

Political Science 605  
Spring Quarter 2004

T R 1:30-3:30

### **SURVEY RESEARCH IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Instructor:**

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**Office Hours:**

Tues, Thurs 3:30-4:30  
or by appointment

**Teaching Assistant:**

Erin McAdams, 2168 Derby Hall

Mon, Wed 11-12:00

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will acquaint students with the principles, techniques, and problems involved in conducting survey research. There are no prerequisites, and no prior knowledge of survey research is assumed. Lectures, readings, and assignments will address the stages of the survey process from design through analysis. Topics to be covered include: study design, sampling, item construction, questionnaire design, interviewing techniques, supervision of interviewers, coding and processing of data, analysis and interpretation of data, reading and writing reports, and survey research ethics. Students will learn to critically evaluate research that draws on surveys as the primary means of data collection, and to better design and conduct their own surveys. An organizing theme of the course will be the "Total Survey Error" approach to conducting survey research. This approach seeks to identify multiple sources of error associated with surveys (sampling error, coverage error, nonresponse error, and measurement error), and to assess the costs and benefits associated with limiting these errors.

The format for the course will be lecture/discussion, so attending class and taking good notes will be very important.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

Students are expected to attend class, complete the required reading assignments, and participate in class discussion. Grades will be based on several homework assignments (25%), an in-class midterm exam (30%), a second exam (40%), and class attendance (5%). The midterm exam is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 4 in class. The homework assignments will be a combination of questions and exercises asking students to draw on class notes, readings, and Internet resources. The second exam will probably be given in class on June 3.

Graduate students will also prepare a research design for a survey project, including an overview of the proposed project and its aims, as well as a draft of a short questionnaire. The papers will be due on Tuesday, June 1. The homework assignments, midterm, final exam, and paper will each be worth 25% of the course grade for graduate students.

**READINGS:**

1) There are two required texts that have been ordered at SBX:

Weisberg, Herbert F., Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen. 1996. *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Asher, Herbert. 2004. *Polling and the Public*, 6th edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2) In addition to the readings from the text, there will be some required supplemental readings on specific topics. These readings will be accessible through the class web site.

**WEB SITE LINKS:**

1) Political web sites, many related to the 2004 election and to polling:

[http://www.nytimes.com/ref/politics/POLI\\_NAVI.html](http://www.nytimes.com/ref/politics/POLI_NAVI.html)

2) Survey research associations: <http://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/links.html>

**POLICIES AND CAVEATS:**

- All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct and handled according to University policy.
- Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disabilities Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs.
- Missing an exam without prior permission of the instructor may result in a zero on that exam. Make-up tests will only be arranged in extreme cases, so please be sure to let me know if you won't be able to attend at the scheduled time.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

### **I. Introduction and Overview**

#### **A. The Nature of Survey Research (March 30)**

References:

- Converse, Jean M. 1987. *Survey Research in the United States*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Herbst, Susan. 1993. *Numbered Voices*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Moore, David W. 1992. *The Superpollsters*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows.

#### **B. The Survey Process and Total Survey Error (April 1)**

Required readings:

- Weisberg, Krosnick, and Bowen (hereafter WKB), chapters 1-2; Asher, chapter 1.
- Lavrakas, Paul J. 1993. *Telephone Survey Methods: Sampling, Selection, and Supervision*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 1-4.
- Converse, Philip E., and Michael W. Traugott. 1986. "Assessing the Accuracy of Polls and Surveys." *Science*, 234: 1094-1098.

References:

- Fowler, Floyd J., Jr. 2002. *Survey Research Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Groves, Robert M. 1989. *Survey Errors and Survey Costs*. New York: Wiley.

### **II. Sampling**

#### **A. Sampling Methods (April 6)**

Required: WKB, pp. 38-64; Asher, pp. 69-77.

References:

- Henry, Gary. 1990. *Practical Sampling*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, chapters 2, 6.
- Kalton, Graham. 1983. *Introduction to Survey Sampling*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, chapters 2-7.
- Lavrakas (1993) chapter 2.

#### **B. Sampling Error and Sample Size (April 8)**

Required: WKB, pp. 67-73; Asher, pp. 77-82.

References:

- Henry (1990) chapters 3, 7.
- Kalton (1983) chapters 10-11.

#### **C. Noncoverage, Unit Nonresponse, and Response Rates (April 13)**

Required: WKB, pp. 64-67; Asher, pp. 82-87.

Langer, Gary. 2003. "About Response Rates: Some Unresolved Questions," *Public Perspective*, 14(3): 16-18.

References:

- Fowler (2002) chapter 3.
- Lavrakas (1993) chapter 3.
- Henry (1990) chapters 5, 8.

Kalton (1983) chapters 8-9.

Brehm, John. 1993. *The Phantom Respondents*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Keeter, Scott., C. Miller, Andrew Kohut, Robert M. Groves, and Stanley Presser. 2000. "Consequences of Reducing Non-response in a National Telephone Survey." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64: 125-148.

### **April 15: No Class**

## **III. Questionnaire Construction**

### **A. Theories of Survey Response (April 20)**

Required: WKB, pp. 153-155; Asher, chapter 2.

