

Syllabus, Eco B2000, Colin Powell School at CCNY, Fall 2025

# Statistics and Introduction to Econometrics

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Thursday 5-7pm, in NAC 1-302, STC 1 in Tech Center (ground floor of library)

## Course Description

This MA course is designed to teach you to use the statistical tools that form an economist's basic toolbox in a hands-on environment working with a lot of real data. Students will get a better understanding of statistics, of how numerical evidence is used and abused, and of how people can torture the numbers to make them appear to support their point of view. In our modern world statistics are the first choice for how someone is going to lie to you. If you know some of the secrets then you will be able to see through other people's lies (and perhaps create some of your own – if you choose to embrace the dark side!).

## Course Mode

The course is *in person*. It's important to meet people in person to establish relationships, since your fellow students are vital in your education. You might, from time to time, be unable to get to campus. I might have a zoom link for class so you can get some exposure to what's going on but note that is substantially inferior. No zoom for exams.

## Textbook

There will be a diagnostic test at the beginning of term; students will use the online module on Statistics from Hawkes Learning <http://www.hawkeslearning.com/>.

We will learn the R statistical language. You should get *R for Data Science* by Hadley Wickham (you can read it online for free <https://r4ds.had.co.nz/> or pay for a download). This course uses the textbook by Kieran Healy, *Data Visualization*, which demonstrates many useful techniques in R. You can buy it or there is a free version online <https://socviz.co/>.

This course uses the textbook by James H Stock and Mark W Watson, *Introduction to Econometrics*, Pearson. Earlier editions are very close substitutes. The accompanying study guide is not necessary.

## Professor

Kevin R. Foster, Department of Economics and Business, The Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, The City College of New York, [kfoster@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:kfoster@ccny.cuny.edu), m: (860) 593-7674 Pronouns: he/him. Please call me "Kevin" (*although default for instructors is Professor <lastname> I'm just weird*). Office hours via Calendly link <https://calendly.com/kevinfoster/15min>.

## Course Requirements/Prerequisites

This course assumes that you have prerequisites of a basic undergraduate course in statistics, a course in Calculus, and enough familiarity with computers to quickly learn new programs. I will use math freely and

often. Matrix algebra is not a prerequisite although I will occasionally use it to help more advanced students get a fuller understanding. Stats requires a willingness to work through the algebra and plow through the applicable formulas. However, that said, the point of doing it on a computer is so that the machine can do the donkey work while you worry about bigger questions – so what? why? what does it mean? what else do I need to know? what other hypotheses could present the same pattern?

Some course material will be presented in online videos. All assignments will be submitted online. All exams will be online. We will have a Slack channel for regular communication.

## **Computer Use**

We'll do a lot of work with (free) computer programs such as R and RStudio. You don't need your own computer although it would be helpful. If you don't have that, you will spend time in the campus computer labs. You are not required to have previous experience with programming although that would be useful.

## **Educational Outcomes**

Students will be able to apply mathematically rigorous analysis to topics such as hypothesis testing, common probability density functions, and regression analysis. More details in the document, "Skills Learned in This Course," available from the course webpage.

## **Grading**

Course grades are determined by four factors: your diagnostic test result, your scores on the exams, your demonstrated skill at using statistical analysis in a final project, and your scores on the homework assignments. The exams have a 45% weight, the project has a 30% weight, homework gets 15%, and the diagnostic test is 10%. Homework assignments and diagnostic test are graded as check, check-plus or – minus, or fail. In calculating the final grade, there is no BS factor of effort or any other unobservable will-o-wisps – the weightings sum to 100. Your grade is determined entirely on observed performance.

Grades will be posted on the course page, so that you can check your progress and determine what grade you can expect to receive. In this public grade posting, you will be identified only by the last 4 digits of your CUNYfirst ID number (if you wish to choose some other 4-digit identifier, email me).

## **Time Requirements**

You should expect to spend 10-15 hours per week on this class. My simple calculation is that a grad student who is going to school "full time" takes 3 or 4 classes and someone who works fulltime at a job works 40-50 hours per week. So about 10 hours per week is a good estimate. If you don't put in that much work then you can't expect to get a good grade. (This is confirmed by research)

## **Exam**

The syllabus shows the weeks when the two exams are scheduled.

## Final Project

You will work with a small group of fellow students to write a project to analyze a question using one of the datasets that we'll be working with. You will make one or more presentations about this project in class; the presentation counts as homework and then the written project has a separate grade. You will finish by making a presentation to me, for final assessment. This will require you to use statistical analysis software with a large dataset. More details will be given later in the course.

