

## Class Introduction/Understanding the Context

First, if your nametag does not have your preferred name in large letters, fix it. You can also add a name in small print above your preferred name (for your name in your native language, for example). I'll bring revised nametags to the next class.

Sit in a group with the other people who have the same number card as you, and meet them. Find out their names (and pronunciation) and something about where they come from (country, state, college, neighborhood, major).

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Syllabus discussion: If you have a black card, read about the goals of the course. If you have a red card, read about grading. Summarize what you read for the others in the group. Write down one question you have (about either).

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“Statistics is never context-free.” [An idea expressed by Speed, Cobb, Moore and others.] How do you understand this quote? Do you agree? Those with “heart” cards (or a volunteer, if you have no heart), be ready to stand up and give a 30sec summary of your thoughts.

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To get at the context of a problem, we need to ask good questions. A good question is open-ended and provides the client a chance to tell their story freely. We also need to be sure we understand the answer! An important skill for doing this is restating what we've understood, and asking if we understood correctly.

Pair up and take turns to asking your partner one of the following questions. Summarize their response back to them and ask if you've understood correctly.

- What about this class are you most excited about?
- What about this class are you most nervous or concerned about, or what do feel most unprepared for?
- Why did you choose to go to graduate school in your field of study?
- What has your favorite (or least favorite) part of graduate school been so far?
- (Something else based on what you know about them already.)

Brainstorm some general good questions you might ask a client. Remember to keep them open-ended. For example, a good question might be "Tell me about how you decided which dogs would get which treatments?" A bad question might be "You did randomize, right?" Those with "diamond" and "spade" cards, be ready to stand up and share one question.

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We're going to start a case study which we'll continue for the next several class periods. I'll pose as the client, and you'll ask me questions. Here's how it will work.

1. A volunteer from the next group asks me a question.
2. I answer it.
3. One person in each group (taking turns) summarizes my answer and asks the others "did I understand correctly?"
4. Group discusses answer and what question they might want to ask next.

We'll continue with as many questions as we have time for, and pick up next time as needed. The goal will be to understand the background well enough to write 3-5 sentences describing the background, so take good notes!

Here's the initial information you got. What questions do you have? "I'm a veterinary student studying coagulation abnormalities in dogs with septic peritonitis. Can you tell me what my sample size should be? Thanks."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What about this class are you most excited about?

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What about this class are you most nervous or concerned about, or what do you feel most unprepared for?

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Please leave this sheet, your nametag, and your playing card on the tables by the door.  
The other handouts are for you to keep; this sheet will not be returned except by request.