STAT 301Q – BUSINESS STATISTICS
Spring Semester 2026

Instructor:	Dr. John Rasp
Email:	jrasp@stetson.edu Email is the best way to contact me. I check email frequently during the workday (and much less frequently evenings and weekends).
Website:	johnraspstats.net
Office hours:	Mondays 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Tuesdays 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Wednesdays 1:15 – 2:15 p.m. Or by appointment. Office hours are held in the LBC lobby.
Class meets:	Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays, 10:00 – 10:50 a.m., LBC 124

Course objectives:
By the end of this course, a successful student will be able to:
1) Apply basic principles of probability;
2) Use appropriate tools of descriptive statistics to summarize a set of data;
3) Design, conduct, analyze, and describe findings from a meaningful experiment; and
4) Formulate, collect data, compute results, and infer conclusions from a valid forecast.

Methods of instruction:
This course will operate primarily as a traditional face-to-face lecture class. Class time will be devoted to lecture, as well as to directed activities applying the analytic techniques covered in the lectures and readings. Students are *strongly* encouraged to bring laptop computers to every class session. Standard reading assignments, homework problems, and tests ("knowledge festivals") will be used to reinforce class concepts and computations.

Textbook: *Statistics for Business and Economics*, by Newbold, Carlson, and Thorne
The book is widely regarded as one of the better introductory texts on the market. It is written in part by Dr. Betty Thorne, a Stetson professor. Use of the textbook as a learning tool is encouraged but not required.

Equipment: I recommend that you have the following tools for this course.
A calculator, capable of handling exponents and logarithms. This could be a standard scientific calculator or perhaps your cell phone with an appropriate app. You should bring your calculator to class each day.
A laptop computer, capable of running Microsoft Excel. Ideally, you will have your own laptop, and will bring it to class regularly. If this isn't feasible, then be prepared to do computer work outside the classroom. Unless you are really comfortable using the trackpad on your laptop, investing in an external mouse for the laptop might be a wise idea.
A loose-leaf notebook. I *strongly* encourage you to obtain a loose-leaf notebook (*not* spiral-bound) for use in this class. You will be getting a *lot* of handouts in this class, and this is the best way to keep course materials organized.
A stapler. If you don't already own a stapler, then buy one. You will get more long-term value out of a stapler than you will out of many textbooks you buy for other (lesser) classes. I expect that multi-page assignments will be stapled together. (And no, dog-earing the pages together does *not* count. Professionalism matters.)

Why Should You Take This Class?

Your answer *should* be more than simply "four credits, to fulfill a graduation requirement."

So what should you expect to get out of this course? My primary goal is that you have an appreciation for the usefulness of statistical tools. You should come out of this class saying good things, like "that's interesting stuff" and "I see how this gets used in real life." You should be more quantitatively literate and computer literate. You should be better able to formulate decision problems in quantitative terms, know how to acquire the necessary data to answer the question, and know how to analyze those data. An important secondary goal is that you be better able to communicate the results of your analyses. The best technical skills in the world are of little use if you are unsuccessful in communicating your findings in a way others can understand.

What should you NOT expect out of this course? First, let's clear up one common misconception. *"Stats" is NOT a mathematics course*. This is not a class in deriving formulas and manipulating algebraic symbols. The goal is not to memorize an algorithm or to "plug numbers into a formula" to get an answer. Instead, our focus is on the reasoning behind, and interpretation of, quantitative tools. The calculations we will do are NOT an end in themselves. Rather, they are part of an overall reasoning process that focuses on valid analysis and valid conclusions.

As for other expectations: You should NOT expect to do a lot of busy-work. You should NOT say "I'll never use this stuff again." You SHOULD expect to invest time into studies, and into homework that enables you to understand statistical procedures and applications. You SHOULD be focused on real-world use of the material. You SHOULD approach the course with the expectation that you will learn things that are useful and interesting - and that you will have fun while doing so.

How Will This Class Operate?

Because this is a lecture- and activity-based class, on-time in-person attendance is expected. I recognize that there will upon occasion be valid reasons to miss a class. An absence is "excused" if you let me know in advance, *no matter what the reason*. If you don't let me know in advance, then I'm going to make a judgment call based upon circumstances and time of notification. (Example: you overslept. Sheepish apologies emailed when you wake up are probably excused; waiting until next class to tell me probably isn't.) Unexcused absences will be severely penalized. One unexcused absence may result in a failing grade for the course; two unexcused absences almost certainly will. Similarly, being habitually late to class is warrant for a failing grade. Treat this class as seriously as you would a "real job" … because right now being a student is your real job.

