

**CIS 490**  
**Independent Study in the People Analytics Lab (PAL)<sup>1</sup>**  
**Course Syllabus/Overview of Responsibilities for Lab Members**  
**Lab Homepage: [www.cmcastille.netlify.com](http://www.cmcastille.netlify.com)**  
**2024**

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**Syllabus Revision Statement:**

This syllabus is subject to revision, but not without prior notice by the instructor.

**Catalog Description:**

**CIS 490. Independent Study in Information Systems. 3-3-3.** Prerequisites: Senior standing and permission of department head required. Individualized activities (e.g. independent readings, research, problem reports) designed to meet the special needs of students within their major. (52.1299)

**Prerequisites for Course:** Senior standing and permission of department head required.

**Eligibility**

To be eligible to be a member in the PAL, you must have at least a 3.0 GPA (major-specific is allowable). Students may take this course twice; however, the scope of work will include activities directed at managing the lab's staff, which includes other students (see detailed explanation in the section titled: "For Lab Managers").

**Student Objective Outcomes:**

The course learning objectives are built around competencies for being an effective HR analyst as revealed by research by McCartney et al. (2021).

1. Translate and frame complex insights gathered from data into a compelling story. (*storytelling and communication*)
2. Formulate testable research questions that are both relevant to the organization and can assist with uncovering underlying business challenges, drivers, and trends. (*research and discovery*)
3. Translate and apply HR knowledge to make informed decisions on both current and prospective business challenges. (*HR and business acumen*)
4. Listen and engage with stakeholder requests and recommend strategies and data-driven insights. (*consulting*)

<sup>1</sup>This syllabus has been adapted from Dr. Neil A. Lewis (Cornell University). See [this link](#) for the original.

5. Effectively understand systems and effectively maintain various technology platforms such as HRIS, databases, and visualization software. (*technical knowledge*)
6. Extract and work with large datasets, identify patterns, and apply statistical and data management techniques. (*data fluency and data analysis*)

My primary objective is to provide you with the experience of examining people data in organizational settings (e.g., jobs, careers, etc.) so that you have a better understanding of the scientific process (e.g., data analysis, write-up) that goes on behind the headlines in the newspapers or papers you read in your classes. Ideally, you will be part of a team that completes at least one study within an academic year. However, more likely you will help me to complete studies that are in the lab's pipeline (which you will learn about during a tech orientation). Studies in the lab's pipeline vary depending on what Dr. Castille is currently working on. Students' work will vary depending on the nature of their personal and professional goals, two of which are described below:

***I do not plan to apply to graduate school or a professional school (e.g., med school, law school)...***

Great! I am still happy to have you on the research team as long as you complete your work diligently. If that happens, expect a strong and positive recommendation from me as you move on to your future endeavors. Please do keep me informed of your current career plans (and changes in those plans); knowing your plans will help me assign you to the projects that are most relevant for your future trajectory.

***I plan to apply to graduate school or a professional school...***

Simply completing basic research duties is not enough. You should be in regular communication with me about your professional goals while you work on the team. In order for me to be able to give you an excellent recommendation for graduate school or professional school, you will need to work with me for at least one year, but preferably two or more years. Here are some other things that you should try to do:

1. Complete an honors thesis during your final year.
2. Present research at a professional conference in the field you're applying to (e.g., Association for Psychological Science, Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychology, Inc.).
3. Read research articles so that you gain expertise on the theory behind our research.
4. Prepare for the GRE/MCAT/LSAT early.
5. Look for programs and *professors* whose research interests you early.
6. Try to learn skills beyond running participants through research (e.g., writing an IRB proposal, creating study materials, planning a new experiment).

If you plan to pursue a career in research, then I will want to know that you are hardworking, you have a deep understanding of the relevant theory and the research that we are doing, you can come up with new research ideas, and that you show potential as someone who will be able to contribute to knowledge in the field. This is what admissions committees will be looking for.