References:

Roger Tourangeau, Lance Rips, & Kenneth Rasinski. 2000. *The Psychology of Survey Response*. Cambridge University Press, chapters 1 & 11.

Jon Krosnick. 1991. "Response Strategies for Coping with the Cognitive Demands of Attitude Measures in Surveys," *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 5: 213-236.

### **B. Determining the Wording and Format of Survey Questions (April 22)**

Required: WKB, pp. 77-96; Asher, pp. 50-61.

References:

Converse, Jean, and Stanley Presser. 1986. *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 31-51.

Fowler, Floyd J., Jr. 1995. *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, chapters 1-3; pp. 78-92.

Fowler (2002) chapter 5.

Schuman, Howard, and Stanley Presser. 1981. *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys*. New York: Academic Press, chapters 3-11.

Sudman, Seymour, and Norman M. Bradburn. 1982. *Asking Questions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, chapters 1-7.

### **C. Constructing and Pretesting the Questionnaire (April 27)**

Required: WKB, pp. 96-101; Asher, pp. 61-68.

References:

Converse and Presser (1986) pp. 51-75.

Fowler (1995) pp. 92-103; chapters 5, 6.

Fowler (2002) chapter 6.

Schuman and Presser (1981) chapters 2, 12.

Sudman and Bradburn (1982) chapters 8-11.

## **IV. Data Collection**

### **A. Survey Design (April 29)**

Required: chapter 7.

## **MIDTERM (May 4)**

**B. In-person and Telephone Interviewing (May 6)**

Required: WKB, pp. 103-118; Asher, pp. 89, 93-98.

References:

- Frederick Conrad & Michael Schober. 2000. "Clarifying Question Meaning in a Household Telephone Survey," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 64: 1-28.
- Fowler, Floyd J., Jr., and T. W. Mangione. 1990. *Standardized Survey Interviewing*. Newbury Park CA: Sage.
- Lavrakas (1993) chapters 4-6.

**C. Self-Administered (including Internet) Surveys v. Interviews (May 11)**

Required: WKB, pp. 118-129; Asher, pp. 90-92; 98-103.

References:

- Dillman, Don A. 2000. *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. New York: Wiley, chapters 6-12.

**V. Data Analysis****A. Data Preparation, Coding, and Data Editing (May 13)**

Required: WKB, chapter 6.

References:

- Fowler (2002) chapter 8.
- Weber, Robert. 1990. *Basic Content Analysis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

**B. Data Analysis: Overview, Frequencies, and Crosstabs (May 13)**

Required: WKB, chapters 8, 9, 11, pp. 276-281.

References:

- Kiecolt, K. Jill, and Laura E. Nathan. 1985. *Secondary Analysis of Survey Data*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S. 1995. *Data Analysis: An Introduction*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, chapters 1-3.
- WKB, chapter 10.

**C. Missing Data: Item Nonresponse (May 18)**

References:

- Jon Krosnick. 2002. "The Causes of No-Opinion Responses to Attitude Measures in Surveys: They Are Really What They Appear to Be," in Robert Groves, et al., eds., *Survey Nonresponse*. New York: Wiley.

**D. Data Analysis: Control Tables, Correlation, and Regression (May 18)**

Required: WKB, chapters 13, 14.

References:

- WKB, all of chapters 12.
- Lewis-Beck (1995) chapters 4-7.
- Schroeder, Larry D., David L. Sjoquist, and Paula E. Stephan. 1986. *Understanding Regression Analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Achen, Christopher H. 1982. *Interpreting and Using Regression*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

## **VI. Reporting and Evaluating Survey Results**

### **A. Writing Reports (May 20)**

Required: WKB, chapter 15; Asher, chapter 6; Fowler (2002) chapter 10.

References:

American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2000. *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for RDD Telephone Surveys and In-Person Household Surveys*.

Salant, Priscilla, and Don A. Dillman. 1994. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York: Wiley, chapter 10.

### **B. Election Polls (May 20)**

Required: Asher, chapter 7.

References:

Crespi, Irving. 1988. *Pre-election Polling: Sources of Accuracy and Error*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Traugott, Michael W., and Paul J. Lavrakas. 2000. *The Voter's Guide to Election Polls*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Chatham House.

Voss, Stephen, Andrew Gelman, and Gary King. 1995. "Review: Preelection Survey Methodology." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 59: 98-132.

### **C. Evaluating Polls and Surveys (May 25)**

Required: WKB, chapter 16; Asher, chapters 8-9.

### **D. The Ethics of Survey Research (May 27)**

Required: WKB, chapter 17.

References:

American Association for Public Opinion Research. *Best Practices for Survey and Public Opinion Research & Survey Practices that AAPOR Condemns*.

## **VII. The Survey Process, Revisited**

### **A. Challenges to the Conventional Wisdom Challenged (June 1)**

### **B. Final Thoughts on Total Survey Error (June 1)**

Required: Lavrakas, Paul. 1996. "To Err is Human: Embrace a 'Total Survey Error' Perspective to Make the Most of Precious Resources," *Marketing Research*, 8: 30-36.

### **C. Course Summary and Review (June 1)**

## **SECOND EXAM (June 3)**