But simply occupying space in the classroom won't magically cause the knowledge to appear in your brain. Accordingly, following most classes there will be a short review assignment, to reinforce knowledge of the day's material. This assignment will normally be due at the beginning of the following class. It will not be graded, but will simply be checked for reasonable effort.

Mature, professional behavior is expected of all in the class. This includes regular, on-time class attendance, active and non-disruptive participation in class discussion and activities, and respectful behavior toward members of the class. Cell phones should be put away, out of sight (save in those rare circumstances when you are using it as a calculator). Moreover, should we see a reprise of the coronavirus pandemic (or the zombie apocalypse, or whatever), all are expected to follow established health norms and university policy (face masks, social distancing, whatever) while attending class. Violation of these norms is warrant for a failing grade in the course.

How Will We Achieve Course Objectives?

You learn from what you do, far more than from what you hear. Accordingly, class activities assignments are structured to aid your mastery of course material.

Attendance:
On-time arrival and full participation in class is an important part of the learning process. Each class attended is worth ten points toward the "participation" grade for the class. Showing up late or leaving early reduces this to five points. The lowest four attendance grades are dropped in computing the course grade. (But remember: *unexcused* absences can warrant a failing grade.)

Lecture review assignments:
Following each class there will be a short lecture review assignment. These assignments are designed as a structured means of learning the course material. Review assignments are due at the beginning of the following class. They are not graded; they are simply checked to see that reasonable effort was invested. Each counts ten points toward the "participation" grade for the course. Assignments submitted late receive a penalty grade. The lowest four lecture reviews are dropped in computing the course grade.

Homework:
In addition to the daily review assignments, there may be a few somewhat longer homework assignments. These will be announced in class, and will be part of the "participation" grade.

Exams:
Four regular exams (or, as I prefer to call them, "knowledge festivals") are planned. These are designed to reinforce your knowledge of course concepts and computations, so that your achievements in learning may be applauded and deficiencies in knowledge may be remedied in a timely manner. All "knowledge festivals" are cumulative. Two will be open-notes; two will be closed-notes. Tentative dates are given in the accompanying course schedule.

Makeup exams:
Students missing a regular "knowledge festival" *for any reason* are excused from it, with other exam (er, "festival") grades counting proportionately more. Makeup exams are not generally given.

Final exam:
This course has a cumulative final exam ("ultimate knowledge festival") during the university's scheduled final exam period. You must take, and pass, the U.K.F. to receive a passing grade in the course. Time (per the university's final exam schedule) is as follows:

Tuesday, May 5 – 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

This "knowledge festival" will have both a closed-notes and an open-notes portion. It will provide a comprehensive review of key concepts and computations from the entire course. Ideally, it should be a celebration of what you have learned over the course of the semester.

Studying for exams:
The instructor does not believe in "studying for exams." There are two reasons for this. One is motivation: The purpose of a class is not to pass a test. Rather, it is to master a body of knowledge. If you learn the material, you'll do fine on the test. The converse is not necessarily the case, however. The second reason has to do with process. Too often "study for an exam" means a frantic cram the night beforehand, which just leads to short term memory and long term forgetting. The purpose of the daily review assignments is to give you structured review so that you are in fact studying the material – but you are doing so in a manner that is far more effective in the long run.

What Other Matters Will Facilitate Good Course Outcomes?

Collaborative work and academic integrity:
You are allowed, and encouraged, to confer with others on homework assignments in this class, and to use tools such as generative AI. However, the write-up should be your own (in your own words). Rule of thumb: if I can tell at a glance whom you worked with, then you have gone beyond the bounds of acceptable collaboration. On written work, appropriate standards of academic citation are expected (including to any generative AI used); failure to do so is dishonest. Apparent violations of norms for academic integrity will be referred to the student-run Honor System Council. I will normally follow their recommendations for academic sanctions. Note also that, while some use of AI may be warranted, excessive use is counterproductive. Remember: the goal is to actually learn something, not to complete an assignment for the sake of completing an assignment.

If you're lost and falling behind in the course:
The easy solution is to ignore the problem and just hope it goes away. That's also the absolutely least effective solution.

