

PP 5379 – An Introduction to the Principals and Methods of Survey Research S 2015

Professor: Jennifer Dineen

Office hours: By appointment

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: Admission to the Graduate Program in Survey Research or permission of the instructor.

Software Requirements

- Word processing software
- Microsoft excel
- SPSS
- [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)
- Internet access

Minimum Technical Skills

To be successful in this course, you will need the following technical skills:

- Use electronic mail with attachments.
- Save files in commonly used word processing program formats.
- Copy and paste text, graphics or hyperlinks.
- Work within two or more browser windows simultaneously.
- Open and access PDF files.

Course Overview

This course is a core course in the Graduate Program in Survey research (GPSR). The course provides a comprehensive review of the major issues associated with survey research methods, and prepares students in the fundamental skill areas necessary to design and conduct survey research projects. These areas include survey research design, questionnaire construction, and sampling. We will discuss how to design survey questionnaires and pay special attention to the psychological and social processes that may influence the survey response in unanticipated ways. This will enable the student to assess and minimize the risk of eliciting response effects that might lead to biased results. Further, we will discuss how different methods of sampling may influence the accuracy and quality of survey data.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will:

- Develop, evaluate, and ask survey questions
- Know threats to survey question reliability and validity
- Design self-administered and interviewer administered surveys
- Become familiar with strategies to decrease survey and item nonresponse
- Develop a sampling plan
- Know how to identify and reduce error in survey research

Assignments and Activities

Course assignments will provide students with opportunities to apply the research methods covered in class to practical research scenarios. Assignments will be both individual and group and the format will vary based on the research method being covered.

All assignments will be available through Blackboard and must be submitted via Blackboard. The course can be accessed directly via:

<https://learn.uconn.edu>

Each student will develop an independent research proposal on a topic of their choice – including a complete questionnaire and sampling design. This process will begin with the explicit statement of a null-and a research hypothesis. The choice of questions will depend on these hypotheses and you will be asked to justify the wording of each question, as well as the format of your response options. The questionnaire will be pretested on a relatively small number of respondents. Based on this pretest the questionnaire will be revised and included in the final version of the research proposal. Depending on your research hypothesis, you will specify the population from which a sample is to be drawn and a method by which your sample would have to be drawn.

In addition to learning activities included in each session, the class will have four written assignments: **Paper - Part 1:** A statement of null- and research hypotheses with an initial list of questions. You should include theoretical and empirical justifications for each question and for the response format (ca. 4-5 pages in addition to the actual questions). **Paper - Part 2:** A pretest report of about 4-5 pages. This report should include a description of the participants you selected (no scientific sampling required for this pretest!), their responses to the actual survey questions, as well as, their open-ended comments about the experience of answering your questions. Based on the pretest, how do you plan to revise your questionnaire? **Paper - Part 3:** A short paper (3-4 pages) explaining your sampling design: What is the population your research hypotheses refer to? How do you plan to draw a sample from this population? What is your sample size? **Full Research Proposal:** The final research proposal should contain an introduction with a short literature review, your research hypotheses, and a description of the survey questions, as well as, the sampling design. You should also include the results that you would expect. The final proposal should be about 10-15 pages long in addition to the actual revised questionnaire.

In addition to assignments, there will be regular discussions via WebCT. Many of these discussions will be graded and make up 10% of your final grade.

One of the advantages of taking your course online is that you may be able to engage in online discussions with your instructor and fellow students at times when it is convenient for you. The intention of the course discussions is to encourage lively, informative exchanges about course-related topics that increase your knowledge of those topics--but it's up to you to make this happen.

Post at least one message to each discussion area. There is no upper limit to the number of times you can contribute to a discussion, and you will find that a busy discussion is a good one. Each contribution should be well written and interesting to read, with evidence of originality and considerable reflection. It should also demonstrate that you have read the relevant course materials.

Here are some guidelines for participating in an online discussion:

1. Do more than state agreement or disagreement. Justify and support your opinion. The most persuasive opinions are supported by evidence, examples, reasons, and facts. If you disagree with something, say why. If you really like something that you've read, let people know what makes you think that way.
2. Do the appropriate preparation, such as reading and lesson activity work, before you join the discussion.
3. Keep your comments fairly brief. A paragraph or two is plenty unless you are posting something that by nature has to be longer--a short story, for example.
4. Check your message before you send it. Pay attention to your spelling and grammar, and be sure your message makes the points you want to make in a clear and concise way. Remember, other students and instructors can read your messages.
5. Help move the discussion along. When contributing to a discussion, read other people's comments first. Introduce new ideas, but also build on what others have said ("Piggy-back" on other people's ideas).
6. Keep up with the discussion throughout the course. After you have made your contribution on a topic, check back a few times to find out how the discussion is evolving. Does someone's comment make you think twice about your view?
7. Share your experience with your fellow students. You may be able to offer advice to someone who is newer to the course.
8. Respect others' ideas and opinions. Feel free to disagree, but express your disagreement in a respectful manner. Disrespectful communication is poor communication and not acceptable

Often I will monitor a discussion but not participate immediately in an effort to give you and your classmates time to think and respond. I will respond to posts that are addressed to me directly.

Grading

Regular, quality participation is an important part of this course. Along with participating in each session, students are expected to offer questions comments and critiques. Students are expected to participate actively in all online discussions and activities. All students should offer comments, questions and replies to regularly posted discussion questions and to the comments posted by classmates.

