ICPSR Workshop: Bayesian Modeling for the Social Sciences I
Introduction and Application

Workshop Meeting: M-F 2:30-5:30 PM
Meeting Location: NQ1185

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Syllabus Version: 6/17/2026

Schedule an Office Hours Appointment: https://officehours.justinesarey.com

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will learn how to apply Bayesian models to the study of social scientific questions and interpret the results. The course will focus on practical Bayesian implementations of the (hierarchical) generalized linear model. Students will learn to use R for programming, data management, and visualization with RStudio as an IDE. Students will also learn to use software engines for posterior sampling.

Grading Policies and Assignment Details

Grading will be based on problem sets. Two problem sets will be distributed each week. Include all code you use to complete your assignments with your submission. Each submitted assignment will be graded using the following rubric:

- ✓+ (3 points): Results are correct. They are presented and discussed in a clear manner. Figures and tables are properly labeled. All code is included in the document.
- ✓ (2 points): Results are on the right track, although there may be some errors. They are presented and discussed in a clear manner. Figures and tables are properly labeled. All code is included in the document.
- ✓- (1 point): There are substantial omissions or errors in the results. The presentation is confusing. Code is missing from the document.

All assignments must be typed in LaTeX or RMarkdown.

Final Grades: Submitting all assignments (6-8 points) earns a B. Submitting all assignments and earning a ✓ on most of them (9-12 points) earns an A-. Submitting all assignments with a ✓+ on some assignments (13-15 points) earns an A. A very strong performance on problem sets (16-18 points) earns an A+.

Attendance: Participation in this class may be synchronous or asynchronous. Live attendance and participation is encouraged whenever possible. Attendance will not be formally recorded or factored into the final grade.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts:

- Kaplan, David. 2023. *Bayesian Statistics for the Social Sciences, 2nd edition.* Available in Hardcover or as an e-Book.

Other readings are available on the web or the Canvas workshop website.

Software: This course will teach material primarily through R and RStudio. R is free and available from http://cran.r-project.org/. The RStudio IDE is available at https://www.rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/. If you are an advanced user and wish to take advantage of multithreaded math libraries, you might install the Microsoft R Open distribution available for Windows and Linux at https://mran.microsoft.com/open. We will also study Hamiltonian Monte Carlo and its implementation in STAN; STAN is available at https://mc-stan.org/install/.

Students may install these programs on their personal computer. They may also choose to use the Posit.cloud instance that I have reserved for this class. The advantage of Posit.cloud is that all necessary software is pre-installed on the server and can be accessed with any device that has a browser and an internet connection. A link to join the Posit.cloud space for this class is available in Canvas.

All assignments must be typed in LaTeX or RMarkdown. RMarkdown PDF output can be produced through RStudio.

All students must have a valid University of Michigan e-mail address and login (and access to the Canvas website) to participate in this course.

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

June 15: Software and Preliminaries; Basic Bayesian Thinking

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 1

Software Installation

Choose one of the following options:

- **Local Installation**
  - Install R on your laptop from http://cran.r-project.org/.
  - Install RStudio on your laptop from https://www.rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/.
  - Install the C++ Toolchain, STAN and RStan on your computer by following the instructions at "https://mc-stan.org/install/".
- **Posit.cloud Access**
  - Create an account on https://posit.cloud and click the link in Canvas to join the workspace for this class.

June 16: More Basic Bayesian Thinking; Bayesian Process Tracing

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 2
- Robust and Replicable Bayesian Process Tracing (available on Canvas)

June 17: Sampling

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapters 3 and 4

June 18: Bayesian Regression

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 5, Section 5.1

June 19: No Class (Juneteenth)

June 22: Bayesian Regression II

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 5, Sections 5.2-5.7

June 23: Model Evaluation and Comparison

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 6

June 24: Hierarchical Models

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 7, Sections 7.1-7.2

June 25: Hierarchical Models II

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 7, Sections 7.3-7.5

June 26: Latent Variable Modeling

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 8, Section 8.1

June 29: Latent Variable Modeling II

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 8, Sections 8.2-8.3

June 30: Missing Data

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 9

July 1: Variable Selection

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 10

July 2: Model Uncertainty

Readings

- Kaplan, Chapter 11