**Lab Onboarding Assignment: RA / Team Contracting Exercise (Due in Week 1)**

Finding areas where your interest and desires are aligned with our research needs is paramount for us to have an effective long-term working relationship. The first task of a RA is to read through this overview and formulate a clear set of desires for this experience. Think of this exercise as us forming a contract that specifies, at minimum, the following:

1. What do you want to get out of your time with the PAL (skill sets, experience)?

2. What constraints exist on your time or schedule (i.e., how much time you are willing to commit to working in the lab)? Note: We expect a 3-credit hour to take 6 to 9 hours of work.
3. Think about what this experience looks like on a weekly basis. Describe that to me. Let's make this a reality.

I will look this over with you can clarify what I am willing to do for you when I'm willing to do it, and what my expectations are. Over time, we'll have clarified expectations for one another.

If you've worked with me in the past, you know that I like teams! If we are fortunate enough to work with many RAs, we'll have a team! To build and manage an effective team, on day one we'll cover a team contracting exercise. You can find the details of this assignment [here](#). Please email me your work by the end of week 1.

Note: This assignment is meant for students who are working in a team within the lab (i.e., when there are multiple members in the lab).

### **Role Description for all Lab Members**

No prior research experience is required. You will gain experience using a variety of tools and methods for social science research. A brief description of some of these tools and methods follows. Note that you may or may not be responsible for each of the following depending on the needs for the project that has been assigned to you:

***Studies with human participants in the laboratory [NSU students only]:*** You will need to undergo IRB training. Start by creating an account through CITI set appointments with participants to come to the lab to participate in studies. [Click here to create a CITI account](#). You are responsible for arranging times to conduct the study with participants, running the study, and awarding course credit or other compensation to participants. You also may participate in the participant recruitment process (e.g., posting recruitment flyers around).

***Studies with human participants in virtual locations:*** We occasionally collect data from virtual settings (e.g., online panels, crowdsource). You may be asked to assist with any survey design.

***Article reviews:*** Occasionally, Dr. Castille is asked to engage in the peer review of scholarly works for various journals (this is termed 'ad hoc reviewing'). In 2020, he was recognized as "Reviewer of the Year" for the *Journal of Business & Psychology*. Reviewing papers with Dr. Castille may not be required but is an amazing growth opportunity for students interested in pursuing graduate-level training in the social sciences (which includes business). You'll gain insight into the peer review process, learn how to give constructive feedback to authors, and learn how to navigate the peer review process. Journals may include but are certainly not limited to:

- *Journal of Business & Psychology*
- *Journal of Applied Psychology*
- *Journal of Business Ethics*
- *Journal of Managerial Psychology*
- *Personality and Individual Differences*
- *Applied Psychology: An International Review*

Students who make a contribution to Dr. Castille's reviews can receive credit for co-reviewing via the website [Publons](#).

**Literature reviews:** You will use scholarly databases such as PsycInfo, Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar to find articles that are relevant to current research topics in our lab. You will write a concise summary of the articles that communicate relevant details to other members of the research team.

**Data entry and management:** You will enter data into Qualtrics, Google Spreadsheets, or Microsoft Excel. You will learn how to organize and describe data files in ways that effectively communicate their contents to others who have not been involved in the research process.

**Data coding:** You may be tasked with reading open-ended responses to questionnaires or watch videos of live interactions and code them for content that answers research questions in the lab.

**Data analysis:** You may undergo training in data analytics tools that we use in our work, which include R and RStudio, and GitHub. We use RStudio to make our research fully reproducible – as in, the whole project is written up (literature review, results, etc.) in R. This helps others to check our work, cut down on reporting errors, and makes our work useful for teaching purposes.

Self-directed training may be required. Coursework can come from:

1. [Open Science MOOC](#)
2. [DataCamp](#)

### **Overview of the Experience**

**Weekly meetings:** Our research team will have one weekly meeting that we will arrange according to everyone's schedule. The meeting will be scheduled for one hour. Sometimes we may meet longer, but I will let you know ahead of time. At the meeting you will discuss what you have done during the preceding week, we will solve problems that come up during the research process collaboratively, and we will discuss our plans for the next week. In addition, we will discuss the assigned research articles.

