any recent version); see Sam Corvah if you need a copy for your computer, or use the computer lab. You may use a laptop during exams; computers will be made available during exams for those who do not have a laptop. See the Excel homepage for tutorials and other resources.

Analyse-It is strongly recommended; this add-in for Excel is reliable and easy to use. Analyse-It is available in the computer lab; get a student version for \$25 via Internet at <http://www.analyse-it.com/sales/prices.asp> (select "1 year student license").

Instructors Rachel Franklin is available before class on Monday from 6 to 7 pm (3139 VMH) and by email (rachel.s.franklin@census.gov) at other times. Your teaching assistant is Tina Hodges (thodges@umd.edu). She will hold discussion sessions and may be available at other times by appointment.

