

## The Measured Life

IDST 89.001

Spring 2017

**Building and Room:** Room 1370 of the Genome Sciences Building

**Meeting Days and Time:** Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30-10:45 AM

**Office Hours:** By appointment

### Instructors

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### Course Description

*The unexamined life is not worth living*

' --Socrates

#### **Purpose:**

By conscientiously applying, consuming, and/or ignoring measures, we can live better lives and help other people to live better lives. This course aims to provide the tools to critically engage in human measurement and the policies that surround it.

#### **Description:**

Whether it's by the ACT or Buzzfeed, we've been measured since we can remember, and that, like it or not, changes our lives. This measurement, especially the measurement of indirectly observable human traits--ability, personality, disorder--is both entirely necessary and terribly difficult to do well. Do it poorly and you disenfranchise people from the opportunities they deserve. Do it well and our world might become just a bit better.

But human measurement is not just one thing; it permeates the social and behavioral sciences and public policy from education to health to the workplace. To understand it, we must take a truly interdisciplinary approach. Only by tackling issues from college admissions to personnel selection to IQ testing, can we begin to see how our society measures itself.

For this class to succeed, we are asking everyone to bring their skills and perspectives to the table. Every meeting will be about applying social and behavioral science to defend, to question, and to change how we see the world. By the end, you will be equipped to use measurement in a way that recognizes its potential and limitations, no matter what your interests may be.

**Course Objectives:**

1. You will be able to describe and explain the importance of major aspects of measurements (reliability and validity).
2. You will be able to articulate and evaluate different personal, social, and economic motivations for measurement in education and the workforce.
3. You will be able to identify and analyze how the use of specific measures differentially impacts people on personal, social, and economic terms.
4. You will be able to develop and present a recommendation that critically reviews different measures for the use in public policy, industry, or social and behavioral research.

**Schedule:**

Date	Class Topic	Due	Citation
1/10	Introductions and course overview		
Development Across the Lifespan: How should we measure people?			
1/12	Why do we measure?	Topic rankings	Wagstaff, K. (2014, August 4). <a href="http://grantland.com/features/the-economics-moneyball/">http://grantland.com/features/the-economics-moneyball/</a>
1/17	What is measurement? (Topics Assigned)		Stevens, S. S. "On the theory of scales of measurement." <i>Science</i> (1946).
1/19	What is a good measurement? (Reliability and validity)		Play <a href="http://guessthecorrelation.com/">http://guessthecorrelation.com/</a>  Montgomery, K. S. (2000). Apgar scores: examining the long-term significance. <i>The Journal of perinatal education</i> , 9(3), 5-9.  Finster, M., & Wood, M. (2005). The Apgar score has survived the test of time. <i>The Journal of the American Society of Anesthesiologists</i> , 102(4), 855-857.
1/24	Why measure development? (Theories of human development)		<i>The Folly of Prediction</i> [Advertisement]. (2011, September 14). New York, New York: Freakonomics. <a href="http://freakonomics.com/podcast/new-freakonomics-radio-podcast-the-folly-of-prediction/">http://freakonomics.com/podcast/new-freakonomics-radio-podcast-the-folly-of-prediction/</a>  Heckman, J. J. (2000). Policies to foster human capital. <i>Research in Economics</i> , 54(1), 3-56. Retrieved from <a href="http://athens.sra.uchicago.edu/jenni/dvmaster/FILES/PFHC.pdf">http://athens.sra.uchicago.edu/jenni/dvmaster/FILES/PFHC.pdf</a>  Bronfenbrenner, U. and Evans, G. W. (2000). Developmental Science in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century: Emerging Questions, Theoretical Models, Research Designs and Empirical Findings. <i>Social Development</i> , 9: 115–125. doi:10.1111/1467-9507.00114
1/31	What can measurement do? (Personal, social, and economic effects of measurement)		Dennis, R. M. (1995). Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race [Abstract]. <i>The Journal of Negro Education</i> , 64(3), 243.
Early Childhood: How can we identify where inequality starts?			

