

HUM 403 /SOC 376
NUMBERS, IDENTITY AND MODERNITY:
HOW CALCULATION SHAPES WHO WE ARE

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Wed: 1-3 pm
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Our world is awash in numbers and calculation is central to many theoretical understandings of what it means to “be modern.” This view will be our point of departure as we consider how we make and use numbers, how we know ourselves through numbers, and the particular kinds of authority we grant to numbers. Using a range of examples of calculation including testing, college rankings, and statistics about mortality and morbidity, citizens, race, and sexuality, this class will examine what prompts people to produce numbers, what causes them to spread, how they intervene in the worlds they measure, and how we think about ourselves and others differently as a result. Students will learn to become more critical and appreciative interpreters of numbers, and will appreciate the key role calculation and classification has played in our understanding of what it means to be an individual, a citizen, or a member of some particular group.

Each student will be responsible for leading at one seminar discussion, which may include introducing guest speakers. Students’ oral presentation will be evaluated by me and classmates; it is worth 15% of your grade. Students are expected to come to class having done the required reading, viewing or listening. If you do not prepare for class, you will make it harder for student presenters. Consequently, class participation will be evaluated by me and class presenters each week, for quality as well as quantity; it is worth 10% of your grade. Additionally, two papers will be assigned: one short paper in response to a prompt (worth 25%) and one a final paper, the topic of which will address some aspect or example of calculation selected by you in consultation with me. The final paper is worth 50% of your final grade.

The following books and articles (found via JSTOR or posted on BB) are required. Books should be available at Norris but as the order was lost for 2 months, they may take a week or so to arrive. The library also has multiple copies of all books. See me if you cannot afford to purchase books as I have a few copies I am happy to lend. This syllabus may be revised as the quarter unfolds.

Books:

Theodore Porter. *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Human Life.*

Margo Anderson. *The American Census. A Social History.*

Sarah Igo. *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public.*

Nicholas Lemann. *The Big Test. The Secret History of the American Meritocracy.*

Articles and excerpts are designated weekly.

WEEK ONE: Introduction: Why Quantification is a Radical Social Process

Tuesday Jan 3 No Tuesday class this week.

Thursday Jan 5 Introduction: **PLEASE READ IN ADVANCE OF 1ST CLASS**

Espeland, Wendy Nelson and Mitchell Stevens, "Commensuration as a Social Process," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24: 312-43, 1998. JSTOR

Espeland, Wendy and Mitchell Stevens, "A Sociology of Quantification," *European Journal of Sociology (Archives Européennes de Sociologie)*, 49(3):401-436, 2009. JSTOR.

WEEK TWO: Calculation, Capitalism and Rationalism: Labor, Money and Bookkeeping

Tuesday Jan 10

Marx, Karl. Excerpts from *The Marx-Engels Reader* ed. Tucker: on BB. 101-105; 329-361;

Simmel, Georg. Excerpts from *The Philosophy of Money*, Ch. 6, "The Style of Live" pp. 399-411; 413-418; 429-441; 498-512. BB

Thursday Jan 12

Weber, Max. Excerpts from *General Economic History; Economy and Society; The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* BB

WEEK THREE: Trust, Distrust, and Calculation as Objectivity

Tuesday Jan 17

Begin Porter, *Trust in Numbers*, Preface, Intro, Part I: pp. vii-86.

Thursday Jan 19 Porter, *Trust in Numbers*, Part II: pp. 89-189.

WEEK FOUR: Making up Kinds of People: Citizens, Race, and Republics

Tuesday 24

Hacking, Ian. Excerpts from *Taming Chance* on Blackboard; Begin Anderson, Margo. *The American Census. A Social History*. Ch 1-4: Pp.1-115

Thursday 26

Anderson, Ch 5-9: pp 116-240:

Two page synopsis of final paper due in class.

WEEK FIVE: Making People Visible/Invisible

Tuesday Jan 31

Igo, Sarah. *The Averaged American*, Ch. 1-2

Guest Speaker: Jean Beaman, "Racial Statistics in Republican France".

