

**Professor:** James Noonan, Ed.D.  
**Email:** [jnoonan@salemstate.edu](mailto:jnoonan@salemstate.edu)

**Office:** Sullivan Building 207-C  
**Office Hours:** By appointment, via Zoom

---

### Course Description

Using data to inform one's leadership is crucial for aspiring educational leaders. This course will support future educational leaders in understanding how data can play a generative role in the work of instructional change and school improvement. In particular, candidates will gain knowledge about how collaborative processes, when paired with careful data collection and analysis, can lead to improved outcomes for students.

### Global Goals

1. To understand the key role that data plays in the work of educational leadership.
2. To develop familiarity with many different types of data in educational settings.
3. To discover ways to both use existing data and to create opportunities to gather data to answer pressing questions.
4. To develop familiarity with and skills in collaborating with other educators in the use of data to drive school improvement.

### Objectives:

1. Analyze the current sources of data available at teacher's school site.
2. Evaluate the utility of data in developing instructional plans.
3. Prepare instructional plans based on a specific set of data (from student work).
4. Assess and evaluate multiple models for analyzing student data.
5. Engage in multiple, structured conversations about student achievement data and reflect on this work via journal responses.
6. Prepare and lead a collaborative data team meeting using data from a school context. Reflect on this work through a written review.
7. Relate course content to a particular data-related project.

### Instructional Objectives

1. Explore a number of different types of data that they may encounter in schools.
2. Demonstrate an ability to distinguish between qualitative and quantitative data and to discern when different types of data are necessary in order to more fully understand various problems of practice.
3. Develop skills that allow them to generate data to answer pressing educational questions.
4. Develop familiarity with and the processes for engaging faculty in collaborative work that includes the use of data in order to make informed decisions to drive school change.
5. Practice facilitating professional conversations with colleagues, as part of collaborative processes that use data to make informed decisions to drive school change.
6. Demonstrate their ability to display and synthesize data and to use data to plan for instructional change initiatives.

### Note on Teaching and Learning in the Time of COVID-19

The language of a syllabus—dates, do’s, don’t’s—is designed to introduce you to a course in ordinary times, but as we know these are *not* ordinary times. Much like last year, we may find ourselves dealing with unexpected challenges, whether to our health, the health of people we care about or care for, employment, internet access, childcare, or more. We may also find our course disrupted in ways we cannot yet anticipate.

I am excited to teach and learn with you in this course, and grateful to do it in person. However, *my first priority is your well-being, both physically and mentally*. If you experience any challenges that affect your work in this course, please communicate with me as soon as possible. I don’t need to know the details, though you may share as much as you want to. I only need to know that you need to discuss alternative arrangements to help you get the most from the course. And if you are experiencing challenges more generally, I am happy to serve as a point of contact to connect you with the resources you need.

Finally, because we are learning together in a community, let’s do our best to take care of the community. Given the university policy requiring vaccinations and masks for in-person learning and because some of us (myself included) may be caring for vulnerable family members, remember to wear a mask to class. Also, if you are experiencing any symptoms or believe you’ve been exposed to someone with Covid-19 let me know as soon as possible and stay home. In these cases, I’m happy to arrange virtual learning alternatives.

These are (still) strange and uncertain times, and we will get through them together.

### Course Format (Hybrid)

This is a “hybrid” course, meeting in person five times and conducting the rest of the work asynchronously online. Our in-person sessions will be held from 5:00-8:00 pm, in the Learning Commons at Revere High School, on the dates below.

- Tuesday, October 26
- Tuesday, November 2
- Tuesday, November 16
- Tuesday, November 30
- Tuesday, December 7

### Crew

During our first session, you will be assigned to a 3-4 person “crew.” As a crew, you will be responsible for the learning of the group and for the learning of each individual member. Your online reflections will be posted to a crew discussion board. Small group conversations during our synchronous sessions will be held in crew. Consider these colleagues your first sounding board and your support network. As a crew, plan to model “[expedition behavior](#)” for each other.

### Required Text

There is one required text for this course. It is available from many online and in-person retailers. If you are able, consider purchasing it from an independent bookstore. When purchasing your copy, please make sure you are getting the *revised and expanded edition*.

Boudett, K. P., City, E. A., & Murnane, R. J. (2013). *Datawise: A step-by-step guide to using assessment results to improve teaching and learning*. Revised and expanded edition. Harvard Education Press. [[Bookshop](#)]

Additional readings can be found on Canvas. Most will be in PDF form. You will be able to print them or read them on your computer.

