

Political Science 5315 – Public Opinion Seminar

Spring 2014 – Professor Marshall – 4 to 7 p.m. Tuesdays (GS 109)

This seminar focuses on major issues in modern survey research and public opinion. Since the early 1930s, modern public opinion polling has been a fast-changing industry, and also a great influence on American politics. This course focuses on the recent literature on survey research, important problems in polling, and the influence of attitudes on public policy.

During each Tuesday seminar we will consider a topic in survey research, with some lecture and reports from the class. In addition to two short class reports, per person, there are also two in-class exams (including the final). The weight for each part of your grade is 25% for each in-class report (and handout), 25% for the midterm, and 25% for the final. Please remember that this is a once-a-week seminar; it is especially important that you attend the classes and be prepared to discuss the weekly topic and readings.

My office is 448 University Hall; my email is tmarshall@uta.edu. My office hours are 11 a.m. to noon on TTH, and also 1 to 4 on Tuesdays (right before this seminar). For a meeting at a different time, please phone or email. The “bad weather number” for UTA is 866 258 4913. If there is a class cancellation on a seminar day, we will make up that class (including the mid-term exam) at the next meeting, and then re-schedule, as necessary. If bad weather occurs during the final exam, UTA will reschedule the exam. The last day for an automatic drop with a “W” is apparently Friday, March 28th; after that time, drops are not usually accepted.

I have ordered one book for this class: Robert Erikson and Kent Tedin, *American Public Opinion*, (8th edition, 2011, paperback, Longman). In addition, there are also several articles from journals, available through the UTA library; you may download or print these off yourself. Each student will make one class presentation on a particular reading, each of which is an oral report that may go on for about ten to fifteen minutes, plus one oral report from the list of polling topics; please prepare a handout for each of your classmates.

Seminar Meetings and Schedule

January 14 The history of public opinion from early times to the 1930s. Measuring attitudes and opinions. Enumerations versus surveys. Early straw polls. Survey research as an unregulated industry. Draw numbers for class reports.

Tom Smith. The First Straw? A Study of the Origins of Election Polls.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 54 (spring 1990): 21-36.

Robert M. Groves. Three Eras of Survey Research. *Public Opin Q (Special Issue 2011)* 75 (5): 861-871.

January 21 The early development of modern survey research in the 1930s and 1940s. Quota sampling. Correct predictions as a standard for good survey research: the experience of 1936 and 1948. The rise of probability random sampling and the margin of error as a standard for good survey research. Costs of surveys and technology shifts. The status and future of modern survey research. Common terms in public opinion. Erikson and Tedin: Ch. 1 and 2.

J. Michael Brick. **The Future of Survey Sampling** . *Public Opin Q (Special Issue 2011)* 75 (5): 872-888.

Mick P. Couper. **The Future of Modes of Data Collection**. *Public Opin Q (Special Issue 2011)* 75 (5): 889-908.

Christopher Mann. 2005. “Do Advance letters Improve Pre-election Forecast Accuracy?” *POQ* 69 (4): 561-571.

January 28 Legal and ethical standards for survey research. The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). Commonly-used resources in survey research Part I. (*Please note: this class will be held in room 315A, the third floor conference room, at the UTA library.*)

February 4 Commonly-used resources in survey research Part II, continued. Alternative business models for survey research. Describing survey results (handout).

Feb. 11 What affects poll results: random error and computing the margin of error. Bias error, post-survey reweighting, and imputation. Handouts. Review E&T: Ch. 2.

Feb. 18 and 25 and March 4 Common artifacts: question wording effects, question order effects, choice order effects, mode effects, interviewer effects, opinionation, setting effects, and incentive effects. Split-ballot sampling.

Michael Link, et. al. 2007. "Reaching the U.S. Cell Phone Generation -- Comparison of Cell Phone Survey Results with an ongoing Landline Telephone Survey," *POQ* 71 (5): 814-839.

Michael Link, et al. 2006. "Has the National Do Not Call Registry Helped or Hurt State-Level Response Rates? A Time Series Analysis", *POQ* 70 (5): 794-809.

