

# STOR 520-001

## Introduction to Data Science

### Spring 2026

#### Course Description

*This course provides hands-on experience working with data sets provided in class and downloaded from certain public websites. Lectures cover basic topics such as R programming, visualization, data wrangling and cleaning, exploratory data analysis, web scraping, data merging, predictive modeling, and elements of machine learning. Programming analyses in more advanced areas of data science.*

*Plan to come to every class with your computer and ready to work with others. Using resources around you is a key component of successful data analysis. This includes the internet and people.*

*Students may not receive credit for both STOR 320 and STOR 520.*

#### Course Goals and Learning Objectives

***This course will enable you to:***

- Establish proficiency in the statistical programming language R making the student immediately competitive in the data science job market.
- Acquire both structured and unstructured data for the purpose of gathering insight on well-crafted research hypotheses.
- Clean, transform, and merge datasets.
- Summarize data using professionally developed tables and various visualizations.
- Model relationships between variables using a variety of techniques, including linear regression, nonlinear regression, logistic regression, and various machine learning techniques.
- Evaluate and compare predictive accuracy from competing modeling methods using cross-validation.
- Honestly interpret results from predictive analytics using creative visualizations and tables.
- Effectively communicate insights both verbally and in writing to a non-technical audience.
- Share data science ideas with a worldwide audience using HTML web pages and dynamic web applications using RMarkdown and RShiny.

## Course Details

Number	STOR 520-001
Title	Introduction to Data Science
Credit hours	4
Course Format	The course format will include 3 lectures per week. Lectures will be supplemented with in-class programming and practical discussion. Students will also be required to register for a weekly lab with required attendance in person.
Prerequisites	STOR 435/STOR 535 and STOR 455 (MS/PhD Students Welcome)
Target Audience	All MS or PhD students interested in advancing data science skills. Given the similarity to STOR 320, undergraduate students are recommended to take STOR 320 and not STOR 520.
Instructor	Dr. Mario Giacomazzo Office: Hanes 403 Phone: 480-489-1398 (Cell) Email: <a href="mailto:mgiacoma@email.unc.edu">mgiacoma@email.unc.edu</a> Office Hours: M, 3PM – 4PM & F, 2PM – 3PM
Lab Instructors	Mark Cahill (400,401) Office: Hanes B-04 Email: <a href="mailto:mbcahill@unc.edu">mbcahill@unc.edu</a> Office Hours: Th, 11AM – 12PM
Course Website	<a href="https://supermariogiacomazzo.github.io/STOR320_WEBSITE/">https://supermariogiacomazzo.github.io/STOR320_WEBSITE/</a>
Class Days, Times, Location	MWF, 9:05AM – 9:55AM, Hanes 130
Lab Days, Times, Location	400: M, 4:45PM – 5:35PM, Hanes 107 401: W, 4:45PM – 5:35PM, Hanes 107
Course Texts	<i>R for Data Science</i> , Hadley Wickham. Legally free online, but can be purchased for less than \$40 on Amazon.

## Course Assessments

Assignments	Percentages
Attendance	2%
Labs	10%
Homework	0%
Mini Projects	13%
Midterm 1	20%
Midterm 2	20%
Final Project	25%
Group Involvement	10%

## Grading Scale

Your final grade is based on a weighted average according to the previously addressed breakdown. Curving on individual/group assessments should not be expected. A curve may be applied to the final grades depending upon the highest grades in the course. Conversion to a letter grade will be based on the table below:

H	90 to 100	F	0 to 69.99
P	80 to 89.99		
L	70 to 79.99		

A	93 to 100	B	83 to 86.99	C	73 to 76.99	D	60 to 66.99
A-	90 to 92.99	B-	80 to 82.99	C-	70 to 72.99	F	0 to 59.99
B+	87 to 89.99	C+	77 to 79.99	D+	67 to 69.99		

## Assignment Descriptions

### Attendance:

Attendance will be taken every class using the UNC Check-in App. You will need to install the UNC Check-in app to your mobile device and bring it to every class. Starting at the beginning of class, you will have 15 minutes to check-in using the mobile app. Instructions for installing and using the UNC Check-in App are available at <https://unccheckin.unc.edu/>. Go to this website to learn more. You need to attend at least 70% of the lectures to get credit for attendance, otherwise you will receive a 0 for your attendance grade. If you need to miss class for a reason permitted by the university and you don't want to be penalized, you will need to get a university approved absence at <https://uaao.unc.edu/>. If you cannot get a university approved absence and don't want to be penalized, you must notify your instructor of the reason and provide documentation of the reason in email. The reason should line up with UNC'S definition of a university approved absence. For example, a job interview would not be approved by the university or me.

### Labs:

Attendance to all labs is mandatory, and you must attend the entire lab. Every week, your lab instructor will take attendance. If you are there for the entire class, you will receive 5 points. During this period, students are required to work on a lab assignment. Each lab assignment will be based on the topics

discussed in lecture or related to your final project. Students are responsible to turn in their own labs, but are encouraged to work in teams. These assignments are to be completed using RMarkdown and submitted as an HTML file by 4:45 PM on the following Monday. A lab instructor will be provided to help students in the completion of the lab and to facilitate group work. Every lab is worth 10 points and no late lab assignments will be accepted. You will need to get a university approved absence and notify your lab instructor to prevent a loss of points in these weekly labs if you miss class.