### Course Requirement Categories

While I believe that grades tend to carry too much importance when it comes to the formal assessment of learning, the requirements for this course are still weighted to reflect the value I place on them for your learning and development:

50%	Weekly online work and class participation
50%	Data-Informed Needs Assessment

*No final exam will be given in this course.*

### Grades

In this course – as with all courses in this program – the focus of your efforts should be on *your learning* (and not just your grade). In our in-class discussions and your assignments, I want you to take chances, to be unsure and uncomfortable (and to be okay with that), to challenge what you may have previously thought, to challenge what I think and what the authors we read may think, and to struggle when using new ideas for the first time. And so while this is a graded course, I will provide you with clear assignment guidelines and rubrics to give you a picture of what is expected. I will also give you substantive feedback on your work in many forms throughout the course. Your final grade is based on accumulated points on assessments (weighted as described in the previous section), using the following scale:

A = 94-100 % *	B = 83-86 %	C = 73-76 %
A- = 90-93 %	B- = 80-82 %	C- = 70-72 %
B+ = 87-89 %	C+ = 77-79 %	F = 69% or below

\* Note that all grade ranges include a calculation to the nearest hundredth. Thus, a grade of 93.99 would be an A- while a grade of 94.01 would be an A. Please note, too, that I reserve the right to use discretion when calculating your final grade, beyond what can be found on Canvas. If you have questions about the grading policy, please talk to me.

### A Note About Resistance and Learning

Having spent many years in school myself, I can say that my best learning did not happen when I was comfortable. Rather, my best learning happened when I spoke up or asked hard questions or challenged what I was hearing. I often resisted these impulses, whether out of shyness or deference to authority, but *that impulse is important!* During this course, you may have moments when you feel yourself pushing back against ideas that I share or that you read about. That resistance holds something important for you to learn and to make sense of. In your spoken or written contributions to this class, please speak or write about *that* – that resistance – and not what you think I want to hear. Doing so, I believe, will benefit your learning and mine.

### Course Rhythms

Our course website can be found on Canvas (<http://elearning.salemstate.edu>) and is accessible using your SSU Navigator username/password. New modules open each Wednesday evening, with work due the following Tuesday (occasionally there may be intermediary deadlines). As part of each week's module, I will post a welcome note to contextualize the readings and give you a checklist of tasks/assignments to complete. You should read this first.

## Office Hours

Office hours are an opportunity for students to meet one-on-one with me. This time may be used to ask questions and clarify understandings of course concepts, work through connections between course theory and lived experiences, give me feedback on the course, and more. Given the ever-shifting schedules of my own remote-working and a remote-learning family, it has been hard to have consistent office hour availability each week but I will make time for anyone who wants to meet one-on-one, either by Zoom or by phone. Please just [send me an email](#) and I'm happy to arrange it.

## Course Hashtag (#AGS735)

Increasingly, educators are finding community and opportunities for deeper learning through online social media platforms like Twitter. For this reason, in addition to posting on the course site, I encourage you to post reflections, resources, or questions related to course material on Twitter. Unlike the posts on the course website, posts to Twitter are not required. But if/when you do post something, don't forget to include the course hashtag (#AGS735)! I will be doing the same ([@\\_jmnoonan](#)), as will students in other AGS735 cohorts.

## Course Requirement Details

### *Weekly Engagement*

Our work in this course is driven by participation. Whether engaging in asynchronous online discussions or small group conversations during our synchronous sessions, your participation is vital to your learning and the learning of others in the class. To the extent possible, please be sure to bring your "whole self" to our work together. Participation does not mean knowing the answer or putting only fully polished thoughts on the table. It means bringing conundrums, worries, partially-shaped ideas, and dilemmas to our conversations. Your uncertainty helps everyone grow. Weekly engagement is assessed by your participation in synchronous sessions as well as your responses to weekly readings.

### *Data-Informed Needs Assessment (DINA)*

The main work of this course involves the development of a needs assessment and initial plans, informed by data, to address a challenge within your school. The area of need you identify should be one that you feel strongly about and that you are able to influence in some way. This process will be collaborative and guided by the Data Wise process, scaffolded across the arc of the course and in collaboration with your crewmates. I will provide information and tools to keep you on track. Periodically, throughout the course, you will submit "DINA Update" memos in which you respond to specific prompts to guide your thinking. These memos—along with work undertaken by a school-based data team that you convene—will shape the final submission. This assignment also serves as Core Assessment #1. Please note that, for the final assignment, no late work will be accepted, except through prior arrangement due to unforeseen, extraordinary circumstances.

