SOCI 269

“Midterm” Assignment

Sakeef M. Karim

*Amherst College*

## Basic Expectations

As noted in your [syllabus](https://soci269.netlify.app/), you are required to submit a “midterm”[[1]](#footnote-1) assignment by Tuesday, April 8th at 8:00 PM. For this assignment, you will—either individually or in groups of 2-3—submit a relatively complex data visualization using one of the [data sources](#thedata) listed below; an annotated script file or Quarto/RMarkdown document featuring your underlying code; and a 5–10-page reflection memo (double-spaced) where you interpret your results and establish connections between your visualization and recent social scientific scholarship. *Most* of the scholarship you engage with should be quantitatively oriented.

|  |
| --- |
|  To Reiterate |
| ***Most*** of the scholarship you engage with should be quantitatively oriented. |

|  |
| --- |
|  You Must Submit Two Separate Files |
| *Please remember to submit*:1. The code you used to complete the assignment (i.e., as an .Rmd, .qmd or .R file).
2. A ***separate*** document—i.e., paper—featuring your results and exposition.
 |

## The Data

### Broad Overview

You can work with the 2010 *General Social Survey* (henceforth, GSS); the *American National Election Studies* (henceforth, ANES) Cumulative File; or ***any of the data sets*** featured in [Week 4](https://soci269-w4.netlify.app/) of this class. GSS and ANES files were prepared using the [{gssr}](https://kjhealy.github.io/gssr/) and [{anesr}](https://github.com/jamesmartherus/anesr) packages in .

You can access these data through one of three channels:

1. By copying and pasting the script below directly into RStudio:

load(url("https://github.com/sakeefkarim/intro\_quantitative\_sociology/raw/refs/heads/main/data/assignments/midterm%20assignment/assignment-2.RData"))

1. By [downloading](./data/assignment-2.RData)  the .RData file.
2. By cloning our companion [GitHub repository](https://github.com/sakeefkarim/intro_quantitative_sociology/tree/main).

### Variables in the ANES Time Series

Learn more about the ANES time series by clicking here.

### Variables in the 2010 GSS

Learn more about the 2010 GSS by clicking here.

## Structure of Paper

### Introductory Section

In your introduction, state the [central thesis](https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/thesis) of your paper with lucidity and precision. To wit, please clearly, succinctly, and cogently communicate the thrust of your argument. Introductory paragraphs should provide a brief summary of the literature you engage with and offer a clear roadmap for the paper: i.e., what are the key claims being made? How will different theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks be integrated? What is $x$, your phenomenon of analytic interest?

|  |
| --- |
| **Hint** $x$ should be ***directly*** related to your visualization. |

What is the central puzzle, problem, or idea being addressed? Please resist the allure of grandiosity. Ancient philosophers and fables need not be invoked.

### Visualization

You must embed your visualization ***directly*** within your main text. It should be placed *after* the Introduction, though the exact location is up to you. To orient the reader,[[2]](#footnote-2) the visualization must have a detailed caption (e.g., Figure 1) clearly explaining what your plot seeks to convey.

### Interpretation

Drawing on relevant social scientific research,[[3]](#footnote-3) carefully interpret the results of your visualization. Clearly articulate how your findings relate to (i.e., refine or complicate) extant understandings of $x$, your phenomenon of interest. Do your results offer novel or interesting insights? Are there any unexpected patterns that emerge, and if so, how can you account for them? Thoughtfully connect your interpretation to the broader literature, highlighting areas of convergence or disjuncture before clarifying what your graphic reveals about the sociological mechanisms animating $x$.

### Conclusion

In concluding your brief essay, please restate the central arguments proferred in your text and discuss the limitations of your analysis.

## Formatting Guidelines

You are free to prepare your “midterm” assignment in Microsoft Word, Google Docs, $\LaTeX$, RMarkdown or Quarto. Concretely, this means you can submit your short essay as a .docx file or as a PDF. Your main text must be double-spaced and formatted in a 12-point font. Margins should be set to 1 inch on all sides (top, bottom, left, and right). You are free to use either an [APA](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html) or [ASA](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/asa_style/index.html) citation style to manage the references you include.

|  |
| --- |
|  Zotero |
| If you haven’t done so already, you may want to invest in [Zotero](https://www.zotero.org/) to manage your citations. |

|  |
| --- |
|  A Note About Subheadings |
| You ***must*** use subheadings to organize your arguments. |

1. It’s not exactly *midterm* anymore, but let’s pretend. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Me. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Again, *most* of the papers you engage with should be quantitatively oriented. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)