

1.1: Why are you taking this course?

Why must you take a stats class when your major is in the social sciences (probably), and you just want to help people? There are several answers to that. The one that is probably most compelling to you right now is:

Understanding statistics will help make you better in your future career.

Whether you become a therapist, a social worker, a police officer, a nurse, or run a business, you should read research from your field, and understand the statistical results. You are being trained to think like a manager or supervisor. To make decisions in your career, you'll need to understand and apply the results of statistical analyses of others in your field. Understanding statistical analyses will help you make decisions based on evidence. What you will learn in this class can help you show that your program (or your decision) is statistically significantly better than the alternatives.

What you might not know right now, but will know when you start in a career field in the social sciences, is that much of what you will be doing is documenting what you did, and how it worked. In other words, you will be describing data that you collect on your clients based on their different groups. That leads us to a second major reason that you have to take this course:

You will need to report evidence to show that what you are doing helps your clients/patients/customers.

This relates to the first reason because knowing what works and what doesn't will help you figure out how to be more successful in the future. It also turns out that the organizations that fund workers in many helping fields only want to continue funding programs and services that are effective. It will be much easier to get funding if you understand the best way to organize and present your results. This evidence comes from **collecting**, **analyzing**, and **reporting** data from your program.

For more on why your major may require a statistics class, watch [this short TED Talk by Arthur Benjamin](#):

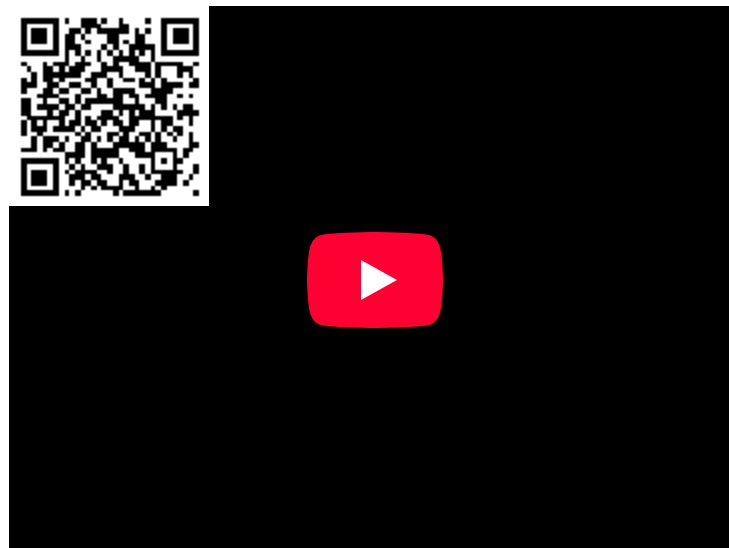


Figure 1.1.1: Arthur Benjamin's TED Talk on statistics before calculus. (CC-BY-NC-ND TED Talks via [YouTube](#) or [TED Talks](#) directly)

Finally, some of you will fall in love with statistics, and become a researcher for a living! This isn't a reason why you have to take the course, but it is a happy accident for those of you who want to help people, but tend to be more logical rather than emotional (like me!). According to [this American Psychological Association \(APA\) article](#), [there are jobs out there for folks who like statistics](#), including analyzing data for big companies like Netflix and Hulu (as shown in this optional [TED Talk by Sebastian Wernicke about using data to make a hit TV show](#)).

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