**Homework:**

Homework will be based on problems from the course textbook, *R for Data Science*. These assignments are recommended, but not required. I would highly recommend completing all homework assignments or you may find the exams extremely difficult.

**Mini Projects:**

Mini Projects are larger assignments designed to test your data science skills while also helping you build a professional portfolio of data science work for when you leave. Some of the material needed for these assignments will be taught in lecture or found in the textbook. Other material needed will be provided by your instructor. You will be expected to read all the material provided for each of these. The amount of time you get for these mini projects and the point value will vary based off the difficulty of the assignment. For each mini project, you will use RMarkdown and submit an HTML file on Canvas. If you submit your mini project late, expect a 25% deduction for less than 1 day late, 50% deduction between 1 and 2 days late, and 100% deduction more than 2 days late. All late mini projects must be submitted to Canvas as soon as they are completed. These assignments must be done individually without the help from any other human being in the course or outside of the course. If you get help from someone else in the course, I will submit an honors conduct violation

**Midterms:**

There will be 2 midterm exams during the semester. The date and material covered of each midterm will be announced at least 1 week before the midterm occurs. Currently, the plan is to have the midterms on February 18 and April 15.

The format of the midterms will depend on the material that they will cover. The midterms will be closed book and be completed without the use of your computer or course materials. If you are found to be submitting the work of other students, an honor code violation will be reported. This could be by communication with others and the sharing of answers and code during the midterm, communication with students in other sections of the course, using solutions from previous semesters, or online answer tools such as Chegg, CourseHero, ChatGPT, etc. This is a zero tolerance policy and all suspected honor code violations will be reported.

Technology like smart phones, smart watches, and AR glasses are prohibited. If you are found to be using technology without permission from me, you will get an honors conduct violation if I suspect that it is being used to help you during the exam.

Make-up midterms are only possible for University approved absences or consent from the instructor due to extenuating circumstances. Unless you have accommodation as determined by the university or university approved absences, you must take the midterms at the dates and times provided. If you have accommodation, please provide the formal notification before the second week of classes.

**Final Project:**

The final project is done in groups of 4-5 students and is worth a total of 100 points. There will be 4 parts of varying point values submitted throughout the semester. The first part, the Project Proposal, is worth 10 points and will be due sometime in the beginning of the semester after groups have been designated. The second part, the Exploratory Data Analysis, is worth 20 points and will be due after the middle of the semester after the Project Proposal has been completed. The third part, the Final Paper, is worth 40 points and must be submitted on Canvas by 11:59PM on Monday, April 27. The fourth part, the Final Presentation, is worth 30 points and will take place during our designated final exam time according to the university calendar. For our class, this is 12PM to 3PM on Wednesday, April 29. Slides must be submitted by 12PM on April 29 to Canvas. If you are not in attendance for the final presentation, you will lose 5 points on your project grade.

**Group Involvement:**

Since the final project is a group project that is worth a tremendous number of points, it is very important that each group member fulfills their obligation to their group. Four times during the semester, there will be a survey sent out to the class, where you will score your group members on a scale from 0 (Terrible) to 5 (Excellent). In extreme circumstances, Dr. Mario has the right to remove individuals from their group and force them to submit their own project. If this occurs, changes to grading weights may be altered for individual students.

## Course Policies and Resources

### Syllabus Changes

*Dr. Mario reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including all due dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible so that students can adjust their schedules.*

### Attendance Policy

**University Policy:** As stated in the University's [Class Attendance Policy](#), no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities: [University Approved Absence Office \(UAAO\) website](#) provides information and [FAQs for students](#) and [FAQs for faculty](#) related to University Approved Absences
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC).

Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview, illness/ flu or club activity), instructors are encouraged to work directly with students to determine the best approach to missed classes and make-up assessment and assignments.

*Dr. Mario will require digital documentation in situations that are not University approved, but instructor approved. Without documentation, approval to miss class will not be given, and Dr. Mario has the right to inspect the validity of the documentation. Dishonest documentation is a violation of UNC's honor code.*

*Attendance will be taken using UNC's Check-in app. If you are having problems checking in using the app on your phone, you need to see me at the end of class so I can manually update your attendance. Dr. Mario will only fix your attendance retroactively one time if you forget to see me at the end of lecture.*

## Technology Use

*Students are required to bring their cell phone and computer to every class. Students must have R and RStudio installed on their computer. Directions for free downloads of this software will be provided. The professor or teaching assistant will occasionally request computers to be closed for dynamic discussion and guest speakers.*

## Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Use of generative AI tools can be used on all labs and assignments. However, if you don't know how to code on your own and depend on generative AI you will probably fail the exams and this course. You will not have access to generative AI tools and technology on exams. Also, you should not use AI to write your final paper. I want to see your individual creativity and originality. Any use of AI to write parts of your final paper will be treated as an honors conduct violation. The only acceptable use of AI as it pertains to your final project would be to proofread and detect spelling/grammatical errors.