## PROPOSED SCHEDULE (FALL 2021)

Please note that this syllabus is a guide for the semester. It represents the core work and readings for our time together. I may add readings or potentially adjust the syllabus to respond to your needs across the semester. Please stay up-to-date via Canvas for these changes.

Rows shaded grey in the table below represent online modules when we will not meet in person.

Date	Guiding Questions	Readings/Media	Assignment(s) Due <i>DINA activities in bold</i>
Session 1: Oct 26	What counts as data? What assumptions or anxiety do we carry about data and achievement? How can we begin to think about data and achievement through a leadership lens?	In class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safir, <i>The Listening Leader</i>, “Key Challenge 4: Disconnected Data” (pp. 16-20)</li> </ul>	Review syllabus DINA Memo #1 (Opening Thoughts), <i>completed in class</i>
Session 2: Nov 2	How can I use data to help me understand areas of need at my school? How can we engage in conversations about data without reifying stereotypes about students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benson &amp; Fiarman, <i>Unconscious Bias in Schools</i> (chapter 6)</li> <li>Safir &amp; Dugan, <i>Street Data</i> (chapter 2)</li> <li><i>Data Wise</i> (pp. 25-33)</li> </ul> <i>Recommended</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safir, <a href="#">“Street Data: A New Grammar for Educational Equity”</a> (<i>Education Week</i> blog)</li> </ul>	Reading Reflection #1
Session 3: Nov 9	How do we develop assessment literacy in ways that are tailored to our work and our roles (current or future)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Data Wise</i>, ch 2, (especially pp. 35-42, 55-63)</li> <li>Safir &amp; Dugan, <i>Street Data</i> (chapter 3)</li> <li>Browse: MA DESE, Assessment Glossary</li> </ul> <i>Recommended</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Koretz, <i>Measuring Up</i> (ch 1)</li> <li>Harvard EdCast, with Andrew Ho, “What Test Scores Actually Tell Us” (<a href="#">read/listen</a>, 12:45)</li> <li>Safir &amp; Dugan, <i>Street Data</i> (chapter 4)</li> </ul>	Reading Reflection #2 DINA Memo #2 (Forming Your Data Team)

Date	Guiding Questions	Readings/Media	Assignment(s) Due DINA activities in bold
Session 4: Nov 16	How do I frame a data-informed challenge? What is a learner-centered problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City et al., <i>Instructional Rounds in Education</i> (ch 4, pp. 83-98)</li> <li><i>Data Wise</i> (ch 4)</li> <li><i>Recommended</i></li> <li><i>Data Wise</i> (ch 3)</li> <li>Browse: DESE Visualizations Excerpt</li> </ul>	DINA Memo #3 (Initial Data)  <b>By Thanksgiving</b> , hold first data team meeting
Session 5: Nov 23  Happy Thanksgiving!	How do I find the root of the challenge? What is a problem of practice? What are the different types of data (across multiple timeframes) that will inform this work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Data Wise</i> (ch 5)</li> <li>Skim: Benson &amp; Fiarman, <i>Unconscious Bias</i> (ch 9)</li> <li>Review selected protocols for use with your data team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affinity protocol (<i>DW</i>, p. 230)</li> <li>Why-Why-Why (<i>DW</i>, pp. 113-114)</li> <li>ATLAS (steps 1-3, <a href="#">link</a>)</li> <li>5 Whys (<a href="#">link</a>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Reading Reflection #3  <b>By Thanksgiving</b> , hold first data team meeting
Session 6: Nov 30	How do I move toward action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Data Wise</i> (ch 6)</li> <li><i>Recommended</i></li> <li>Skim: <i>Data Wise</i> (ch 7)</li> </ul>	DINA Memo #4 (Action Planning)
Session 7: Dec 7	How do I create authentic learning environments for shared sense-making of data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safir, <i>The Listening Leader</i> (pp. 189-197)</li> <li><i>Recommended</i></li> <li>Safir &amp; Dugan, <i>Street Data</i> (ch. 8)</li> </ul>	Reading Reflection #4 <b>Second data team meeting complete</b>
Dec 17	Final Papers due by 11:59pm		

### Acknowledgments

Some of the ideas, statements, and policies on this syllabus were adapted from Drs. Chris Buttimer, Megin Charner-Laird, Eve L. Ewing, Sara Goldrick-Rab, Tony Jack, Jacy Ippolito, and Matthew Kraft.

