

## Review: MIT Big Data and Social Analytics Course



MIT's Big Data and Social Analytics 8-week online certificate course (open to anyone) is designed to provide an introduction to the overarching concepts and technical approaches for analyzing big data.

**What the course gets right:** Concepts. The course delivers a very thorough introduction to the central concepts in the field of big data analytics and does a fabulous job covering most of the major pitfalls that arise when tackling big data problems, as well as how to avoid them. The course website, technical support, and tutors leave little to be desired, which makes the online experience easy and enjoyable.

**What the course gets wrong:** Coding and price. MIT simply hands you the code scripts needed to analyze the data while offering minimal explanation of syntax. This oversight makes it difficult to apply the concepts learned in the course to new problems without guidance in coding. By providing coding tutorials to accompany these scripts, MIT could significantly increase the value and impact of the course and better justify its cost. Currently, users pay for a good introduction to concepts, easy access to technical support and tutors, and a nice website; these things alone only justify about half of the price.

**Would I recommend the course to others?** Yes, but only to people in situations similar to mine. Just before taking the course, I needed a thorough introduction to big data analytics in a short amount of time in order to apply for a job. Taking MIT's course was a good way to learn the necessary material as well as provide proof that I had learned it. For those with more time and no real need for proof, better and cheaper resources probably exist.