

Course Syllabus
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[updated: Saturday, April 19, 2025]

Course: BUS 312
Title: Data Literacy for Business (3 units)

“Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school.”

---Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Program: Bachelors of Science, Business Administration (all options)
College: CSUN Nazarian College of Business and Economics

Semester: Fall, 2025
Class: 13754
Day/Time: Mon/Wed 10:00am - 11:15am
(Mon 8/25 - Wed 12/10, 16 weeks)

Location: BB2206

Delivery Format: in-person

Lead Student: Wayne Smith, Ph.D.

Office Room: BB4225

Office Hours: Mon/Wed 9:30am – 10:00am (and by appointment)

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Public Web: <http://ocw.smithw.org/2025fall/bus312-13754/>

Private LMS: <http://canvas.csun.edu/>

Tentative Exams: *Midterm* (Wed. Oct. 15), *Final* (Mon. Dec 15)

Required Materials (Bookstore):

1. Richardson, V., and M. Watson. (2024) *Introduction to Business Analytics*, McGrawHill, New York:NY. ISBN 978-1-265-45017-5
2. Two (2) “Scantron Form 882” (50 questions each side)

Required Materials (non-Bookstore):

1. Library Materials—the URL is on the course web page

Recommended Materials:

1. Hacker, D., and Sommers, N. (2021) *A Writer's Reference* (10th ed.), Bedford/St. Martin's, Boston:MA. ISBN-13 978-1319332935.
2. Help with statistics (generally) and Excel (specifically) – [LinkedIn Learning](#) (login with your CSUN account and password)
3. Wall Street Journal (20-30 minutes daily, in printed or online form)
[<https://libguides.csun.edu/news/WSJ>]

You must bring your required materials, including any instructor-supplied name tag or desk tent card, with you to each class.

Course Description:

Integrating key concepts from the lower-division core courses (i.e., financial and managerial accounting, micro and macroeconomics, business law, and statistics), this course should be taken by all business majors prior to, or concurrently with, the student's first upper division business core courses. In this course, students will learn to apply data analytics techniques (e.g., data cleansing, data exploration, etc.) to analyze data and make data-driven decisions. This course will teach students how data analytics facilitates data-driven decision-making by reviewing and expanding students' understanding of the critical concepts of using data and data analytics techniques for business decisions. During the class, students will learn to use data and apply several data analytics techniques while conducting a series of assignments and projects.

Attendance in class is required. This course is designed on a traditional university schedule. This course requires, at a minimum, three times the number of hours per week outside of class as the number of hours in class.

Students who wish to add must attend each class and submit all assigned work.

Each class will begin promptly. The clock in the classroom will be used as the reference.

Course Prerequisites:

This course requires the completion of all lower-division business core courses. None of the prerequisites can be taken concurrently. All of the prerequisites will be strictly enforced.

Learning Objectives:

This course is designed to achieve the following learning goals:

- Students will learn to access/import, explore, analyze, and interpret data.
- Students will communicate their findings in effective oral presentations and written business reports.
- Students will learn to analyze data in spreadsheets related to business decisions using Excel's built-in functions.
- Students will communicate findings using modern data visualization tools (e.g., Excel, PowerPoint, etc.).
- Students will practice basic data analytics techniques such as hypothesis testing and prediction methods.
- Students will practice demonstrating an understanding of ethics, diversity, inclusion, and equity by analyzing ethical dilemmas resulting from emerging technologies affecting data collection, privacy, and security.

Pedagogical Approach:

The course will use a variety of approaches including lectures, videos, class discussions, assignments, analyses of business news and cases, and in-class, experiential exercises, including extemporaneous debate.

Learning Rhythms and Patterns:

I tend neither to read nor summarize the required reading materials in class. I tend to offer clarifications, differences of perspectives, or explorations of the core material. Additionally, I tend not to use a large number of presentation slides, much less post them online. Students must allocate sufficient out-of-class time to do the required reading in order to participate in class and ask substantive questions as necessary. Students will need to have mastered necessary skills in reading comprehension, retention, and recall. Each class session will generally begin with an opportunity to ask questions regarding the required reading materials or lecture topics from the previous class session. Each class session is generally oriented around one or two learning themes. The textbook materials support the core ideas of those themes, the peer-reviewed and other materials

support key theories and models of those themes, and the non-peer-reviewed and other materials support key ideas in practice or working examples.

Examinations:

There will be two examinations (a mid-term and a final) scheduled in advance. I may give cumulative exams, although I usually exclude specific material. The final exam will cover the chapters covered in class as well as in-class discussions and other non-textbook materials. Due to time constraints, we will not be able to cover each and every aspect of the textbook readings or other readings for class. Nonetheless, you are responsible for all the material (i.e., it is “fair game” for the exam) unless explicitly directed otherwise by the instructor. No make-up exams will be given without a signed note from a medical doctor or public safety agency.

Assignments:

There will be a few individual assignments, and at least two team-based assignments. The assignments will be described in advance and will be available on the course website.

