Results on the Fly: Using Google Docs in the classroom

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Economics 209

About the Course:

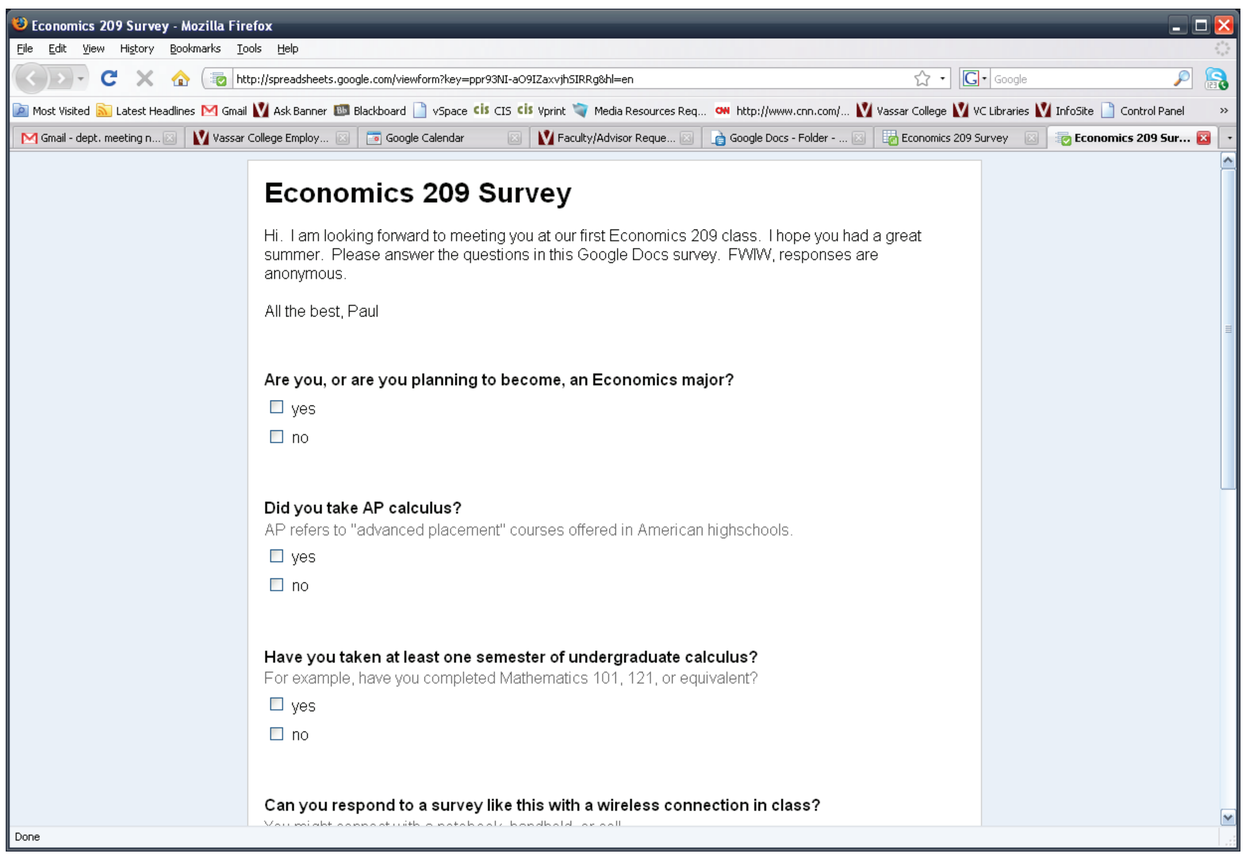
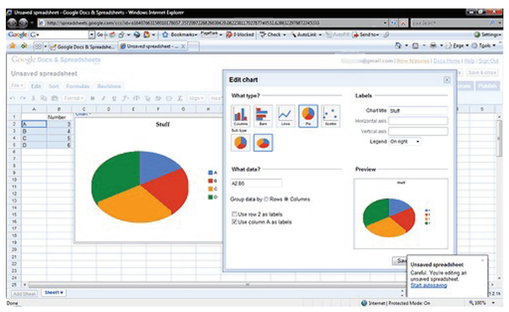
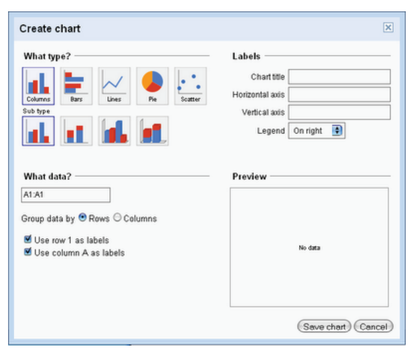
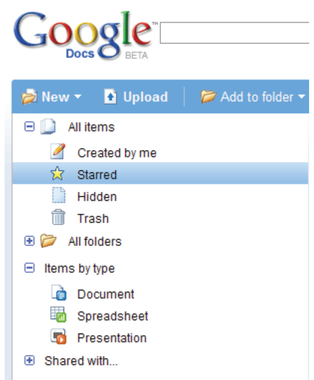
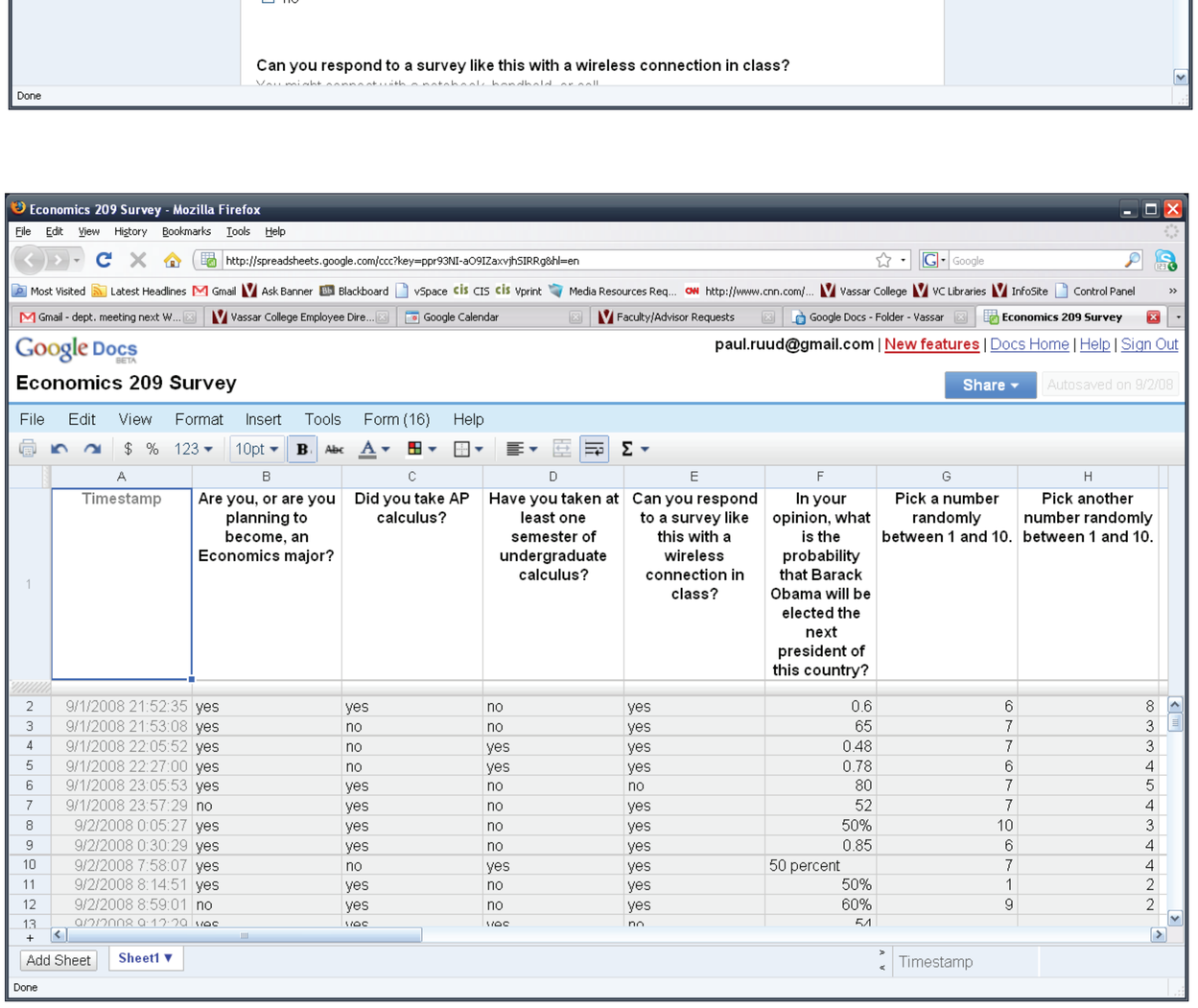
A basic goal of the course is to lead students to see how one might view a sample of data as only one instance of a repeatable experiment. The results of the experiment cannot be known exactly in advance and, even after conducting the experiment, the results of repeating the experiment cannot be anticipated precisely. Nevertheless, there are such underlying characteristics as probabilities that one can investigate.

Because the experimental data could have been different, statistics provides formal ways to account for the inherent uncertainty that is always present. Without statistics, we tend to ascribe too much precision to experimental results.

Technology Used:

- Course website
- Spreadsheet software
- Tablet microcomputer and display for lectures
- Google Docs, a free web-based word processor and spreadsheet technology

More aboute Using Google Docs:

Google Docs is a free web-based word processor and spreadsheet technology. Google Docs makes it possible to conduct in-class surveys and experiments so that the results produced by individual students appear on a display at the front of the classroom as the results occur.

My application of Google Docs is novel but straight forward. Students come to class with their laptop computers and connect to the internet through our campus-wide wireless network. I email a survey to them, which they complete and return in class. Each response appears instantaneously in a spreadsheet which I project onto a classroom display. Thus, all the components of this application are already available and no additional equipment or software is needed.