Your regular attendance, and your regular completion of the review assignments, should be our first check on whether things are going OK in this class. Some early warning signs: If you regularly feel "too sick" to come to class when it's really 'statistics-itis' or even some general low-level depression. Or you're swamped with work in other (lesser) classes or with something happening in real-life and so put off a daily review until 'later' … and then put off the next one … and then the next one … and the next thing you know, you're *really really* lost. The actual reason doesn't matter much. I'm not particularly interested in issues of "whose fault this is" and I'm far more inclined to focus on "what we need to do, to make things right."

I'll try to intervene when I notice something going awry. But I don't always catch things. And yes the course has some really negative consequences (like a failing grade) for things like attendance and lecture review issues. And I'll use them if I have to. But I don't want to have to. I'd much rather take the time to figure out what we need to do, to make things work.

So talk to me. I'm only half as evil as everyone says.

Accessibility:

> "If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of a course, you should meet with the course instructor to discuss ways to ensure full participation. If disability-related accommodations are necessary, you must register with Academic Success through the Accessibility Services Center located in the Hollis Family Student Success Center at 421 N. Woodland Blvd. (386-822-7127; Accessibility Servicess Webage) and notify the course instructor of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. The student, course instructor and Academic Success will plan how best to coordinate accommodations."

That's the university's standard boilerplate, pulled from the university website. A couple things to note: One is that the office is part of the Academic Success Center on the second floor of the library. Second, let me underscore that I'm more than understanding that sometimes individuals need individualized provision for their particular circumstances. Whatever the situation (more time on ~~exams~~, er, "knowledge festivals," separate testing, *whatever*) then work with Accessibility Services and me, and we'll aim to make it happen.

Caveat:
I reserve the right to make minor modifications in the course schedule and mechanics, as the situation warrants. I will announce such changes to the class. (I don't anticipate any problems, but in today's litigation-filled world you often have to say explicitly what a reasonable person would normally assume implicitly.)

How Will You Be Evaluated in this Class?

I'm very much of the opinion that grades are over-emphasized in contemporary academic practice. (There's a reason that this section comes at the end of the syllabus, rather than at the beginning.) I like the following quote (which I stumbled across in a professional journal):

> It is not difficult to understand why students might come to the conclusion that instructors overly stress grade orientation and give only short shrift to learning orientation. Almost every syllabus contains descriptions of how grades are calculated; few address the need to find excitement in course material. Colleges regularly establish remedial classes for students receiving poor grades; they rarely, if ever, offer remedial instruction for students unable to find excitement in English literature or physics. Grades are a required part of every class, but instructors are not obliged to stimulate interest in course content. In fact, it is possible for someone to teach for an entire career and not excite interest in his or her discipline; any instructor who failed to assign grades would be dismissed after only a short tenure.
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> Howard R. Pollio and Hall P. Beck, "When the Tail Wags the Dog"
> *Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 71, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2000), p. 93

I will grade you fairly and objectively. I will not inflate grades. I will make every effort to provide prompt feedback. And I will maintain a focus that the grade is a *means* (to identify strengths in learning that can be celebrated, and deficiencies in learning that can be remedied), rather than an *end*.

Interpretation of grades:
Course grades represent the instructor's assessment of the student's demonstrated mastery of the course material. Grades are assigned according to the following interpretative framework:

A – An "A" indicates that the student has demonstrated outstanding mastery of the subject material. S/he shows a deep understanding of the material's concepts, implications, and applications.

B – A "B" indicates that the student has demonstrated a solid competence in the mechanics of the subject matter, but is weak in understanding of the underlying motivations of the material.

C – A "C" indicates that the student has demonstrated basic ability in course concepts as reflected by foundational capability in calculation, but has marginal capabilities with material beyond these fundamentals.

Grades of "D" and "F" represent unacceptably low levels of course mastery, and will be assigned as required.

Computation of grades:
Assessment of student mastery of course material will be based on the following:

Four regular exams ("knowledge festivals")	60%
Final exam ("ultimate knowledge festival")	20%
Participation (attendance, lecture reviews, homework)	20%

A scale of 90/80/70 will be used. All course assignments and "knowledge festivals" will be written and graded in the context of the interpretive framework and scale given above. Grades are NOT posted on Canvas. This is a course in data analysis; you should be able to analyze your data.