## Course Material

Homework and basic course documents will be on the class page, publicly accessible from my web page (<http://kfoster.ccnycuny.edu/classes/fall2025/>). Little of the material will be available on the Brightspace course page. More on the class Slack channel and Github. I will periodically send emails to the class so you must regularly check your CCNY email.

## Additional Reading

If you end up engulfed in a love affair with stats, you might be interested in these books too:

- Judea Pearl, *Book of Why*.
- Andrew Gelman and Jennifer Hill, *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models*.
- Cathy O'Neil & Rachel Schutt, *Doing Data Science*.
- Cosma Rohilla Shalizi, *Advanced Data Analysis from an Elementary Point of View*.
- John W. Tukey, *Exploratory Data Analysis* (in library)
- Edward R. Tufte *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information, Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative* (in library);
- Howard Wainer, *Graphic Discovery: A Trout in the Milk and Other Visual Adventures*
- David Salsburg, *Lady Tasting Tea: How Statistics Revolutionized Science in the Twentieth Century*
- Stephen Stigler, *Statistics on the Table* (in library) and *The History of Statistics: The Measurement of Uncertainty before 1900* (in library).
- Dierdre McCloskey, *Economical Writing and The Rhetoric of Economics* (in library).
- Peter Kennedy, *A Guide to Econometrics*.
- Joshua Angrist & Jörn-Steffen Pischke, *Mostly Harmless Econometrics: An Empiricist's Companion*.
- John Hopcroft and Ravindran Kannan, *Foundations of Data Science*.
- DJ Patil and Hilary Mason, *Data Driven: Creating a Data Culture*.
- Cathy O'Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK\\_zyqgl\\_HY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK_zyqgl_HY)
- Annie Duke, *Thinking in Bets*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uYNsSeYj4p4>
- Allison Schrager, *An Economist Walks into a Brothel, and other unexpected places to understand risk*. <https://www.allisonschrager.com/why>
- Leonard Mlodinow, *The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives*.
- Scott Cunningham, *Causal Inference: the Mixtape*.
- Maria Konnikova, *The Biggest Bluff*.
- Carl Bergstrom & Jevin West, *Calling Bullshit*.

## Weekly Topics

Eco B2000, Fall 2025

Kevin R Foster, CCNY

Date	Chapter(s)	Topic
Aug 28	1-3, <i>online material</i>	Introduction to Econometrics, R, Visualization
Sept 4	4; Hawkes	Basic Statistics & Random Variables
Sept 11	5, <i>online material</i>	Estimating Parameters
Sept 18	6, <i>online material</i>	Hypothesis Testing
Sept 25	7, <i>online material</i>	Linear Regression
<b>Friday Sept 26</b>		<b>Diagnostic Test must be completed before 11:59pm (local time)</b>
<b>Oct 2</b>		<b>no class</b>
Oct 9	<i>online material</i>	More Regression
<b>Oct 16</b>	<i>comprehensive</i>	<b>Exam 1</b>
Oct 23	<i>online material</i>	Nonlinear Regression, Panel Data
Oct 30	<i>online material</i>	Binary Dependent, Instruments, Quantile, Propensity Score
Nov 6	<i>online material</i>	Further Topics: Trees, Random Forest
Nov 13	<i>online material</i>	Further Topics: LASSO, Spike & Slab, Factor Analysis, (Time Series)
Nov 20	<i>comprehensive</i>	<b>Exam 2</b>
<b>Nov 27</b>		<b>no class</b>
Dec 4		<i>Class Presentations of Research Projects – attendance is graded</i>
Dec 11		<i>Class Presentations of Research Projects – attendance is graded</i>
<b>Friday Dec 19</b>		<b>Final Project Due</b> before midnight

Chapters refer to **Data Visualization** by Kieran Healy. That text is available free. Students must purchase access to Hawkes Basic Statistics.

There will be lecture notes online – these are most important. Exams will cover material in both textbook and lecture.

Deviations from the schedule will be announced in class.

The exam dates are given above. You must take the exams at the scheduled times. No excuses.

## CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity

"Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research or writings as your own. The following are some examples of plagiarism:

- "Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes attributing the words to their source;
- "Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the source;
- "Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source;
- "Failing to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments.
- "Internet plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the internet without citing the source, and "cutting & pasting" from various sources without proper attribution."
- A student who plagiarizes may incur academic and disciplinary penalties, including failing grades, suspensions, and expulsion.
- A complete copy of the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity may be downloaded from the College's home page.