## Time Limited Grade Disputes

*You only have 1 week after the grading of an assessment is complete to dispute your grade and possibly receive points back for that assessment. The only grade that should be disputed and modified after the last day of class is the final exam. Dr. Mario makes mistakes and desires that all students receive a fair grade that is correct. However, it is the student's responsibility to review their grades on assignments in a timely manner so that Dr. Mario can make fair decisions and modify grades quickly.*

If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our director of undergraduate studies or department chair.

## Late Submissions

*Lab Assignments cannot be submitted late at all. This is a zero tolerance policy and you will get a 0. Mini Projects can be submitted late with penalty. Any late submissions regarding your group project will be penalized based on Dr. Mario's discretion and the penalty will be fairly applied to all members of the group no matter who was at fault or took the blame.*

## Accessibility Resources

[Accessibility Resources and Service](mailto:ars@unc.edu) (ARS – [ars@unc.edu](mailto:ars@unc.edu)) receives requests for accommodations, and through the Student and Applicant Accommodations Policy determines eligibility and identifies reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions to mitigate or remove the barriers experienced in accessing University courses, programs and activities.

ARS also offers its Testing Center resources to students and instructors to facilitate the implementation of testing accommodations.

Faculty and instructors with any concerns or questions about accommodations and/or their implementation, are invited to [reach out to ARS](#) to discuss.

### Undergraduate Testing Center

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit <http://testingcenter.web.unc.edu/>.

### Honor Code

I expect all students to follow the guidelines of the UNC Code of Conduct. In particular, students are expected to be aware of policies related to academic integrity. You can read more about the Code of Conduct at [studentconduct.unc.edu](http://studentconduct.unc.edu). In any course, including mine, what constitutes cheating can change from one activity to another. For example, collaboration may be encouraged for an assignment but qualify as cheating during an exam. Please see my guidelines for each activity, and if you are unsure, please ask me to clarify. In remote classes, there may be many temptations for using online exchange sites, such as Chegg. Note that these sites provide names of students who have used their materials, and they routinely cooperate with institutions around academic integrity issues. Please don't get caught up with Code of Conduct issues just because it appears to be simple and untraceable. It is not!

*You are not permitted to download or upload any content from this course to the web in any form, including but not limited to Chegg, Course Hero, Coursera, Google Drive, etc. If you post my course content, you may be violating my intellectual property rights. If you post your own work from this course, you are allowing sites to profit from your intellectual property. In utilizing web sources to upload or download course content, you risk violating the University's Honor Code.*

### IT Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University's technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University's mission. In the context of a class, it's quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others' intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full [Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#), which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property.

Additionally, consult the [Safe Computing at UNC](#) website for information about data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

### Data Security and Privacy

UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities of transparency as a state-sponsored institution of higher learning, protecting certain types of information, and using information Carolina

collects only for appropriate purposes. Consult the [UNC-Chapel Hill Privacy Statement](#) for additional information.

### Counseling and Psychological Services

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The [Heels Care Network](#) website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to the [CAPS website](#) or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

### Title IX and Related Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made [online to the EOC](#) or by contacting the [University's Title IX Coordinator](#), Elizabeth Hall, or the [Report and Response Managers](#) in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office. Please note that I am designated as a Responsible Employee, which means I must report to the EOC any information I receive about the forms of misconduct listed in this paragraph. If you'd like to speak with a confidential resource, those include Counseling and Psychological Services, the University's Ombuds Office, and the [Gender Violence Services Coordinators](#). Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](#).

### Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](#) offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, sex, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered, and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (email [reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu) or see additional contact info at [safe.unc.edu](#)) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

### Learning Center

Want to get the most out of this course or others this semester? Visit [UNC's Learning Center](#) to make an appointment or register for an event. Their free, popular programs will help you optimize your academic performance. Try academic coaching, peer tutoring, STEM support, ADHD/LD services, workshops and study camps, or review tips and tools available on the website.

### Writing Center

For free feedback on any course writing projects, check out UNC's Writing Center. Writing Center coaches can assist with any writing project, including multimedia projects and application essays, at any



stage of the writing process. You don't even need a draft to come visit. To schedule a 45-minute appointment, review quick tips, or request written feedback online, visit [UNC's Writing Center online](#).

### Equal Opportunity and Compliance

Equal Opportunity and Compliance Accommodations Team ([Accommodations - UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance](#)) receives requests for accommodations for disability, pregnancy and related conditions, and sincerely held religious beliefs and practices through the University's Policy on Accommodations. EOC Accommodations team determines eligibility and reasonable accommodations consistent with state and federal laws.

### Diversity Statement

I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, physical and learning ability and any other way in which individuals differ from one another. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate any suggestions.

### Undergraduate Testing Center

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The Center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit the [testing center website](#).