### Attribution

This syllabus—its policies, assignments, and sequencing—is by James Noonan and licensed under [Creative Commons BY-NC 4.0 \(Attribution-NonCommercial\)](#). You are free to share and adapt it, with attribution and only for non-commercial purposes.

## MORE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

### COVID-19 Safety Protocols

Students must comply with the university's Covid-19 Health and Safety Protocols for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Academic Year. These protocols include wearing masks in class and on campus in public spaces, practicing physical distancing where possible, including in class, engaging in a daily symptom check, notifying Counseling and Health Services at 978-542-6413 if they have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, and not coming to campus or to an in-person class if they have any of the symptoms related to COVID-19, until cleared by the Student Life Wellness Area. Students who have documented disabilities that may prevent them from complying with these policies are required to contact the Disability Services office.

### Equity Statement

“Salem State University is committed to providing equal access to the educational experience for all students in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act and to providing all reasonable academic accommodations, aids and adjustments. Any student who has a documented disability requiring an accommodation, aid or adjustment should speak with the instructor immediately. Students with disabilities who have not previously done so should provide documentation to and schedule an appointment with the Office for Students with Disabilities and obtain appropriate services.”

### Emergency Statement

“In the event of a college declared critical emergency, Salem State University reserves the right to alter this course plan. Students should refer to their college email for further information and updates. The course attendance policy stays in effect until there is a college declared critical emergency. In the event of an emergency, please refer to the alternative educational plans for this course located in course handouts. Students should review the plans and gather all required materials before an emergency is declared.”

### Additional Emergency Statement

In the event of a University declared critical emergency, Salem State University reserves the right to alter this course plan. Students should refer to [www.salemstate.edu](http://www.salemstate.edu) for further information and updates. The course attendance policy stays in effect until there is a University-declared critical emergency. In the event of an emergency, please refer to the alternative educational plans for this course, which will be posted on Canvas. Students should review the plans and stay up to date via Canvas.

### Citations and Attribution

Please ensure that all work you submit is your own, and cite your sources when you use them. The work of education involves creativity and being resourceful. Often, this means looking elsewhere for ideas. That is encouraged in this course. However, you must attribute those ideas to the original authors when you use them. Failure to do so, in the form of plagiarism (even if unwitting) can result in a grade of 0 or further action with the SSU administration. Please visit this site for further information about citation and attribution: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

## Bibliography\*

- Benson, T. A., & Fiarman, S. E. (2019). *Unconscious Bias in Schools: A Developmental Approach to Exploring Race and Racism*. Harvard Education Press.
- Boudett, K. P. & City, E. A. (2014). *Meetingwise: Making the Most of Collaborative Time for Educators*. Harvard Education Press.
- Boudett, K.P., E.A. City and R.J. Murnane, Eds. (2013). *Data Wise: A Step-by-Step Guide to Using Assessment Results to Improve Teaching and Learning*, Revised and Expanded Edition. Harvard Education Press.
- Davies, A. (2011). *Making Classroom Assessment Work*. Solution Tree.
- James-Ward, C., Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2013). *Using Data to Focus Instructional Improvement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Koretz, D. (2008). *Measuring Up: What Educational Testing Really Tells Us*. Harvard University Press.
- Landrigan, C. & Mulligan, T. (2013). *Assessment in Perspective*. Stenhouse.
- Lewis, A. E., & Diamond, J. B. (2015). *Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools*. Oxford University Press.
- Lipton, L. & Wellman, B. (2012). *Got Data? Now What?* Solution Tree.
- Mandinach, E. B. & Honey, M. (2008). *Data-Driven School Improvement: Linking Data and Learning*. Teachers College Press.
- Safir, S. (2017). *The Listening Leader: Creating Conditions for Equitable School Transformation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Safir, S., & Dugan, J. (2021). *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation*. Corwin.
- Shea, M., Murray, R., & Harlin, R. (2005). *Drowning in Data? How to Collect, Organize, and Document Student Performance*. Heinemann.
- Stoelinga, S. R. & Mangin, M. M. (2010). *Examining Effective Teacher Leadership: A Case Study Approach*. Teachers College Press.
- Tovani, C. (2011). *So What Do They Really Know? Assessment That Informs Teaching and Learning*. Stenhouse.
- William, D. (2011). *Embedded Formative Assessment*. Solution Tree.

---

\* Not every cited work appears in the syllabus, but they're all useful for data-informed leadership!