Steven Kinkel, et al.. 1991. "Race-of-interviewer effects in a preelection poll: Virginia 1989," *POQ* 55 (1991): 313-330.

Darren W. Davis. 1997. "The direction of race of interviewer among African-Americans: donning the black mask," *American J of Pol Sci* 41: 309-322.

March 11 **SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

March 18 **Mid-term exam. Polls in elections. Embedded experiments in election polls.**

D. Sunshine Hillygus. **The Evolution of Election Polling in the United States.** *Public Opin Q (Special Issue 2011)* 75 (5): 962-981.

March 25 **Specialized and industry-specific forms of attitude research: focus groups, mall intercepts, and jury polls.**

April 1 and 8 **"Explaining" public opinion: groups, gaps, and events. E&T: Ch. 5, 7, and 8.**

Benjamin Page, et al. 1987. "What moves public opinion?" *Am. Pol. Science Rev.* 81: 23-43.

April 15, 22, and 29 **Public opinion and public policy. E&T: Ch. 9, 10, and 11.**

Robert Y. Shapiro. Public Opinion and American Democracy. *Public Opin Q (Special Issue 2011)* 75 (5): 982-1017.

May 6 **Final exam 4-7 p.m. (please check your schedules against this time)**

The objective of this seminar is that students will learn major data resources and procedures of modern survey research, understand the development of modern survey research, and consider problems and issues in survey research. Students should also be able to present survey data in an acceptable format, including computer-based presentations using excel and power point, and to make organized oral and written reports on published survey research. Evaluations will be through two seminar reports and two in-class exams.

Table One. Reports on articles for Class. We will draw numbers to pick reports. You may switch your report with a classmate at your mutual agreement. Be ready to present your report with a short power-point presentation of ten to fifteen minutes, along with a one- or two-page handout, at the assigned date.

(1) Brandon Rottinghaus. 2007. "Following the 'Mail Hawks' – Alternative measures of Public Opinion on Vietnam in the Johnson White House," <i>Public Opin Q</i> 71 (3): 367-391.	1/21
(2) Markus Prior. Who Watches Presidential Debates?: Measurement Problems in Campaign Effects Research. <i>Public Opin Q (Summer 2012)</i> 76 (2): 350-363.	2/11
(3) Donald Rugg. Experiments in Wording Questions: II. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> , Vol. 5, No. 1 (Mar., 1941), pp. 91-92.	2/18
(4) Smith, Tom W. 1987. "That Which We Call Welfare by Any Other Name Would Smell Sweeter: An Analysis of the Impact of Question Wording on Response Patterns." <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 51:75–83.	2/18
(5) Gregory A. Huber and Celia Paris, "Assessing the Programmatic Equivalence Assumption In Question Wording Experiments: Understanding Why Americans Like Assistance to the Poor More Than Welfare," <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> , Vol. 77, No. 1, Spring 2013, pp. 385–397.	2/18
(6) Jonathon P. Schuldt, Sara H. Konrath, and Norbert Schwarz. "Global warming" or "climate change"?: Whether the planet is warming depends on question wording. <i>Public Opin Q (2011)</i> 75 (1): 115-124.	2/18
(7) Tom Smith. The JAMA controversy and the Meaning of Sex. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> (1999) Vol. 63: 385-400.	2/18
(8) Davis, Rachel E., Mick P. Couper, Nancy K. Janz, Cleopatra H. Caldwell, and Ken Resnicow. 2010. "Interviewer Effects in Public Health Surveys." <i>Health Education Research</i> 25:14–26.	2/25
(9) MINGNAN LIU and KEVIN STAINBACK. INTERVIEWER GENDER EFFECTS ON SURVEY RESPONSES TO MARRIAGE-RELATED QUESTIONS. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> , Vol. 77, No. 2, Summer 2013, pp. 606–618	2/25
(10) Laura H. Lind, Michael F. Schober, Frederick G. Conrad, and Heidi Reichert, <i>Why Do Survey Respondents Disclose More When Computers Ask the Questions?</i> <i>Public Opin Q (2013)</i> 77 (4): 888-935.	2/25
(11) Jennifer Dykema, Kerryann Diloreto, Jessica L. Price, Eric White, and Nora Cate Schaeffer. ACASI Gender-of-Interviewer Voice Effects on Reports to Questions about Sensitive Behaviors Among Young Adults. <i>Public Opin Q (Summer 2012)</i> 76 (2): 311-325.	2/25
(12) Daniel Petrolia and Sanjoy Bhattacharjee. 2009. "Revisiting Incentive Effects – Evidence from a random-sample mail survey on consumer preferences for fuel ethanol," <i>POQ</i> 73 (3): 537-550.	2/25
(13) David Wilson, et. al. 2008. "Affirmative Action Programs for Women and Minorities – Expressed Support Affected By Question Order," <i>POQ</i> 72 (3): 514-522.	3/4
(14) Joanne Miller and Jon Krosnick. 1998. "The impact of candidate name order on election outcomes." <i>POQ</i> 62: 291-330.	3/4
(15) Maria Villarroel, et al. 2006. "Same gender sex in the United States: impact of t-acase on prevalence estimates." <i>POQ</i> 70 (2): 166-196.	3/4
(16) Nancy Brener, et al. 2006. "The Association of Survey Setting and Mode with self-reported health risk behaviors among high school students. <i>POQ</i> 70 (3): 354-374.	3/4
(17) David C. Wilson and Paul R. Brewer. The Foundations of Public Opinion on Voter ID Laws: Political Predispositions, Racial Resentment, and Information Effects, <i>Public Opin Q (2013)</i> 77 (4): 962-984.	4/1
(18) Jody C. Baumgartner, Jonathan S. Morris, and Natasha L. Walth. The Fey Effect: Young Adults, Political Humor, and Perceptions of Sarah Palin in the 2008 Presidential Election Campaign. <i>Public Opin Q (Spring 2012)</i> 76 (1): 95-104	4/1
(19) Julianna Pacheco. The Impact of smoking bans on attitudes toward smokers, secondhand smoke, and antismoking policies. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> (Fall 2013) 77 (3): 714-734.	4/1

