

PP422 – Engagement Plan and Grade

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As noted in the course syllabus, this course has a participation component which is part of the Coursework item, but I will assess this area differently than you may be used to. The goal of the engagement component is to generate a plan for how you are going to engage with the course. There are three steps to this process:

1. You will document your plan in a short assignment at the beginning of the AT
2. Midway through the course, I will have you check in with yourself and write a self-assessment on how you are meeting your goals and if there are any changes you would like to make depending on how things are currently going
3. At the end of the WT, you will do a final self-assessment of your participation. I will use this self-assessment along with your completion and engagement with course modules and discussion forums to determine your final participation grade¹

Your Initial Assignment: ²

Produce a one-page document that outlines your primary goals for the course, your engagement plan in service of these goals and some brief reflections on why you made the choices you did. To help you achieve this, please complete the following steps.

Step 1: State Your Goals

Write a short (bulleted if you like) list of your primary goals for the course.

Step 2: The Plan

Write a paragraph or bulleted list of how you plan to engage with the course in service of the goals you list above. Some questions you may consider:

1. Is there a form of participation you think will be particularly effective for you?
2. Is there a form of participation you think will *not* be effective or useful for you?
3. How do you think you could best contribute to any group work?
4. What evidence may demonstrate your achievement towards your goals for this participation?

¹ There is consistent and robust literature that women and minorities tend to subjectively self-describe their ability less favourably than men. I will discuss self-assessment in more detail towards the end of the course, but I hope that generating a specific plan can reduce this 'self-promotion' gap. See for instance Exley, Christine L., and Judd B. Kessler. "The gender gap in self-promotion." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 137.3 (2022): 1345-1381.

² Originally developed by Luke Miratrix for S043

Engagement takes many forms, both in class and outside of class. Here are some examples:

- In Class
 - Asking questions
 - Sharing relevant personal experiences
 - Completing any pre-class work to arrive prepared for discussions
- Out of Class
 - Attending office hours
 - Working and talking with other students about problem sets and readings
 - Offering feedback on changes or improvements to the course

There are many plans you could create, but if helpful as a guide, below are sample plans from prior students. Please upload your participation plan to the corresponding assignment upload area on Moodle.

Demo Plan 1

I have been involved in several research projects that relied heavily on data science tools - mainly using R- to address economic or social research questions. My goal with this course is to be more than just a good user of the tools I put into practice. I aim to deepen my understanding of the methods and techniques I use. This understanding will grant me more flexibility and confidence when making decisions about the approach and/or time schedule for different data-intensive projects. Furthermore, I believe this deeper knowledge is what will allow me to communicate effectively relevant findings to policymakers and non-technical audiences.

In addition, I want to challenge myself implementing new techniques and tools with Python that will allow for a more professional, automated management of the data I use.

The Plan

I plan to engage in both forms of participation: in class and out of class.

1. I will attend the live lectures and seminars on Tuesdays and Fridays. I plan to link the three ways of in-class participation, formulating questions based on my own experience when applicable and addressing the pre-class material.
2. I plan to bring at least one question in mind to each class (no matter how big or how small), to keep me thinking intentionally about the material at a consistent rate. I may not ask the question in class since 1) it may be answered during the session, 2) I don't want to take up too much space all the time, and 3) I could ask it in the post-class survey, but having them at the ready for my own tracking and learning will be helpful. I will do this by adding it to my list of pre-class to-do's.
3. I will aim to do at least half of the pre-class to-dos (videos, readings, etc.) before the seminar sessions. I find this key to be more engaged and get the most out of the subjects addressed in class.
4. I will post news articles, past research, and podcasts to the course forum to make connections with course material to ground our conversations. I find this highly effective to absorb and own the topics we see in class because it allows us to address them in diverse ways and in different contexts.

5. I plan to follow-up on specific subjects or techniques I find interesting during office hours since I understand it may not be of interest for everyone in the class.

