

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

History 4450: History with Numbers

Semester: Winter 2015

Instructor: Dr. K. Inwood

Office Hours: 15:30–16:20 Mondays and Wednesdays and by appointment, McKinnon Rm 716

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Class time and location: Tuesdays and Thursdays 1430-1550, GRHM Rm 2302

Objectives: This course provides an introduction to the use of quantitative evidence in an historical context. The objective is to improve our abilities to read the literature, and to use and present quantitative material. We emphasize the qualitative dimensions of quantitative history including the context in which a source originated, assumptions embedded in the analysis, substantive versus statistical significance, and presentation strategies to enhance persuasive impact.

Required Textbook: Pat Hudson, *History by Numbers: An Introduction to Quantitative Approaches* (London: Arnold, 2000).

Recommended Reading: Jane E. Miller, *12345, The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Additional Resources: Gary J. Kornblith, *Making Sense of Numbers*

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/numbers/>, an on-line module within the ‘History Matters’ page, American Social History Project; University of Guelph *Numeracy and Quantitative Reasoning* modules at <http://www.uoguelph.ca/numeracy/>; Derek Rowntree’s *Statistics Without Tears: A Primer for Non-Mathematicians* (any edition).

Grading Outline:

Newspaper article commentaries	5% (best 5 of 6, due Jan. 13-29)
Database creation exercise	10% (due Jan. 29)
Data retrieval exercise	10% (due Feb. 12)
Reports on readings	10% (best 5 of 6, due Feb. 3-12)
Project/essay proposal	5% (due Feb. 12)
Independent research presentation	10% (schedule to be determined)
Independent research essay/proposal	35% (final class day Apr. 2)
Discussion and feedback for student presentations	15% (schedule to be determined)

Learning outcomes: Through assignments and in-class discussion students will improve their capacity to read material with quantitative evidence and to deploy it in their own work.

Schedule before the reading break:

- Jan 6, 8 (a) objectives and organization of the course
(b) origin and nature of quantitative thinking, what are quantitative sources, where did they come from, why and how do we use them?
(c) video – The Joy of Stats
Required reading: Hudson chs. 1-2. Recommended: Kornblith, “Getting Started”; Rowntree chs. 1-2; Miller chs. 1-4
- Jan 13, 15 (a) arranging, rearranging and displaying data
(b) begin database creation assignment
(c) newspaper commentaries
(d) first discussion of student projects
Required reading: Hudson chs 3-4. Recommended: Kornblith, “Averages, Totals and Rates”; Rowntree chs. 2-4; Miller chs. 5-8
- Jan 20, 22 (a) time series and indices; sampling and significance testing
(b) newspaper commentaries
(c) review of basic software skills (Excel)
Required reading: Hudson chs. 5, 7, 9. Recommended: Kornblith, “Sampling”; Rowntree chs. 5-7; Miller ch. 3
- Jan 27, 29 (a) relationships between variables
(b) inventory of project ideas (verbal, not graded)
(c) newspaper commentaries
(d) begin data retrieval assignment
Required reading: Hudson ch. 6. Recommended: Recommended: Kornblith, “How are data patterns related?”; Rowntree ch. 8; Miller chs. 9-10
- Feb 3, 5 (a) discussion of select readings
Massimo Livi-Bacci, *A Concise History of World Population* (Blackwell: 4th ed), 127-151
Patricia Thornton and Sherry Olson, “A Deadly Discrimination among Montreal Infants 1860-1900”, *Continuity and Change* 18 n1 (2001), 95-135.
Carole Shammas, "Re-assessing the Married Women's Property Acts", *Journal of Women's History* 6 no. 1 (spring 1994), pp. 9-30.
(b) update on data retrieval
- Feb 10, 12 (b) discussion of select readings
M. Wisselgren, S. Edvinsson, M. Berggren & M. Larsson, ‘Testing Methods of Record Linkage on Swedish Censuses,’ *Historical Methods* 47 (2014), 138-151
Sara Horrell, Jane Humphries and Ken Sneath, “Consumption Conundrums Revealed”, *Economic History Review* (2014).
Bishnupriya Gupta, “Where have all the brides gone? Son preference and marriage in India over the twentieth century” *Economic History Review* 67 (2014), 1-24.
(b) organize project presentations

Newspaper article commentaries: Before the beginning of each class January 13-29 each student will send to the instructor by email a recent news article or equivalent that relies on quantitative evidence in some way along with a 300-400 word commentary on the effectiveness (for analysis and communication) of the journalist's use of the data. You are free to choose any article, short or long, that has appeared in the last six months.

Database Creation Exercise: In this exercise the class creates a small database of **aboriginal** soldiers found in the enlistment or attestation forms of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (World War One). We begin with a class discussion of how to identify aboriginal soldiers. Two databases that attempt to list aboriginal soldiers may be found at <http://www.doingourbit.ca> and <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/~jeffrey1/tribute.htm>. The military enlistment records are accessible at <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/cef/index-e.html>. Each member of the class enters data for ~75 soldiers. Because we aim to combine everyone's observations into a single database the class needs to co-operate in the design of a sampling strategy, determination of what fields to create, rules for transferring information into a structured database and the design of a common data entry template. The 75 or so observations from each student are combined in a single database by one of the class, and the database is available to everyone. Each person then prepares a short (2-4 page) report describing the source, assumptions made in creating the database and comparing briefly two subsets of the data.