Simon, Patrick. 2008. "The Choice of Ignorance: The Debate on Ethnic and Racial Statistics in France." *French Politics, Culture and Society* 26:7-31.

<http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/berghahn/15376370/v26n1/s2.pdf?expires=1325521482&id=66484224&titleid=75002109&accname=Northwestern+University+Law+Library&checksum=BB24CC37AAFC3B6B252F3E436F45F9BD>

"From Measuring Integration to Fighting Discrimination: The Illusion of "Ethnic Statistics," Alain Blum and France Guerin Pace. *French Politics, Culture and Society*. 26:1, Spring 2008 , pp. 45-61(17)

<http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/berghahn/15376370/v26n1/s4.pdf?expires=1325521684&id=66484273&titleid=75002109&accname=Northwestern+University+Law+Library&checksum=66251232E7416F926F13896EE75336E4>

Thursday Feb 2

Igo, Sarah. Ch. 3-4

"How Puerto Rico Became White: Boundary Dynamics and Intercensus Racial Reclassification," Mara Loveman and Jeronimo O. Muniz, *American Sociological Review* , Vol. 72, No. 6 (Dec., 2007), pp. 915-939 Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472503>

WEEK SIX: Sorting by Numbers: Intelligence, Ability and Access

Tuesday Feb 7

John Carson; "Army Alpha, Army Brass, and the Search for Army Intelligence" Author(s): John Carson Isis, Vol. 84, No. 2 (Jun., 1993), pp. 278-309 Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of The History of Science Society Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/236235> .

Lehman, Nicholas. *The Big Test*

Thursday Feb 9

Lehman *The Big Test*

Claude Steele, Stereotype Threat

WEEK SEVEN: Making People Visible/ Invisible

Tuesday Feb 14

Igo, Chapter 5, 6, Epilogue: Watch **Kinsey**;

Numbers and Gay Politics: Espeland and Michaels:

Thursday Feb 16 Numbers, War and Representation

John Hagen and Alberto Palloni, "Death in Darfur," *Science* 313:1578-1579.

This American Life: Civilian Casualties "Truth, Damned Truth and Statistics: Act One" <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/320/whats-in-a-number-%E2%80%942006-edition>

WEEK EIGHT: Numbers Visibility/Invisibility (cont.) and Calculation as Bureaucratic Logic

Tuesday Feb 21

"Numbers on Top of Numbers": Counting the Civil War Dead", Drew Gilpin Faust *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (Oct., 2006), pp. 995-1009. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4138192>

Thursday Feb 23

Espeland, "Legally Mediated Identity" *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 28, No. 5, (1994), pp. 1149-1180

WEEK NINE: Holding People and Organizations Accountable and/or Gaming, Lying, and Cheating: The Unintended Consequences of Counting

Tuesday Feb 27;

Watch Moneyball

Sauder, Michael and Wendy Espeland, "The Discipline of Rankings" American Sociological Review, 2009.

University of Illinois Law School Admissions Sandal:
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/72042620/Nov7-UofI-finalReport>

Thursday Mar 1

Crime Statistics in New York: This American Life podcast "Right to Remain Silent" <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/414/right-to-remain-silent?act=2>

Crime Statistics in Hebron "Winning on Points" and "Cops Cooking the Numbers". <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/winning-on-points-1.300971?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.212%2C2.213%2C>

<http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/report-cops-cooking-numbers-by-opening-unnecessary-cases-1.323292?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.225%2C2.226%2C>

WEEK TEN Summing Up (pun intended) What Shouldn't We Count?

Tuesday Mar 6 Last Day of Classes Spring Term

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/88/numbers>

Wednesday Mar 7 Reading Period Begins

Monday March 12: FINAL PAPERS DUE:

TWO VERSIONS REQUIRED: HARD COPY IN MY MAIL BOX, c/o Sociology Department, 1810 Chicago Ave. ATTACHMENT IN MY EMAIL: wne741@northwestern.edu.

Monday Mar 19 Spring Break Begins!