2/2	How can we detect the effects of poverty on child development? (Early learning environments)		Hart, B & Risley, K. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3. <i>American Educator</i> , 4-9.  Thompson, R.A. (2008). Connecting neurons, concepts, and people: Brain development and its implications. <i>NIEER Preschool Policy Brief</i> , 17, 1-11.
2/7	How do we know whether our interventions work? (Preschool)		Heckman, J. (2013). Skill begets skills. <i>The Heckman Equation</i> . Retrieved from <a href="http://heckmanequation.org/content/resource/skills-beget-skills">http://heckmanequation.org/content/resource/skills-beget-skills</a>  Flowers, A. (2016). Is pre-k all it's cracked up to be? FiveThirtyEight. Retrieved from <a href="http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/is-pre-k-all-its-cracked-up-to-be/">http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/is-pre-k-all-its-cracked-up-to-be/</a>
2/9	How do we know when development is atypical? (Early detection of autism and developmental disorders)		Charman, T., Baird, G., Simonoff, E., Loucas, T., Chandler, S., Meldrum, D., & Pickles, A. (2007). Efficacy of three screening instruments in the identification of autistic-spectrum disorders. <i>The British Journal of Psychiatry</i> , 191(6), 554-559.  Siu, A. L., Bibbins-Domingo, K., Grossman, D. C., Baumann, L. C., Davidson, K. W., Ebell, M., ... & Krist, A. H. (2016). Screening for autism spectrum disorder in young children: US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement. <i>JAMA</i> , 315(7), 691-696.

#### Childhood: What does a successful education look like?

2/14	How can we provide individualized education?	Section 1 due	Grissom, J.A. (2016). Why aren't more black student identified as gifted? New Republic. Retrieved from <a href="https://newrepublic.com/article/128980/arent-black-students-identified-gifted">https://newrepublic.com/article/128980/arent-black-students-identified-gifted</a>  Sparks, S.D. (2016). Study: RTI practice falls short of promise. Education Week. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/11/11/study-rti-practice-falls-short-of-promise.html?qs=response+to+intervention+">http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/11/11/study-rti-practice-falls-short-of-promise.html?qs=response+to+intervention+</a>
2/16	Do personality traits predict success? (A critical look at grit)		Smith, T. (2015). Does teachers kids to get 'gritty' help them get ahead? National Public Radio. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/03/17/290089998/does-teaching-kids-to-get-gritty-help-them-get-ahead">http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/03/17/290089998/does-teaching-kids-to-get-gritty-help-them-get-ahead</a>  Duckworth, A. L., & Yeager, D. S. (2015). Measurement matters assessing personal qualities other than cognitive ability for educational purposes. <i>Educational Researcher</i> , 44(4), 237-251.
2/21	History of High-Stakes Testing		Nichols, S. & Berliner, D. (2007). A short history of high-stakes testing. <i>Collateral Damage: How High-Stakes Testing Corrupts America's Schools</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.  Casselman, B. (2015). No child left behind worked. FiveThirtyEight. Retrieved from

			<a href="http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/no-child-left-behind-worked/">http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/no-child-left-behind-worked/</a>
2/23	Teacher Evaluation; Measuring Teacher Quality		Flowers, A. (2015). The science of grading teachers gets high marks. FiveThirtyEight. Retrieved from <a href="http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-science-of-grading-teachers-gets-high-marks/">http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-science-of-grading-teachers-gets-high-marks/</a>
2/28	How can we evaluate teachers in diverse settings?		<i>Those Cheating Teachers!</i> [Advertisement]. (2011, October 19). New York, New York: Freakonomics. <a href="http://freakonomics.com/2011/10/19/those-cheating-teachers-a-new-freakonomics-marketplace-podcast/">http://freakonomics.com/2011/10/19/those-cheating-teachers-a-new-freakonomics-marketplace-podcast/</a> <b>Special Guest: James Sadler!</b>
3/2	How can we evaluate schools in diverse communities?		Chingos et al. (2010) Grading Schools. Education Next. <a href="http://educationnext.org/grading-schools/">http://educationnext.org/grading-schools/</a>
Teens: Can researchers ever understand?			
3/7	Can we ask people indirectly about sensitive topics?		Christopher S. Miller, Joshua Woodson, Ryan T. Howell & Alan L. Shields (2009) Assessing the Reliability of Scores Produced by the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory, Substance Use & Misuse, 44:8, 1090-1100, DOI: 10.1080/10826080802486772
	How can we understand day to day changes?		Trull, T. J., & Ebner-Priemer, U. W. (2009). Using experience sampling methods/ecological momentary assessment (ESM/EMA) in clinical assessment and clinical research: Introduction to the special section. <i>Psychological Assessment</i> , 21(4), 457-462. doi:10.1037/a0017653
3/8	Progress meetings		
3/14	Spring Break!		
3/16	Spring Break!		
3/21	How can we know when someone needs help?	Section 2 due	Corson, K., Gerrity, M. S., & Dobscha, S. K. (2004). Screening for depression and suicidality in a VA primary care setting: 2 items are better than 1 item. <i>Am J Manag Care</i> , 10 (11 Pt 2), 839-845.
College: Who should get in?			
3/23	How should colleges use the SAT and ACT?		Hoffman, H. (2014, July 29). Temple Option will open more doors to a university education. Retrieved from <a href="http://news.temple.edu/news/2014-07-29/temple-option-will-open-more-doors-university-education">http://news.temple.edu/news/2014-07-29/temple-option-will-open-more-doors-university-education</a>
3/28	Do test-optional policies help colleges and applicants?		Shear, M. D. (2015, September 12). With Website to Research Colleges, Obama Abandons Ranking System. Retrieved from