Data Retrieval Exercise: The purpose of this exercise is to acquire familiarity with the process of retrieving data from a data archive or distribution centre. In this case the Tri-University Data Resource Centre (TDR) at <http://tdr.tug-libraries.on.ca/>. The exercise has four stages. (i) First download to a spreadsheet every individual observation from Ontario of the 5% sample of the 1901 Canadian census (instructions provided separately). (ii) Report the number of observations, and the mean and standard deviation of age, separately, for males and for females. (iii) Next, either from a second retrieval/download or from the first spreadsheet, determine the distribution of marital status for 16-25 year old men distinguishing those born in North America (US and Canada) and those born in Europe. (iv) Prepare a short (1-3 page) report of your results; describe any problems that you encountered in this exercise.

Project/essay Proposal: 750-1000 words. The purpose of the proposal is to enable the instructor to offer constructive comments. Each proposal must include 6 elements: (i) identification of an interesting historical context and motivation of the specific historical question or hypothesis to be examined, (ii) the data or evidence of possible value to an investigation of the question, (iii) the kind of theory and empirical methodology that you might use, (iv) the significance of the results that you hope to obtain, (v) techniques for presentation that may be useful and (vi) a preliminary bibliography. Students must ensure that sufficient data and secondary sources are available for them to complete the final paper.

Project/essay Presentation: In most cases, the project will not be completed at the time of presentation; however it must be sufficiently advanced to be able to support a useful discussion. This will require a contextualization of the study in an historical literature, identification of the principal argument and relevant quantitative evidence, and the findings based on analysis to date. A one page abstract will be provided to the class no less than 48 hours before each presentation.

The presentation will include a report of the data assembled (including where it came from, its scope and its limitations), the methodology the student has used to analyze it, preliminary results, and remaining work to be done. Everyone else in the class is responsible to contribute constructive comments to improve the project in its final form.

Project/essay Final Paper: 4000-5000 words. Grading of the final essay is similar to that of an essay for any other course. Students should be familiar with the History Department Writing Guide for Research Papers http://www.uoguelph.ca/history/o_essays.shtml. Students should also be sure to incorporate the comments from their presentation discussions in the final product. Additional guidelines appended to the course outline give some idea of qualities of writing valued by this instructor. All assignments will be subject to a late penalty of 5 percentage points per day on the final grade unless the student has been granted additional time by the instructor.

Reading Reports: We discuss in class three research articles during the two week period Feb. 3-13. Before each of the classes you will provide a 2-4 page report including two questions of interest for seminar discussion. The questions will build on your reading of the article and should be of a character to stimulate class discussion. Our principle interest in these articles is methodological – what evidence is available to answer particular questions of historical interest, how source availability shapes what we might hope to know, which methods are used for presentation and analysis, and so on. Preparation of the questions will enhance your own ability to contribute to class discussion, and of course you may find occasion during the class to ask your question. No questions will be accepted after the beginning of the relevant class.

Course Participation: Seminars are dependant on good preparation and contributions as well as the fostering of a respectful learning environment by all. Students will be evaluated on the quality of their preparation and their contributions in the final section of the course, which is devoted to the in-class presentation and discussion of student projects.

- A Excellent: always participates with valuable comments, frequently leads debate or offers original analysis and comment, uses assigned reading to back up arguments, clearly has done and understands virtually all reading, intelligently uses this understanding in discussion, encourages participation by others in the class and is supportive of them
- B Good: almost always participates, thoughtful comments for the most part, a willing and able contributor, has done most reading, provides competent analysis of reading when prompted, does not respond to or encourage participation by others in the class
- C Fair: Frequent contributor, has basic grasp of key concepts; arguments sporadic and at times incomplete or poorly supported, displays familiarity with most reading but tends not to analyze it or explore connections between different sources, comments and contributions may discourage participation by others
- D Not Good: occasional participation, remarks in class marred by misunderstandings of key concepts, only occasionally offers comments or opinions, actual knowledge of material is outweighed by improvised comments and remarks, little or no apparent familiarity with assigned materials, comments and contributions may discourage participation by others
- F Poor: rarely speaks, and parrots readings when put on the spot to offer an opinion. Distracts other members of the group with private conversation, inappropriate comments and/or use of wireless communication devices during class.

Standards for Grading of an Essay

- A (1) Has a thesis that falls within the framework of the course
(2) Expresses its purpose clearly and persuasively
(3) Begins and ends effectively
(4) Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples, and details
(5) Is well-organized and unified
(6) Uses appropriate, direct language
(7) Correctly acknowledges and documents sources
(8) Is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format
(9) Maintains a level of excellence throughout, and shows originality and creativity in realizing (1) through (6)
- B Realizes (1) through (8) fully and completely -- and demonstrates overall excellence -- but shows little or no originality or creativity.
- C Realizes (1) through (8) adequately -- and demonstrates overall competence -- but contains a few, relatively minor errors or flaws. A “C” paper may show great creativity and originality, but those qualities don’t make up for poor or careless writing. A “C” paper usually looks and reads like a next-to-final draft.
- D Fails to realize some elements of (1) through (8) adequately -- and contains several, relatively serious errors or flaws, or many minor ones. A “D” paper often looks and reads like a first or second draft.
- F Fails to realize several elements of (1) through (8) adequately -- and contains many serious errors or flaws, and usually many minor ones, as well. An “F” paper often looks and reads like a very preliminary draft.

E-mail Communication: As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <mail.uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement: When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. [See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration.](#)

Drop Date: The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday, 6 March 2015**. For [regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar.](#)

Copies of out-of-class assignments: Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility: The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an

identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. For more information, contact SAS at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email csd@uoguelph.ca or see the website: <http://www.csd.uoguelph.ca/csd/>

Student Rights and Responsibilities: Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. [The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar](#)

Academic Misconduct: The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. [The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.](#)

Recording of Materials: Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources: The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.