What evidence may demonstrate your achievement towards your goals for this participation?

- Number of lectures and seminars attended
- Number of questions asked per class
- Articles, podcasts, papers shared

Demo Plan 2

Participation Contract

Goals

- a. Deepen my understanding of key concepts of probability and statistics and their real-world applications.
- b. Expand my Python 'toolbox'
- c. Learn to communicate high-level data science concepts to audiences who are not in the field (this has practical policy applications, but more importantly it is a test of how well I know the material. I'm a big believer in the adage that you don't really understand something until you can explain it to a child).
- d. Develop a sense of careers in the fields of data science and policymaking that I may wish to pursue after my masters.
- e. Learn from my peers as much or more as I learn from the course material.

Plan

1. Attend all lectures and seminars that I can attend.
2. Ask questions during class to engage critically with the material and ensure active participation. Come prepared with at least one question for each class.
3. Work on problem sets collaboratively with my peers frequently. There are only 18 people in the program, so I should be able to work with everyone at least once.
4. Participate in at least one 'hack-a-thon' per term to apply my newly acquired Python tools to real-world applications.

5. Add to the *PP422 in the News* and *General Discussion* forums at least once per term.

Demo Plan 3

Goals:

- Build my knowledge in Data Science, learning not only theories, formulas, and coding but also how to apply these in addressing real public policy questions and how to communicate such analysis and results to a general and academic audience.
- Continue improving my skills to analyze a public policy question, explore its potential evidence-based solutions/alternatives and how to communicate them. Remember constantly that there are many solutions/alternatives to address social challenges and there is not any perfect public policy.
- Attempt to draft a research proposal that incorporates the Data Science tools learned. This helps me to prepare to Capstone course.
- Enhance my knowledge by engaging with new topics through the reading material and insights from classmates' backgrounds.

The plan:

- I will attend the live lectures and seminars on Tuesdays and Fridays. This helps keep me engaged, allowing myself to ask questions and reflect on some things.
- I will do at least half of the pre-class-to-dos (including Problem Set if it is applicable) before the actual day of class because this will help me engaging in the topic of the class. It will at least half of materials due to the similar deadlines of other courses.
- I am aiming to bring at least one question in mind to each class, to keep me thinking about the material at a consistent rate. The question could be answer in class, out of class or in office hours.
- I will book some office hours per month to discuss about any doubts arising from pre-class-to-dos, classes, or public policy questions.
- I am aiming to discuss with my classmates about the problem sets and reading materials before the actual day of class.
- Engage gradually in discussions in or out of class with the aim of enriching my points of views and knowledge about new topics. Additionally, I will share my professional experience in education, poverty, and labor sector.
- Attend additional seminars and events about Data Science which are offered by Institute Data Science, Statistics, SPP, and external institutions.

Demo Plan 4

The Goals:

- Get more comfortable coding in Python;
- Translate my math skills into the real world – understand what I’m doing and why I’m doing it instead of relying on mechanical repetition;
- Look out for possible interesting topics for the capstone project that might come up during the readings and classes;
- Listen actively and with the intention to understand instead of just being present;
- Learn how to voice my opinions confidently and effectively in class and in group assignments;

The Plan:

- Do the readings ahead of the lecture – I like knowing what we’re going to talk about beforehand because it gives me time to reflect on the issue and it facilitates meaningful participation;
- Do my best to attend every lecture and seminar – if I can’t make it for some reason I’ll still do all the coursework and ask about any key information that might have been mentioned;
- Discuss course material with the others outside of class – I believe that sharing opinions and personal experience in a more informal and relaxed setting can reinforce understanding and ultimately build a more supportive learning community;
- Post news articles, book recommendations or other content that somehow relates to the course and enhances real-world connections to class topics;
- Actively work towards overcoming shyness by challenging myself to ask some questions and participate in class discussions - if at any point I don’t feel comfortable asking my questions out loud, I’ll do it in the post-class survey or go to office hours;