Statistics for Social Research II

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Date October 3, 2023

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Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course. The Learning Journal integrates the essential elements of the course within your professional field of interest. The objective of the course journal is to produce a degree of acculturation,

integrating new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity

to communicate with your professor insights gained as a result of the course. The course

learning journal should be 3-5 pages in length and should include the following sections:

1. Introduction –Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate

program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.

2. Personal Growth - Describe your personal growth–how the course stretched or

challenged you– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during

the week and through subsequent readings – what new insights or skills you gained.

3. Reflective Entry - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or

adaptation and relevant application) of new learning in your professional field.

What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a

result of your study?

4. Conclusion – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional,

religious, and educational goals.

**Introduction**

The intent of the course for those who have already had an introductory course in statistics in CORE 3 is to reiterate and secure an understanding of foundational and intermediate statistical language. The student should also be able to interpret histograms, box whisker plots, and other types of descriptive charts in social research studies. Parametric and non-parametric procedures are also discussed in depth as well as other types of statistical tests such as t-tests, Pearson's Correlation test, or the Mann-Whitney U tests. From reading the syllabus, the student should have an opportunity to engage with various research methods, with the teacher as a guide, so that the student can get familiar with actual tests that have been performed, testing out real-life hypotheses from an array of social research studies. Students in OGS are not medical researchers, scientists, or researchers of economics, although some students may hail from these fields. Students at OGS are social researchers. Our goal is to understand society, the humans that interact within society and contribute to improvements to our society based on God’s word and purpose for our lives.

It is intended that in this CORE, students gain hands-on experience with statistical procedures and methods and have an opportunity to compare quantitative and qualitative research methods to aid us in deciding which method will best fit our research goals. The syllabus states that a Winks tutorial will be along with the introduction of Moomoomath.

**Personal Growth**

Personal growth was experienced to an extent. Trying to interpret regression models and multivariate correlations in CORE 3 was of course challenging but now that I have completed CORE 4, I have gained a bit more understanding. Because of the slide show presented at the beginning of the CORE, and a few video tutorials, I also gained more understanding of parametric and non-parametric tests but not to my satisfaction. One achievement I am proud of is the ability to understand hierarchical regression models showing the relationship between a number of dependent variables and the independent variable (s). This regression is created in steps by grouping items together that measure that ultimately measure and give meaning to the variable.

As always, while completing the developmental readings, I learn new vocabulary. In this class, most of the new terminology I learned was statistical in meaning which was great. As I came across new terms, I tried my best to record them with their meanings in my vocabulary tablet. This way I can refer back to them in the future. The goal is that the terminology becomes ingrained in my vocabulary without me looking the word up.

Although I felt that the syllabus should have been followed more closely, what did help was the ability to choose my own topic for the essay (a requirement for assignment #3). Being able to pick articles and interpret data from research somewhat close to my research interests provided a foundation for what statistical tests and tools I may want to use as I complete my dissertation. The content and data had meaning for me because it was a subject, I was passionate about.

**Reflective Entry**

As I began the OGS program, I was adamant about not wanting to conduct quantitative research. This decision was based mainly on fear and not facts or research. It was in my best research to read through both a qualitative and quantitative dissertation to compare the two. It was also in my best interest to compare articles that based their study on either qualitative or quantitative to analyze the difference. By learning new statistical terminology and becoming more familiar with various parametric and non-parametric as well as scales and tools for gathering data, my fear lessened. It has not gone away but has waned.

There are still many questions and concerns. Because instruction was not according to the syllabus, I have yet to become familiar with Winks, Atlas.ti or Dedoose. nor did I get an opportunity to peruse Excel programs that will help me in the future.

Assignment #3 requires the student to perform a fictional study to include interpreting histograms and box whisker plots. This also did not happen. Upon reflection, it was somewhat of a repeat of CORE 3 statistics with not much progress accomplished. Introductory hands-on experience with the statistical programs mentioned would ease student anxiety and prepare them for CORE 5.

**Conclusion**

During the residency, only one of my two courses provided structured instruction with the facilitator while this class did not. It is crucial that faculty stay cognizant of the fact that statistics for many is dreaded or feared and the students in these courses need detailed instruction and care to include power point slides. Unfortunately, the new OGS format does not allow Zoom instruction for all courses. If you want me to be completely blunt (which I always am), asynchronous has no significant meaning or benefit for the student. What it means in the context of the curriculum/program is without instruction. This format places a lesser burden on professors who are actually volunteers and puts the student at a disadvantage.

The residency is supposed to be a time for instruction, collaboration, and gaining understanding. On the one Saturday, where I had live instructions for one course, I feel two more hours could have been spared for students to have live instruction in their second course, making better use of the day. The week for residency begins choppy and syllabi were not totally updated for the new format, making preparation guidelines confusing.

So how do I really feel? While I do understand that the new format makes it easier for working students and teachers to complete courses, and while I appreciate my professor's attempt to supplement the residency with flexible meeting times, the reduction in developmental reading requirements, the reduction in live instruction (aka, the “asynchronous” method), and the choppy residency schedule does not adequately prepare the student to become a scholar-practitioner. If a student signs up for a Ph.D. program, they should expect it to be rigorous.