## Student Support Services

There are many resources available to support students at the Colin Powell School. We encourage you to speak with a Colin Powell School Academic Advisor for guidance about which might be suitable.

<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool/office-academic-advisors>. Also, consider the resources outlined below.

## Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Your success in this class is important to me! We all learn differently. The Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) is dedicated to providing students with disabilities equal access to the College curriculum. The Office ensures that, upon request, qualified students with disabilities are provided reasonable and effective accommodations, as mandated by law, as well as appropriate support services. At City College, we strive to make all our classes accessible to every student, regardless of any disability (visible or non-visible; physical, cognitive, emotional, or learning) or any other special circumstances (such as a medical, personal, or housing emergency; family responsibilities; financial difficulties; legal difficulties; or immigration status) that may affect your ability to attend class and complete the coursework. Please speak to your professors in office hours or via email early in the semester or as soon as you're aware that you may need accommodations.

In addition, City College offers resources to students in a wide range of circumstances. Please share this information with your friends and classmates at CCNY! We want all students to succeed and to take advantage of all the support the college has to offer.

Students who contact SDS and indicate that they have a disability or believe that they might qualify for services will be asked to make an appointment for an intake interview with SDS staff. To qualify for services, students must register with SDS.

Service animals are welcome in class.

Early planning is essential for many of the resources, adjustments and accommodations; students are asked to contact SDS at the earliest possible date (NA 1/218; 212-650-5913 or 212-650-6910 for TTY/TTD or [disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu)).

## Mental Health

CCNY has free anonymous programs available to community members who need help, <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/counseling> for details or call (212)650-8222. Daytime/Walk-in Crisis Services are available to students whose crisis affects their own or others' safety. If the crisis is urgent but the Counseling Center is closed, please contact Public Safety at (212)650-7777 or call the Crisis line at (800)273-8255. If you are in a life-threatening situation while off-campus, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Room. There is a Psychological Counselor: Confidential Advocate for confidential clinical services to students and employees who have experienced gender-based violence. To be immediately connected with a Crisis Counselor, text CUNY to 741741. This Crisis Text Line is a free and confidential service that assists in problem solving and safety planning during moments of crisis and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Colin Powell School also has a partnership with NAMI-NYC to help you if you are living with mental health challenges or if you care about someone experiencing those challenges. NAMI-NYC programs and services are available FREE of charge and you can be as anonymous as you'd like. Contact NAMI-NYC's helpline via phone (212-684-3264) or email ([helpline@naminyc.org](mailto:helpline@naminyc.org)).

The Psychological Center, located in the NAC Building, 8th Floor offers a range of in-person psychological services at low cost, including individual and group psychotherapy, couple's therapy and psychological testing. All services are confidential. To schedule a psychological screening, please call 212-650-6602 or you can go on the clinic's website <https://www.thepsychologicalcenter.org/> and click on NEW PATIENT to begin the process for a psychological screening.

## IT Needs

If you need a computer, tablet, or wi-fi, you can request them through an online form ([https://portal.ccny.cuny.edu/depts/oit/cuny\\_loaner/login.php](https://portal.ccny.cuny.edu/depts/oit/cuny_loaner/login.php)). You can also contact the iMedia Center via email ([imedia@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:imedia@ccny.cuny.edu)) or their Zoom virtual front desk, Monday-Thursday, 11am-3pm (<https://ccny.zoom.us/j/2126505480>).

## Tutoring/Academic Support

If you are struggling in any of your classes, don't hesitate to get extra academic support. Talk with advisors (contact info below). There are various student tutoring services through CCNY Tutoring Services (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/academics/tutoring>) or City Tutors (<https://www.thecitytutors.org/>). The Colin Powell School also offers free peer mentoring with trained upperclassman students to help motivate, focus on academics, and support students in achieving their goals. To sign up, simply fill out the form (<https://airtable.com/appbIX4GFdKGDMLwL/shrWHKbV8QKh3017A>). Learn more through the Colin Powell Office of Student Success Mentoring (<https://cps-oss.ccny.cuny.edu/mentoring/>).

## Advising

Contact the Colin Powell School Advising Office (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool/office-academic-advisors>). At their website, you can make a virtual appointment with one of the advisors or you can find their email addresses so you can send them a message.