Assignments and reports announced in class may consist of self-assessments, case analyses, or short write-ups. Assignments and reports are due promptly at the beginning of class. Assignments and reports not submitted promptly at the beginning of class (I will make a “last call” announcement) are assessed an immediate 50% point penalty. No assignments or reports will be accepted after the end of the class session without a signed note from a medical doctor or public safety agency. Therefore, if you fear you might miss class or might not be able to turn in your assignment on time, you may give it to another student to turn in on the correct day and at the correct time. Assignments and reports will be generally graded on straightforward point scheme (“scoring rubric”) enumerated within each assignment. In addition, the writing requirements will be scored for each assignment and report as well (in general, I take off 10% for each error in language use and composition).

Be sure to collect your scored exams, assignments and reports (in other words, anything you turn in) and retain them in your records.

Exercises:

There may be one or more exercises in the course. Some exercises are completed in-class, and some are completed out-of-class. Exercises will always be due in-class.

There will be at least two exercises. The exercises are similar to “pop quizzes” that you may be familiar with in other classes; you will need to keep up with the reading, classwork, and assignments.

Participation:

I occasionally ask for volunteers in class. I often provide “Engagement and Commitment” (aka “participation”) points to students for this effort. Additionally, if I call on you and you are either absent or not prepared, you will lose such points. You can also lose such points in other ways, such as not picking up scored/graded assignments and reports. There is extrinsic and intrinsic value to volunteering in class and being prepared for class.

Grading System:

The contribution of each component to the final grades will be based on the following breakdown:

Component	Relative Weight
Engagement and Commitment	16%
Exercises	28%
Assignments	28%
Exams	28%

Weights within the “Engagement and Commitment” (i.e., “Participation”), “Exercises,” “Assignments,” and “Exams” components are distributed evenly. The Department of Systems and Operations Management strives for some uniformity in final letter grading distributions. Therefore, students are ranked in class by weighted points. Letter grades are not assigned to any quiz, exam, assignment, or report. For each exam, I will provide not only the mean and standard deviation, but also the relevant estimated letter grade percentiles as well. These percentiles can be used as a guide as to help assess your relative performance in class. Each student has the same opportunity to earn high marks. Students should study diligently and strive for high marks on a persistent basis. All of your work matters. There is no “non-important” work in this class.

Students need to attend every class and be on time. Additionally, you must bring standard 8.5 x 11 notebook paper, and a blue pen or black pen with you to class each day.

Grades will be assigned with plus/minus suffixes.

I have minor hearing loss in my right ear. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand and wait until I call on you. It helps me to be able to see you before you begin your question. Thank you in advance. All audio or video recording of class is prohibited.

Classroom Disruptions:

Please ensure that the audio portion (“ringtone”) of your cell phone is off during class. No interaction with your cell phone, including texting, is permitted during class. You may use a computer in class.

Academic Integrity:

Any cheating in or out of class will not be tolerated and will be reported. Cheating could result in a student being expelled from the University. Additional classroom behavior requirements for this class are listed at:

<http://ocw.smithw.org/general/behavior.pdf>

At the start of the semester:

My class roster identifies students by name, CSUN ID, class level, and major. On the first day of class, I know very little about each student. However, I have found that some students benefit by visiting me in my office during scheduled office hours at least once very early in the course. Please do let me know if you fall into one of the following categories:

Differently-abled students. The textbook for this course is available in electronic form for students who are registered with the CSUN Center on Disabilities. Further, all materials in this course have been designed to be accessible as possible to those with visual, aural, motor, and cognitive impairments. If there are additional needs, please let me know as soon as possible.

Military service. If you are either currently in the active service, reserves, or ROTC, or will be attending OCS soon, please let me know. In particular, I want to

ensure that the class schedule doesn't conflict your service schedule. I also would like student veterans to self-identify themselves to me as well. Veterans have unique experiences and can make important contributions to a management class.

Student athletes. I try to attend at least one game or meet for each student athlete, even if your sport is in a future semester. Again, you will need to self-identify yourself to me.

International students. Managing expectations is difficult; managing expectations regarding higher education and culture is *extraordinarily* difficult. Please see me as soon as possible if you do not completely understand any aspect of this course, including writing and grading standards.

At the end of the semester:

I do not discuss any aspect of scores or grades via email after the last class session. I don't discuss any aspect of scores or grades after final grades have been posted to SOLAR.

Students who earn an "A" or "B" may request a written letter of recommendation from me. If such a letter is desired, please try to ask me before the end of the following semester. A request for a letter of recommendation begins and ends with a discussion in my office during office hours.

Acknowledgements:

I am indebted to Dr. Abe Feinberg for sparking an abiding passion in quantitative methods and, perhaps more important, what we call now "analytics" and "data science". Additional faculty who assisted my growth in quantitative reasoning including Professors Al Kinderman, Paul Baum, Ernest Scheurer, and Elizabeth Trybus."

As much as I have learned from these individuals, I have more to learn from my students.