From Ten Percent to Couples per County: 
The Statistics of the Gay and Lesbian Population 
Freshman Seminar

COURSE SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR: Michele DiPietro
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OFFICE HOURS: Monday, 3:00-5:00 or by appointment

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Jacob Wilcock
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WEB PAGE: http://www.cmu.edu/blackboard
UNITS: 9
CLASS MEETINGS: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00-4:20 PM, PH226B.
TEXTBOOK: There is no textbook for this course; we will use published articles
           and I will complement the relevant information with handouts

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW

What percentage of the population is gay? What causes homosexuality? Can gay people change
their sexual orientation? Is it true that gay men are more effeminate and lesbians are butch? Is it
true that gay people have “gaydar?” The answer to all these questions and related ones is not
absolute but statistical – it involves gathering data from a sample, counting or measuring,
synthesizing the information using a relevant statistic (e.g., a percentage, an average), drawing a
conclusion from the sample, and generalizing to a larger population to the extent possible.

The motivation behind this course is to equip you with the statistical and critical thinking tools
you need in order to take an informed position on the ongoing debates about LGBT† issues. By
taking a research-based, scientific perspective, this course will allow you to clearly articulate
competing theories and hypothesis about the LGBT population, and evaluate the strength of the
evidence in favor or against each theory.

† Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered