REVISED SYLLABUS
SURVEY RESEARCH METHODS
Spring 2018

Instructors
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Goals
The goal of this course is to provide doctoral and public policy master’s students with an understanding of the principles of survey research design and experience applying these concepts to the development, conduct and analysis of surveys. Survey research data are essential tools for social policy analysts and the course is designed to provide both conceptual and practical skills. The goal is to prepare students to be able to use and interpret survey research (e.g., in a dissertation), or to conduct their own survey research (both simple and complex designs). The course is designed for Heller and GSAS doctoral students, but public policy master’s candidates are also welcome. Research Methods (HS401), or its equivalent, is a prerequisite for course, along with at least one semester of graduate-level statistics.

Focus
The course focuses on theoretical and practical issues attendant to the development and use of survey research. Issues such as sampling designs, instrument construction, the construction and use of weights, and nonresponse analysis will be considered. A variety of exemplar surveys, drawn from the variety of fields that represent Heller concentrations and from other policy-oriented opinion polls, will be used throughout the semester. The course will be organized as a lecture/discussion and laboratory. The objective is to link discussion of conceptual issues with an opportunity to apply the ideas to actual survey design, conduct and analysis.
**Requirements**

Students are expected to attend all class sessions, participate in discussions and complete assignments according to the course schedule. The course includes three hours of class meetings each week, plus readings and written assignments. Grading will be based on class participation, completion of several short assignments, and a final project.

**Text**


**Additional readings:**

From various journals (available electronically from the library), including Public Opinion Quarterly and websites such as www.fivethirtyeight.com

**Week 1 (Jan. 23): What are Surveys Good For?**

**Readings**

Groves et al., Ch. 1

**Additional Readings:**


**Assignment:**

Review a survey report from popular media that is relevant to your area of interest. Describe briefly the results and methodology of the survey (if the methodology is not available, make sure to note that). In light of what happened with the 2016 election polls, how much do you trust the results of this survey?
**Week 2 (Jan. 30):** How are surveys conducted and what are researchers’ ethical obligations?

**Readings**

Groves et al., Ch. 11


**Week 3 (Feb. 6): Survey Inference and Error**

**Readings**

Groves et al., Ch. 2


**Additional Readings:**

Assignment: Pick a particular subpopulation (with respect to race/ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation etc.) discussed in “All together separate.” Describe the size of the confidence intervals around estimates for that group as shown in the technical appendices. How does the size of these confidence intervals impact your interpretation of results for that subpopulation?

Week 4 (Feb. 13): Sampling Frames and Coverage Error

Readings

Groves et al., Ch. 3


Additional Readings:


Assignment (Due Week 5):

Begin the process to select a study that will be the focus of your midterm project (summarizing/critiquing an extant survey). The study should be in an area of interest/relevance for you and one about which you have some grounding. For this stage of the critique project, merely identify a study and write one paragraph describing why you selected it/what you hope to learn from studying it. In addition, indicate what kind of documentation is available about the study’s methods. Detailed guidelines will be provided in class.

Week 5 (Feb. 27): Sample Design

Readings

Groves et al., Ch. 4

Additional Readings:
Baker et al, 2010 – AAPOR report on online panels, Public Opinion Quarterly
Assignment (Due week 6)
Develop an elaborated outline of your critique or a first draft of the paper. For the purposes of this assignment, focus on the issues that you want to address in your critique. Bring your outline/draft to class.

Week 6 (March 6): Data Collection and Nonresponse

Readings

Groves et al., Ch. 5 & 6


Additional Readings:


Assignment (Midterm, due Week 7):

Develop a critical assessment of a survey that has been conducted in an area of interest to you. As part of the critique, demonstrate your ability to summarize the substantive and methodological features of the study. The project can be done either as a review (e.g., for a journal) and/or a policy memorandum for an organization dealing with the issue of the survey. Detailed guidelines to be provided in class.

Week 7 (March 13): Survey Critiques

Presentations and discussion of critiques

Week 8 (March 20): Survey Questions/Instrument Design

Readings

Groves et al., Ch. 7, 8


Additional Readings:

**Week 9 (March 27): Analysis and Weighting**

**Readings**

Groves et al., Ch. 10

**Additional Readings:**

Winship and Radbill, 1994 – *Sample Weights and Regression Analysis*, Sociological Methods and Research

Introduction to “survey data” Stata manual (on Latte)

**Lab:** group data analysis exercise.

**Week 10 (April 3): Designing Surveys to Answer Difficult Policy Questions**

**Readings**

Saxe et. al. 2006: *Community-Based Prevention Programs in the War on Drugs: Findings from the "Fighting Back" Demonstration.*


Krebs et. al 2009. *College women’s experiences with physically forced, alcohol-or other drug-enabled, and drug-facilitated sexual assault before and since entering college*

**Week 11 (Wednesday, April 19): Reporting and using survey data**
**Assignment:** Go back to the survey report you wrote about in the first assignment. Applying what you have learned in class, how would you modify or review your previous description of the survey’s results or methodology? To what extent has your trust in these results changed since the first week of class? Why?

**Week 12 (May 1): Final presentations**