			<a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/13/us/with-website-to-research-colleges-obama-abandons-ranking-system.html?_r=1">http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/13/us/with-website-to-research-colleges-obama-abandons-ranking-system.html?_r=1</a>
3/30	How do we rank colleges?		<p>Turner, C. (2015, September 14). President Obama's New 'College Scorecard' Is A Torrent Of Data. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/09/12/439742485/president-obamas-new-college-scorecard-is-a-torrent-of-data">http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/09/12/439742485/president-obamas-new-college-scorecard-is-a-torrent-of-data</a></p>
4/4	What is the value of a college education?		<p>Abel, J. R., &amp; Deitz, R. (2014). Do the Benefits of College Still Outweigh the Costs? <i>Federal Reserve Bank of NY Current Issues in Economics and Finance</i>, 20(3), 1-12. Retrieved from <a href="https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/research/current_issues/ci20-3.pdf">https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/research/current_issues/ci20-3.pdf</a>.</p> <p>Gunderson, M., &amp; Oreopoulos, P. (2010). Returns to Education in Developed Countries. In <i>Economics of Education</i> (pp. 37-43). San Diego: Academic Press.</p> <p>Patrinos, H.A., &amp; Psacharopoulos, G. (2010). Returns to Education in Developing Countries. In <i>Economics of Education</i> (pp. 43-51). San Diego: Academic Press.</p>

#### Adulting: Who should be hired?

4/6	Should you use a personality test to hire someone?	Section 3 due	<p>Deming, D. (2015). The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market. <i>NBER</i>. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.nber.org/papers/w21473">http://www.nber.org/papers/w21473</a></p> <p>Working Paper</p> <p>Emotional breakdown. (2013, April 06). Retrieved from <a href="http://www.economist.com/news/business/21575817-can-leaders-be-identified-psychometrics-emotional-breakdown">http://www.economist.com/news/business/21575817-can-leaders-be-identified-psychometrics-emotional-breakdown</a></p> <p>Flowers, A. (2015, August 25). The Best Jobs Now Require You To Be A People Person. Retrieved from <a href="http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-best-jobs-now-require-you-to-be-a-people-person/?ex_cid=538fb">http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-best-jobs-now-require-you-to-be-a-people-person/?ex_cid=538fb</a></p> <p>Morgeson, F. P., Campion, M. A., Dipboye, R. L., Hollenbeck, J. R., Murphy, K., &amp; Schmitt, N. (2007). Reconsidering the use of personality tests in personnel selection contexts. <i>Personnel psychology</i>, 60(3), 683-729.</p>
4/13	How do we know when a social program or business practice is working?		<p>Lance, P., D. Guilkey, A. Hattori and G. Angeles. (2014). How do we know if a program made a difference? A guide to statistical methods for program impact evaluation. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: MEASURE Evaluation.</p>
4/18	What is one year worth? (End of life quality of life decisions)		<p><i>Are you ready for a glorious sunset?</i> [Advertisement]. (2015, August 27). New York, New York: Freakonomics. <a href="http://freakonomics.com/podcast/are-you-ready-for-a-glorious-sunset-a-new-freakonomics-radio-episode/">http://freakonomics.com/podcast/are-you-ready-for-a-glorious-sunset-a-new-freakonomics-radio-episode/</a></p> <p>Selection from: Gawande, A. (2015). <i>Being Mortal</i>. Tiptree Book Service.</p>
4/20	Presentations I		
4/25	Presentations II		

4/27	How will you use measures? (The measured life wrap up)	Final due in class	
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### **Class Policies:**

1. Attendance: It is mandatory. You should arrive prepared with your coursepack for each meeting. Should an emergency or illness arise, please email the instructors informing them of your circumstance.
2. Discussion: We embrace diversity of thought and opinions in our discussion. However, discourse must remain respectful. We seek to foster an environment conducive to open discussion and expect utmost respect of your classmates and instructors.

### **Class Standards:**

- Argue ideas not people (No Ad Hominem attacks)
  - Be mindful of different perspectives: specifically seek to understand
  - Allow others to finish their thoughts: do not interrupt
  - Be an engaged conversation participant: listen, take notes, do the reading, ask questions
3. Food: Non-disruptive food and drink in class is acceptable. Non-disruptive food is not excessively loud or odorous.
  4. Office Hours: We encourage you to make an appointment with us to meet throughout the semester with any questions or concerns you may have. Additionally, we require that you meet with the instructors once to go over your paper which you will be working on throughout the semester.
  5. Electronics: No electronics in class. This seminar emphasizes discussion, and electronics are disruptive to your classmates, your instructors, and yourself.

