Term Paper
Psych 207 (Depaoli), Fall 2018
DUE: December 12, 2018 by 12:00pm

ASSIGNMENT BASICS:

You will be expected to write a paper in APA style using some of the techniques that you have learned this semester. I encourage you to use your own data if you have access to appropriate data. If you do not have access, there are some resources listed below where you can obtain free data sets.

MY EXPECTATIONS:

The final product that you hand in should be a manuscript of (near) publishable quality. I recognize that it is perhaps unreasonable to request a manuscript ready for submission at the end of a one-semester course, however this paper should be of the quality that only minor tweaking and/or expanding of thoughts are needed before submission. Grading will be based on several different components, including substantive development of the model, handling of model diagnostics/fit, correct interpretation of model results, description of estimation processes, and APA style. I will also grade on the professionalism and technical aspects of your writing. Grades are based on 100 points and are weighted to represent 35% of your final grade.

DUE DATES:

An abstract (150-200 words) will be due on September 20, 2018 in class. This abstract should contain information about your proposed data source and proposed analyses. The final paper is due on December 12, 2018 at 12:00pm. No late assignments will be accepted unless there is an "acceptable" reason according to the details presented in the course syllabus.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- I will not "pre-read" any assignments (i.e., I am not "grading" your paper multiple times throughout the course), but I am more than happy to discuss your papers with you (e.g., direction of analysis, aspects of the introduction, etc.) at any point during the semester.

- See me as early as you can if you need help/guidance. In some cases, students may want to use a model/technique that we are not covering until later in the semester (which I fully encourage because we go over really cool things later in the semester). If this applies to you, then you should talk to me earlier rather than later about your plan (e.g., before the material is covered in class) so that you can still plan what you are going to do for the paper while ensuring you have plenty of time to execute everything.

- You are not allowed to hand in a paper that you have already written previous to this course. If you have done prior work with structural equation models, that is fantastic! However, you need to keep making sure that you continue to grow throughout graduate school. I am certain that you can write a better paper now

than you did/could six months ago. You should always push yourself to grow and do a better job than you could before. *A general tip: In my opinion, you should always be at a point where you look back at a paper you wrote a few months ago and think that it is crap. It means you are growing as a scholar and as a writer.*

- I anticipate that everyone will be giving me a really great product in the end. If you are interested in working with me to expand/modify this into a manuscript for publication, I am more than happy to help you do this after the course is over.

PARTS OF THE PAPER:

- Title page

- Abstract

- Introduction

  - In this section, you need to substantively justify your variable(s) and really make the case for what you are "studying" here. This is where you will build the theory behind the particular problem you will address. You should have *at least* five references used to help build background information, etc. However, there is no upper-bound to the number of references you can cite; use as many as you need to build your case.

- Methods/Design

  - In this section, you need to thoroughly detail the information about your subjects, measures, and database that you are using. You will need to write about any proposed methods/models–this may also include specific hypotheses depending on the nature of the model(s)/question(s) you are proposing. Detail the full design of your study, which should include a brief description of the frequentist and/or Bayesian methods that you are using.

- Results

  - In this section, you will present your findings via appropriate figures/plots and write up your findings thoroughly. You must include a figure of the model(s) you are estimating. You will also need to include any relevant diagnostics/fit information depending on the model/technique you are reporting.

- Discussion

  - There are many different ways that a person can choose to handle a discussion/conclusion section–you can choose what you want. You may decide to present a more thorough discussion of the findings here. For example, you might discuss in more detail (and potentially citing other work) why a particular result was present. You may also choose to discuss any limitations to this work (e.g., design, subjects, etc). You can also talk about future research that might result from your findings and/or the implications of your findings. The point of this section is to tie the points you made in the introduction and your findings together in a way that best tells the story that you are looking to tell.

- References

- Tables/Figures/Appendix

  - You may include (in the appropriate place according to APA manuscript-style) any relevant tables, figures, or appendices. For example, parameter estimates are often best presented in a table. However, when dealing with a structural model, it is also nice to present the readers with a figure to describe the model and/or data; note that Bayesian analyses are often nicely coupled with diagnostic figures. Finally, you may find it useful to present any syntax in an appendix.

GENERAL LIST OF POSSIBLE ANALYSES/TECHNIQUES:

- Confirmatory factor analysis

- Iterative target rotation

- SEM

- Multigroup SEM

- Invariance testing

- Mediation, moderation, etc

- Mixture modeling

- Others covered in class...

DATA SOURCES:

- You are (of course) encouraged to use your own data for this paper, if available.

- Quant students (or others interested): I am open to data simulation for this paper if you can make a compelling enough case to me (this cannot be a project you already have simulations for and you need to justify to me the *novel* methodological topic you are wanting to study). A highly encouraged option though!!

- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten class

  - Data on reading, math, and science achievement throughout elementary school. Data on teacher and parent opinions of children. Data on some attitude-related variables.
  - See me for the disk with all of the data on it. You pick the variables you are interested in and then extract them into an SPSS (or akin) datafile.

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth

  - Contains data on dating, marriage, family, health, attitudes, crime, substance abuse, etc.
  - You can find this database at: https://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator/pages/login.jsp
  - Click the link for "begin searching" as guest.
  - Select the study you want to work with: NLSY97 1997-2010 (rounds 1-14).
  - Click the "variable search" tab.
  - Choose desired variable category under "index of selected variables".
  - Select the variables you are interested in.

* Note that if you hover over the variable name another window will pop up showing more information about the variable.

– Click the "review selected variables" tab to review your selections.

– Click the "save/download" tab.

– Click the "advanced download" tab and then "start download".

– Download the file produced and it will contain SPSS, excel, SAS, text, etc versions of the datafile for you to use.