**Weekly time reports:** Each lab member is required to submit a report of the hours that you worked each week and what you did during those hours. This should be submitted to me by 5:00 PM each Friday. These reports serve two main functions: first, they are essential for me to keep track of the progress of our various projects; second, they allow me (and the university) to ensure that credit is being fairly allocated (if part of an internship or independent study). The timesheet can be found [here](#).

**Please note:** For students who are working as an RA for course credit, you will work on the research for 6-9 hours per week.

### ***If you are working in the lab for course credit, then you must do:***

1. **Mid-term and End of term report:** For students who are working as an RA for course credit, at the end of the term you will write a 1-2 page summary of what you did during the term, what you learned from the experience, what you think is working well in the research, and what you think could be improved.
2. **Final project:** For students who are working as an RA for course credit, your final project will be either to write a research paper or to give a group presentation to the faculty advisor, other graduate students, and other URAs in the broader lab (we will specify the final project at the beginning of the term). Final papers are due by 11:59 PM on Friday before finals begin. Group presentations will take place one or two weeks before finals and will be arranged during the term.

Dr. Castille reserves the right to change 1 and 2 as needed.

## **Policies**

***Emails:*** Our primary mode of communication will be email. If working for credit, responses to are due by the end of the business day after you receive them. If the message does not require a specific response, then you should reply acknowledging that you read and received it.

***Absence Policy:*** If you will be absent from a meeting, then I expect you to contact me at least 24 hours prior to the meeting via email or phone to let me know. You must contact me to schedule a separate time for us to meet.

***Exams in Other Courses [not necessary for volunteers]:*** If you are enrolled in this course for credit, your weekly work for this course is NOT optional. When you have exams or deadlines in other courses, this is NOT an excuse to work fewer hours that week. If you know that an exam in another course is coming up (which you should know since exam schedules are listed on course syllabi), then you may work extra hours the week BEFORE the exam so that you can work fewer hours the week of the exam. You may not work fewer hours the week of the exam in the hope that you can make up for lost time later.

## **Grading Criteria (for students participating for course credit)**

Grades are based on how proactive you are about contributing to the research, working the required number of hours, attendance at weekly meetings, contribution to weekly meetings, responsible communication, and your final project (paper or group presentation). As a general note, I can almost guarantee that you will *make mistakes* during the research process, especially during the beginning. I want you to tell me openly when you have made a mistake so that we can address the problem together so that it does not happen again in the future. Not all behaviors apply to each project and the instructor will clarify this if asked.

### ***A-student:***

1. Contributes ideas to the meetings when the research team is trying to solve problems; these include stupid ideas, which often are an essential part of the path to good ideas
2. Is attentive to the research process, notices when things are going wrong, and provides useful feedback about how to improve our experiments
3. Works independently to complete research tasks
4. Seeks additional tasks when all assigned work has been completed
5. Responds to emails promptly
6. Attends all weekly meetings; reschedules meeting times if absent
7. Demonstrates thought, effort, and a deep understanding of the research in the final project

### ***B-student:***

1. Does not contribute much to problem-solving at the weekly meetings
2. Runs the research, but does not provide much feedback about how the experiments are going
3. Takes the rest of the week off if the amount of work assigned takes fewer hours than the number that the student has promised to work (as opposed to asking for extra tasks if the student does not have enough to do for the week)
4. Delays responses to email communication
5. Attends all weekly meetings; reschedules meeting times if absent

6. Demonstrates moderate thought, effort, and has a moderate understanding of the research in the final project

***C-student:***

1. Does not contribute to problem-solving at weekly meetings
2. Runs the research, but does not work the full amount of hours required
3. Inconsistently completes required responsibilities
4. Inconsistently responds to email communication
5. Has one unexcused absence from weekly meetings
6. Demonstrated weak thought, effort, and does not demonstrate understanding of the research in the final project