Sample Research Report Format

Report, Michael Link, et al, 2007, "Reaching the U.S. Cell Phone Generation – Comparison of Cell Phone Survey Results with an ongoing Landline Telephone Survey, *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71 (5): 814-839.

Major Research Question: How do cell phone respondents vary from those with both landline and cell phone respondents, and what are the characteristics of cell phone holders that affect survey responses?

Sources of Information presented: Results are from a 3-state study of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a CDC survey, a large and ongoing public health telephone survey, conducted in three states (GA, NM, and PA), conducted in spring 2007. Two groups of about 600 respondents apiece were surveyed among (1) cell phone only adults, and (2) cell phone plus landline adults (that is, have both). (There wasn't a sample of landline only)

Major Conclusion: As of late 2006 the cell phone only adult population figure was 13%, and steadily growing. Among adults living with unrelated roommates it was 54%; among adults 18 to 24 years old, it was 25%. This is important for health risk behaviors, because these are high-risk households. Banks of cell phone numbers and cell+landline numbers were obtained. The shortened interview was only about 12 minutes.

Contacting was most productive in weekday evenings, cf. daytime calls; weekend calling was not especially productive. Call answering on cell phones is more idiosyncratic, and one must wait longer (at least 7 rings) before giving up. Location of cell phone answering varies widely; interviewers must assess whether it is safe for Rs to answer (such as driving in traffic), and confidentiality may suffer if R answers in an office or public place, even if willing. Children may use a cell phone (but not be eligible for an interview); cell phones are apparently shared among adults about 15% of the time (thus, a need for a rule about who to interview). Almost no one will respond to a pre-recorded message asking for a callback, when no one answers; this is true even if the sponsor is the government and the callback number is easy to remember and toll-free.