## Financial Aid

For Assistance with Financial aid: Please reach out to our Colin Powell School Embedded Financial Aid Advisor, Jennifer Lavayen: [jlavayen@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:jlavayen@ccny.cuny.edu). Navigating the financial side of your education can be overwhelming, but there are unique resources specifically available to students within Colin Powell School. Reaching out for assistance can open doors to scholarships, grants, and other opportunities tailored just for you, easing your financial burden. Remember, investing time in understanding and applying for these specialized resources can make a huge difference in your college experience. Don't miss out on the help that's designed to support you—take the first step today. To schedule an appointment and view walk-in times please use the following link: <https://ccny-cuny.campus.eab.com/pal/thOILVZXH3>

## Internships and Careers

To receive information and support about securing internships and planning for your post-college career, please contact Colin Powell School Office of Student Success. <https://cps-oss.ccny.cuny.edu/> The Office of Student Success offers something for everyone – whether you are a new student or are about to graduate. Their offices are on the 6th floor of the NAC (6/274 through 6/288) next to the Office of Academic Advising. We encourage you to go to the CPS Student Center (6/289), where you can meet new people, study, and hang out between classes.

## Emergency Grants

The Colin Powell School has Emergency Grants for students. If you need help and/or funds, please contact Ms Charlene Darbassie [cdarbassie@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:cdarbassie@ccny.cuny.edu). You can learn more about these emergency grants online (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/colinpowellschool/student-emergency-fund>).

## Student Basic Needs

Students who find themselves experiencing difficulties obtaining food every day or who lack a stable and safe place to live are urged to come to Benny's pantry for assistance (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/bennysfoodpantry>). Benny's pantry is located on the ground floor of the North Academic Center (NAC) and is open to anyone within the CUNY community (students, staff,

faculty) in need of support. The pantry is open from 10am to 6pm and is self-serve. Additional emergency support for financial, health and housing needs are also available through Benny's. Please contact Dee Dee Mozeleski at [dmozeleski@ccny.CUNY.edu](mailto:dmozeleski@ccny.CUNY.edu) or Charles Ramirez @[cramirez@ccny.CUNY.edu](mailto:cramirez@ccny.CUNY.edu) for additional details.

## **Policies on Non-Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**

The City College prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, transgender, disability, genetic predisposition or carrier status, alienage or citizenship, religion, race, color, nationality or ethnic origin, or veteran, military or marital status in its student admissions, employment, access to programs, and administration of educational policies.

Questions, concerns, or complaints based on any of the above may be directed to the Office of Diversity and Compliance, Wille Administration Building, Room 212 (212-650-6310). In addition, the specific form of gender discrimination, "sexual harassment," is prohibited by the policies of the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York. Student complaints alleging sexual harassment should be directed to the Sexual Harassment Awareness and Intake Coordinator (see Appendix B.15 of the Bulletin, and the Sexual Harassment brochure for the name of the current Coordinator and a list of Committee members who may be contacted). Brochures are available in the Office of Diversity and Compliance, the Office of Human Resources, the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and at the NAC Welcome Center. Information is also available on the City College website under Office of Diversity.

If you are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence or violence that is sex-based, gender-based, or sexuality-based; or if you are experiencing or have experienced discrimination because of gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language, religion, disability, or other reasons, please report it to Sheryl Konigsberg in the Office of Affirmative Action, Compliance, and Diversity via email ([dcuozzo@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:dcuozzo@ccny.cuny.edu)) or phone (212-650-7330). For a confidential discussion of these and related issues, please contact Sophie English via email ([senglish@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:senglish@ccny.cuny.edu)) or phone (212-650-8905).

The Health and Wellness Center offers resources to survivors of gender-based and sexuality-based violence as well as to all members of the LGBTQIA+ community at CCNY. You can learn more about these gender resources online (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/health-wellness/gender-resources>) or via phone (212-650-8222), via email ([genderresources@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:genderresources@ccny.cuny.edu)), or by visiting their virtual front desk, Monday-Thursday, 10am-4pm (<https://ccny.zoom.us/j/2126508222>).

Every student has their own identity and can choose what name to use and what pronoun. Gender Resources info <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/health-wellness/gender-resources>

## **Policy on Children in Class**

All students should assist in welcoming their peers who are parents. Breastfeeding babies and newborns welcome always. For older children, I understand that unforeseen disruptions in childcare can be an issue so you are welcome to bring your child to class – although this is not a longterm solution.

## **Veterans**

We welcome students who have served our country as members of the armed forces <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/veterans>

## **Immigrants**

CUNY Citizenship Now offers free immigration services to all CCNY students and their families <https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/we-are-one-ccny/city-college-immigration-center> or CCNY Immigration Center for free and confidential advice via phone (212-650-6620) or email ([meetu.dhar@cuny.edu](mailto:meetu.dhar@cuny.edu)).