***D-student:***

1. Neither contributes to problem-solving or discusses what he/she did the previous week at weekly meetings
2. Schedules research sessions and does not show up
3. Consistently fails to complete required weekly responsibilities
4. Consistently late or fails to respond to email communication
5. Has two unexcused absences from weekly meetings
6. Demonstrated minimal thought, effort, and understanding of the research in the final project

***F-student:***

1. Misses multiple meetings and fails to reschedule
2. Consistently fails to show up for research sessions
3. Consistently fails to complete required weekly responsibilities
4. Rarely responds to email communication
5. Does not complete the final project

**Contact**

Most of our research-related communication will take place in email unless informed otherwise. Of course, you can text me (337-256-0664).

**Make-Up Procedure:** As there are no exams in this independent study, this segment is not applicable.

**College of Business Testing Policy:**

In an effort to maintain the highest standard of academic integrity, the College of Business has adopted a testing policy to which this class will adhere. It addresses behavior before, during and after testing.

This policy is posted on the College's website:

<https://www.nicholls.edu/business/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2019/10/CBA-testing-policy-fall-18.pdf>

**Attendance / Punctuality Policy:** Please see the section above outlining expectations for the PPAs, which explains how student attendance and contribution to meetings is evaluated.

**DROP DATE:** The last day to drop a course with a “W” is: **July 11 (7/11)**

**Academic Dishonesty Policy / Cheating / Disruptive Behavior:** *(use of cell phones, distracting behavior, sleeping, use of computers for purposes other than class related, etc.)*

Any student(s) caught violating the University Academic Dishonesty Policy (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) on ANY graded assignment will receive a grade of “0” on the assignment. Depending upon the severity of the infraction, this instructor reserves the right to assign a semester grade of “F” in the course. All issues of Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of the College of Business Administration and/or Dean of Student Life for further actions. Students should familiarize themselves with the terms of dishonesty, cheating/plagiarism, and disruptive behavior in the Student Policy and Procedure Manual.

### **Cell Phone & Other Classroom Behavior Policy:**

I will ask that you keep your phones, tablets, and computers inaccessible unless necessary for class. I have two principles that govern decisions to use technology in the classroom: (1) electronic devices (e.g., computers, tablets, cell phones) can be used if doing so facilitates student and peer productivity; (2) any forms of counterproductive technology use (e.g., looking at Facebook during a group activity) will be punished by a loss of participation credit for that day. Students who are using technology in a way that distracts from others’ classroom experiences will be removed from class. Students who wonder whether or not they should use an electronic device should ask for my permission (though, they will find that I provide guidance on when to use technology).

### **Multiple Cheating Offenses:**

The Academic Integrity Section of the Student Policy and Procedure Manual includes a requirement that faculty file a charge complaint statement with their respective dean whenever a student is confronted or disciplined for cheating. The Office of Academic Affairs will maintain these records, and any student confronted and/or disciplined for multiple offenses of academic dishonesty will be brought before the Academic Affairs Integrity Committee for further review and potential sanctions **that may include dismissal from the University up to one academic year.** Please read the Student Policy and Procedure Manual for further details regarding this policy.

### **Academic Grievances:**

The proper procedure for filing grade appeals or grievances related to academic matters is listed in the Academic Integrity Section of the Student Policy and Procedure Manual at the following link:

<https://www.nicholls.edu/student-policy/academic-integrity/student-academic-grievances/>

### **Chain of Command**

**Nicholls is committed to providing the best class experience possible. If you have any concerns about this course outside of what your instructor or professor can address, please follow the chain of command that has been established as part of university protocol:**

1. Contact your professor or advisor, again, to find a potential solution.

**If your concern was not resolved, then:**

2. Contact your Department Head of Business Administration & Computer Information Systems
  - o Ms. Sherry Rodrigue
  - o Email: Sherry.Rodrigue@nicholls.edu
  - o Office 101 White
  - o Phone: 985-448-4749