**Required Texts:** Course Pack or print each reading and bring to class.

### **Medical Condition/Disability:**

If you have a medical condition/disability that may require reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access to this course, please contact the Department of Disability Services at 919.962.8300, on the Internet at <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/eligibility> or via email at [disabilityservices@unc.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@unc.edu)

### **Instructor statement on wellbeing:**

As previous undergraduate students and current graduate students, we both respect and understand the pressure to perform at your top levels. Maximizing performance requires both mental and physical health. In this seminar, we aim for students to push themselves in their analytical and communicative abilities, partially through classroom participation. Although we require such participation, we understand that at times throughout the semester well-being, either or both mentally and physically, may be compromised. Should

you feel on any day unable to participate, please notify one of the instructors before class so that we know not to "cold-call" you. We intend to drive intellectual growth and participation with this exercise, which may not always be comfortable, but we do understand that an individual's circumstances may prohibit the real benefits of the exercise from being realized. We also encourage students to visit both websites for Campus Health Services and Counseling and Psychological Services for resources and appointments.

<https://campushealth.unc.edu/services/counseling-and-psychological-services>

<https://campushealth.unc.edu/>

### **Honor Code:**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had a student-led honor system for over 100 years. Academic integrity is at the heart of Carolina and we all are responsible for upholding the ideals of honor and integrity. The student-led Honor System is responsible for adjudicating any suspected violations of the Honor Code and all suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the honor system. Information, including your responsibilities as a student is outlined in the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance. Your full participation and observance of the Honor Code is expected. For more information visit [studentconduct.unc.edu](http://studentconduct.unc.edu)

### **Harassment and Discrimination:**

It is the University's policy not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status as consistent with the University's Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct. See

<http://policies.unc.edu/policies/nondiscrim/> for more information.

### **Assignments and Grading:**

It will be possible to earn a total of 200 points in this class. Grades will be awarded according to the following schedule:

Score	Grade	179-173	B+	159-153	C+	139-133	D+
200-187	A	172-167	B	152-147	C	132-120	D
186-180	A-	166-160	B-	146-140	C-	<119	F

### Active Engagement (35%)

Participation is more than showing up--it's bringing the coursepack and being present. We will ask you about the reading every class, whether through discussion or through specific questions. Do the reading.

From experience, we know these grades can feel arbitrary. To keep you informed, we will return preliminary (and by no means final) participation grades with your first three papers.

### Papers (50%)

You will be responsible for producing a final project that critically examines the measurement of some aspect of human experience. You will select a topic from a list provided or propose your own. We generated the topics because we know that there is sufficient work on their measurement, but we strongly encourage you to pursue your own interests. After selecting your topic, you will be responsible for four papers on it:

#### Paper 1: Background and Motivation (20pts)

In this paper, you will not only describe the construct you are measuring, but also the motivations behind its measurement. We will ask you to revise and resubmit this paper with our input to support your progress on the final project. As such, your grade for this paper will be the average of your first and second submission.

#### Paper 2: Compare and Contrast (20pts)

In this paper, you will select at least two measures (we will provide you with direction as to which measures might be most interesting) and compare and contrast them using content knowledge and psychometric theory.

#### Paper 3: Implementation and Effects (20pts)

In this paper, you will critically examine the current and future effects of the measures you selected on personal, social, political, and cultural levels.

#### Final Paper: Bringing it all together (40pts)

In this paper, you will integrate your three (revised) papers into one cohesive document. In addition to your past work, you will include your own recommendations for how an organization (e.g. the government, a school, a business) should measure this construct.

The first three papers should be between 800-1250 words, while the final needs to be sufficiently long to include the previous three papers and your policy recommendations (3000-3500 words). Although the final paper may seem long, you will have written most of it already through your first three papers and your blog posts. To acknowledge improvement, if your final paper grade is higher than your lowest short paper grade, then the average of that final paper grade and that original short paper grade becomes that short paper grade

(If you receive a 40 on the final, and got 15, 17, and 18 on your short papers, your paper grades will be 17.5, 17, 18, 40).

**Presentation: (30pts, 15%)**

You will be grouped into a team based on the thematic relationship between your final project's construct and the measures. Together, you will be responsible for a ten-minute executive summary of your measures. For example, those of you presenting on performance metrics for human capital might present them as if you are consultants, while those of you presenting on Common Core metrics might decide to present as if to a school board.