Discussion board postings will be evaluated based on the quality and frequency of the postings as well as the extent to which they promote discussion among the class. Each discussion will be evaluated separately. Online discussions will be assessed using the following:

1 point	2 points	3 points
Student provides a minimal or basic response to the discussion question	Student's posting addresses the discussion question but does not stimulate further discussion	Student's posting fully addresses discussion question AND stimulates at least 1 substantial follow-up posting

Final Grades will be based on the following:

Final Grade:

Paper Part 1: Research Question	10%
Paper Part 2: Questionnaire Pretest	10%
Paper Part 3: Sampling Plan	10%
Full Survey Research Proposal	20%
Quizzes	20%
Session Activities	20%
Participation in Discussion Boards	10%

Required course books and materials:

Groves, Robert et al. 2009. *Survey Methodology*, 2nd Edition. New York: Wiley

***Additional readings can be found on the course schedule and may be added throughout the semester.**

A 1.69 oz bag of M&Ms (to be used in session 05)

Ground Rules

Professionalism and conduct. This is a graduate-level course that demands that students be carefully prepared. It entails a substantial weekly workload. This course is presented within the context of a professional degree program, and will be conducted according to the standards of the professional workplace. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of course materials and concepts. That said, individual proficiency is a must, and all assignments should represent your own work.

Integrity. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Disciplinary action will be pursued if such conduct is discovered. **All work that you submit for credit during this course, including problem sets and exams, must represent your own work and no one else's.** Students are expected to abide by the University of Connecticut's policies on academic misconduct which are found in Appendix B of the University of Connecticut student code located on the web at <http://www.dosa.uconn.edu>. Academic misconduct includes (but is not limited to):

- Writing someone else's paper or handing in a paper that someone else wrote
- "Sharing" answers during an exam
- Including the ideas or research of others in a paper, assignment or exam without proving proper documentation

Students with Disabilities. According University of Connecticut policy, the university is committed to achieving equal educational opportunity and full participation for persons with disabilities. Assurance of equal educational opportunity rests upon legal foundations established by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. By federal law, a person with a disability is any person who: 1. has a physical or mental impairment; 2. has a record of such impairment; or 3. is regarded as having such an impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities such as self-care, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, or learning. All students with disabilities are entitled to a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Reasonable accommodation does not obviate the requirement for a student to meet course performance

standards. If you believe you have a disability that requires an accommodation, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities website at www.csd.uconn.edu.

Religious observances. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate absences from the course necessary to observe religious beliefs in accordance with the University Senate policy, which states that “students anticipating such a conflict should inform their instructor in writing within the first three weeks of the semester, and prior to the anticipated absence, and should take the initiative to work out with the instructor a schedule for making up missed work.”

Logistics and Support

Technical support. Most technical problems result from improper computer settings. For example, you must disable pop-up blocking to have full functionality in HuskyCT. Make sure your computer is properly configured for HuskyCT by clicking on the “Recommended Settings” link at the bottom left of the HuskyCT main page. If you use different computers, check the settings on each computer you will use to access the course. If you encounter problems you cannot resolve, get help. You may be able to resolve problems using HUSKYCT’s built-in help function. In addition, UConn’s Learning Resource Center maintains a help desk to assist students with technical issues, and can be reached at (860)486-1187 or <http://lrc.uconn.edu/help/>.

Email. I will communicate with you via your UConn email address (usually firstname.lastname@uconn.edu). It is your responsibility to check this email account for messages. If you have a personal email address that you prefer to use, you should forward your UConn email to this address.

Late Policy. Make-up exams will not be given and late assignments will not be accepted unless arrangements are made **prior to the due date**. Exceptions will only be made in the cases of illness (I need a doctor’s note) or serious emergency (again, documentation must be provided). If you anticipate a problem meeting a deadline please see me IN ADVANCE.

Course Schedule:

Course sessions will become available on Tuesdays by 4 pm EST. All assignments and session activities are due on Tuesdays by 4 pm.

Session Number	Topic	Readings and Assignments (to be done prior to the session)
00	Introduction: History and Ethics of Survey Research	Course Syllabus
Questionnaire Design		
01	Models of the Survey Response	Groves: chapter 1,11 A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences. Zaller & Feldman. American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Aug., 1992), pp. 579-616

			http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111583 Structural Topic Models for Open-Ended Survey Responses. ME Roberts, et. al, American Journal of Political Science. Vol. 58, No. 4 (October 2014), pp. 1064-1082 http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12103/pdf
02		Question Sequence, Wording, and Response Options	Groves: chapter 7
03		Evaluating Survey Questions: Pretesting and Wording Experiments	Groves: chapter 8 Controlling Order-Effect Bias. William D. Perreault, Jr. The Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Winter, 1975-1976), pp. 544-551 http://www.jstor.org/stable/2748507
04		Asking Survey Questions: Interviewer Effects	Groves: chapter 9 Effects of Speech Rate, Pitch, and Pausing on Survey Participation Decisions. Benkí, et. al, A paper presented to the American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2011. https://www.amstat.org/sections/SRMS/Proceedings/y2011/Files/400189.pdf
		Submit what you are presenting during the round table via drop box by 4 PM	Roundtable Discussion from 2/18-3/4
Sampling			
05		Survey Modes	Paper Part 1 DUE Groves: chapter 5
06		Simple Random Sampling	Groves: chapter 3
07		Other Probability Sampling Designs	Groves: chapter 4
08		Non-Probability Sampling Designs	Discussion board activity
			Paper Part 2 DUE
Minimizing Survey Error			
09		The Total Survey Error Approach	Groves: chapter 2
10		Sampling Error, Non-Response, and Response Rates	Groves: chapter 6
11		Additional Sources of Survey Error Groves: chapter 12	Groves: chapter 12 Paper Part 3 Due
12		Overview of the Survey Research Industry	New Challenges for Telephone Survey Research in the Twenty-First Century. Kempf and Remington. Annual Review of Public Health Vol. 28: 113-126 (Volume publication date April 2007) http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.publhealth.28.021406.144059
Full Research Proposal			

Readings are to be done PRIOR to the session listed.