Cell phone samples are much more expensive than land-line calls, (harder to contact respondents, must be hand-dialed by federal law). Response rates don't seem to vary much, comparing cell phone only, cf. cell+landline. (Per 1,000 completions, \$64 per a landline series; \$74 for a cell phone survey with no screening; and \$196 for a cell phone-only HH).

Cell phone samples will be different than cell+landline. Here, it was more men, more non-Hispanic blacks, employed people, single or never married, and those with 1 or more children in the household.

Among health indicators, cell phone only households were significantly more likely to report binge drinking in the last 30 days, and more likely to say they had not received health care at some point during the last year, due to health care costs; they were less likely to have any kind of health care coverage. Landline only were least likely to report physical activities and exercise; less likely to have asthma; more likely to have diabetes; more likely to have high blood pressure;. Cell phone only were less likely to currently smoke cigarettes (but not stat signif) and more likely to have ever been tested for HIV. Cell+landline were most likely to be obese (BMI over 30kg/m-2).

Conclusion is that for some surveys, cell phone only cannot be correctly estimated by re-weighting landline surveys (where R is asked about cell phone), as was done in the early 2000s. Cell phone only Rs can be different than equal age samples from landlines+cells. It may be that cell+landline also answer differently, depending on whether they are contacted on cell, vs. landline, which is a troubling possibility.

Strengths and Weaknesses: Weaknesses might be that there wasn't a sample of landline only respondents, nor was there a sample of those without a phone. This was a 3-state study (only). Results are suggestive. Cell phone coverage is rapidly growing, and possibly changing.

Table Two. Reports on polling topics for class. We will draw numbers to pick reports. You may switch your report with a classmate at your mutual agreement. Be ready to present your report with a short power-point presentation of ten to fifteen minutes, along with a one- or two-page handout, at the assigned date. (Please contact me for further information before you present these reports.)

(1)The accuracy of the 2012 pre-general election polls	1/21
(2)The AAPOR ethical standards and the censure of Gilbert Burnham.	1/28
(3)The Eurobarometer Poll. How and why is it conducted.	2/4
(4)The Knowledge networks on-line poll. How and why is it conducted.	2/4
(5)The decennial Census and the annual American Community Survey. How and why are they conducted, and what's the difference?	2/4
(6)The American National Election Study (ANES)	2/4
(7) AAPOR's censure procedures and the case of Gilbert Burnham	2/4
(8) www.realclearpolitics.com 's method of aggregating different polls over time in elections	3/18
(9) The national election exit polls.	3/18
(10) The National Children's Study	3/25
(11) Explaining presidential approval ratings: the case of Barack Obama	4/8
(12) A comparison of changes in social trust and tolerance (joint report for two people)	4/22
(13) Poll support for legalizing marijuana and public policy	4/22
(14) Poll support for ObamaCare: 2010-2014 (joint report for two people)	4/29
(15) Poll support for U.S. involvement in the Libya and Syrian wars	4/29

UTA provides reasonable accommodation to student with disabilities under the Americans With Disabilities Act. Students are responsible for informing me at the beginning of the semester for a recognized disability, and also for providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels; if this applies please see the office at 102 University Hall (817 272 3364). Academic dishonesty is unacceptable and persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with university regulations and procedures, which may include suspension or expulsion from the university. Please disconnect or turn to silent your pagers and cell phones, so that they do not disrupt the class. UTA offers a variety of student services and advising; for updated information, please see your advisor or major department. This class advises students on interpreting and measuring public opinion, including varieties of polls and surveys currently being used; students should be able to assess and evaluate commonly-used polling methodologies and terms, including the advantages and limitations of assessing attitudes among the public, and to access and use surveys and common survey sites. The political science phone number is 817 272 2991. Please remember that there may be limits on the number of drops and withdrawals you may use; please see an academic advisor on this issue. UTA offers a variety of services for students. Grade grievances and all other issues will be followed through designated procedures. About ten days before the end of the semester, a student feedback survey will be sent to your MyMav account, by which you are encouraged to evaluate this course. For the last few class days prior to the final exam period there are no exams. Please note: UTA communicates directly with students about enrollment and other matters at their UTA-assigned MyMav email, so please check it frequently.