**If your concern was still not resolved, then:**

3. Contact the Dean of the College of Business Administration:
  - o Dr. Marilyn Macik-Frey
  - o Email: marilyn.macik-frey@nicholls.edu
  - o Office: 106 White Hall
  - o Phone: 985-448-4171

**If your concern warrants further consideration by the university administration, the Dean will contact the appropriate person.**

**Classwork During Extreme Emergencies**

During extreme weather or other emergency situations, the President of the university may declare either **Closure Status** or **Remote Learning Status** for a period of one or more days. During these times, students and faculty are responsible for reading and remaining familiar with (1) official emergency notifications through the Nicholls website and (2) all emergency guidelines of the university.

**CLOSURE STATUS.** When the university is officially closed, all teaching operations are suspended. During these days, there will be neither classroom nor online teaching, no expectation of class participation, no assignments due, and no tests or quizzes administered.

**REMOTE LEARNING STATUS.** When the university is open but it is unsafe to travel to or work on campus, students and faculty are responsible for continued learning through remote (online) means. During these days, teaching will occur and class participation is expected. Assignments, tests, and quizzes will be administered as planned unless otherwise directed by the faculty instructor. Under this status, for learning to continue:

- Students must (1) maintain access to Canvas, Nicholls email, phone, and textbooks and other course materials and (2) remain in contact with their course instructors.
- Students are required to have access to the following to participate in remote learning: 1) A computer with broadband internet access. As courses may require the watching of video lessons and the completion of online lessons, an internet connection of 5mbps is a minimum requirement. 2) Access to a webcam and microphone. These will be needed for class discussions, as well as for taking exams. 3) The ability to download the following software which may differ for each faculty member but could be Zoom, ProctorU, Respondus, Skype, Discord, etc.

Faculty will (1) conduct teaching through online means, (2) ensure opportunities for student progress and completion, and (3) adjust course requirements as necessary to accommodate special courses like labs, studios, and clinical.



### **Student Portfolio – Watermark Student Learning and Licensure (SLL)**

Nicholls State University has adopted Watermark's Student Learning and Licensure (SLL) and Outcomes Assessment Projects (OAP) as its Assessment System. SLL allows you to set up a personal portfolio highlighting the skills you acquire in your time at Nicholls, including activities outside of the classroom. This class is using this system to assess the learning outcomes of your academic program or of the university. All students have assessed a fee called Electronic Assessment Fee in their first semester at Nicholls. SLL and OAP assignments will be loaded through Canvas. You will be sent an invitation from Watermark in the second week of the semester. Inquiries about any Watermark product can be sent to [watermark@nicholls.edu](mailto:watermark@nicholls.edu).

### **University Title IX Statement**

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the University's Title IX Coordinator ([titleix@nicholls.edu](mailto:titleix@nicholls.edu)) or visit <http://nicholls.edu/titleix> for information about campus resources and confidential support services, including confidential counseling services.

**Americans With Disabilities Act:** If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you will need to register with the Student Access Center for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Access Center is located in 158A Shaver Gym. The phone number is (985) 448-4430 or (TTY 449-0002). Additional information can be found at <https://www.nicholls.edu/student-access-center/>

### **Assisting with Studying and Assignments:**

- **The Tutoring Center.** Call 985-448-4100, email: [tutoring@nicholls.edu](mailto:tutoring@nicholls.edu), or visit <https://www.nicholls.edu/tutoring/>.
- **The Writing Center.** Call 985-448-4100, email: [writingcenter@nicholls.edu](mailto:writingcenter@nicholls.edu), or visit <https://www.nicholls.edu/tutoring/>.
- **Online Tutoring Resources through Canvas.** Locate the *University Services* menu and select "TutoringServices." Then scroll down to the "Online Resources" section on the webpage.
- **Remote Online Tutoring/Skills Building.** On Canvas main page, under My Courses, choose "Tutoring for Students." Select Brainfuse to access a comprehensive suite of online academic services designed to support many learning needs and styles. There is a \$55 charge for two hours of live tutoring.