POS 6757: SURVEY RESEARCH
Spring, 2015 (Section 1C30)

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Background: The essence of survey research consists of selecting a sample of respondents, asking them questions, and analyzing their answers. Since its development in the 1930s and 1940s, this seemingly simple technique has become a major tool of investigation for academic researchers, journalists, social analysts, government agencies, political practitioners, market researchers, and others. The course is intended to provide students with a solid grounding in the design of surveys, paying particularly close attention to the potential pitfalls inherent in this method of data collection. During the semester, we will address the question of when and why to undertake this particular form of research, explore the issues that arise in the design, administration and analysis of surveys, and consider how best to communicate survey data and issues. The principal focus of the seminar is on recognizing and dealing with potential threats to the validity of surveys that arise from what is called non-sampling error. Nonsampling error has been defined in many ways but never so memorably as when Robert Chambers described survey data as

... aggregates of what has emerged from fallible programming of fallible punching of fallible coding of responses which are what investigators wrote down as their interpretation of their instructions as to how they were to write down what they believed respondents said to them, which was only what respondents were prepared to say to them in reply to the investigator's rendering of their understanding of a question and the respondent's understanding of the way they asked it, always assuming that the interview took place at all and that the answers were not more congenially compiled under a tree or in a teashop or bar without the tiresome complication of a respondent. (R. Chambers, Rural Development: Putting the Last First [Essex, UK: Longman], 1983, pp. 51-2)

Beyond the customary topics, the seminar will also consider the use of new survey modes associated with advanced computer technology and surveys as a global phenomenon. At the end of the semester, you should be a more sophisticated consumer of surveys and also have the capacity to contribute intelligently to survey design and interpretation.

Reading: We will use the following paperback book as the core text for the seminar:


In addition, I've recommended two supplemental texts that give a more "how-to" feel:


Except for two excerpts indicated below, these books are not required but I'll indicate readings keyed to the course schedule. Because the first book is rather dated and the second is a bit light on the details, let me suggest you look at this brief article as a supplement on web-based surveys. A recent report by a blue-ribbon taskforce has produced a comprehensive report on all the issues raised by online surveys


The core text will be supplemented by journal articles that are available online (most by direct posting but some in e-learning) and some supplementary material that will be distributed.

If you are directly connected to the UF network, clicking on the links will bring up the article PDF or a gateway to it immediately. If you login from off campus via a third-party server such as AOL or Cox, you'll need to configure your browser for proxy access or use the VPN program. Click here for directions about the proxy server (which only requires a simple login procedure, and here for information about VPN access which requires downloading and configuring some software. Although VPN is more difficult to set up, it makes using the site much easier. The proxy server requires that you use the library's website to locate the individual articles while
VPN works directly from this web page. The tech consultants in the Hub can install and configure VPN for you. Whichever option you choose, I strongly recommend that you download all the readings from the web early and store them. As URLs tend to change haphazardly, please let me know ASAP if a link has failed so I can fix it.

**Responsibilities**: POS 6757 is a graduate seminar and its success depends on you keeping up with the readings, attending class faithfully, participating actively in class activities, and contributing to discussion. Your final grade will reflect this goal by weighing several components:

- Participation (5%) - You will be responsible for all general readings indicated on the syllabus. I will factor in both the frequency and quality of your contributions to class discussions generally. Absences (other than those due to illness or compelling circumstances) will count heavily against the participation grade while timely reading of the assigned sources will add points to this component.

- Presentation (20%) - Each student will be assigned responsibility for presenting and leading discussion about the readings (or a portion thereof) for the week. As part of this assignment, you will need to be able to summarize the readings clearly and comprehensively and link them to the major topical concerns of the class. (You should not spend so much time on this that other students feel they can avoid reading the articles on their own!) Beyond summarizing the readings, the principal task of the presenter is to encourage and facilitate discussion and debate. You can and should expect to draw on the reaction papers of your fellow students. *Presenters must schedule an appointment with me no later than the Tuesday preceding class* and preferably earlier. You will be expected to provide the class with some kind of visual presentation in Powerpoint or similar software and make sure I have a copy which will subsequently be distributed to class members.

- Reaction Papers (15%) - Every fourth week, you will prepare a reaction paper in response to the assigned readings. On the weeks you're assigned a paper, select one of the readings (not from the textbook) and think in a disciplined way about its relevance to your own potential research. The paper should be equally divided into two parts. In the first half, describe and summarize the arguments of at least one of the articles: What are the major themes and conclusions? Where is the author coming from? The second part of your paper should describe how the article speaks to your own research interests. How might you or your colleagues use it in your research agenda? *Papers should be 2-3 pages and use a format that can be edited in Word (no PDFs). Submit the assignment electronically via Sakai by the Tuesday preceding class.* Late or missing papers will be factored into your grade for this component. *For your group assignment, click here.*

- Mid-term Examination (30%) - The midterm, a take-home, will consist of a short number of essay questions that ask you to integrate the reading material. *It will be distributed on February 18th and is due on February 25th.* Submit this electronically in Word-compatible format via Sakai.

- Article Review (30%) - In consultation with the instructor, you will select one substantial research article in your field that relies heavily on survey data. The survey data should be central to the article and presented in some detail so you can assess the appropriateness of the author's approach and usage. (This may not be an assigned reading.) You are to write a methodological review of the article that describes and summarizes the contents and evaluates the use of survey data in the context of the issues and themes in the course readings. You will need to clear the choice with me by no later than April 1st. We must have a face-to-face meeting about the paper before I approve your article. *The review is due on April 28th (Tuesday).* Submit this as a Word compatible document via Sakai by 5:00pm. If you have not already sent me a PDF of the article you're reviewing, make sure I have a copy which will subsequently be distributed to class members.

- **Outline:**


  1. **Orientation** (1/7)

  2. **What do Surveys Measure?** (1/14)

     Phillip Converse, "Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," *Ideology and Discontent*, 227-245 (Sakai-resources tab)
     _____, "Attitudes and Non-Attitudes: Continuation of a Dialogue," *Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems*, 168-180 (Sakai)

  3. **The Concept of Survey Error** (1/21)

     *Salant & Dillman, How to Conduct, ch. 2

     Paul J. Lavrakas, "Applying a Total Error Perspective for Improving Research Quality in the Social, Behavioral, and Marketing Sciences,"
4. **Design Effects** (1/28) [Disc: ] CRP=A

Survey Methodology, chap. 5
Salant & Dillman, *How to Conduct*, ch. 7, pp. 101-127; ch. 8, 137-148 (Note: This is a required reading for all students.) (Sakai-resources tab)
*Salant & Dillman, *How to Conduct*, ch. 4, 8
*Andres, *Designing*, ch. 4


5. **Questions & Answers in Survey Research** (2/4 [topic A], 2/11 [topic B], 2/18 [topic C], 2/25 [topic D])

Survey Methodology, chaps. 7-8
*Salant & Dillman, *How to Conduct*, chs. 3, 6-7
*Andres, *Designing*, chs. 3, 5, 7

A. **Question Design** [Disc: ] CRP=B

- **Tom W. Smith**, "That Which We Call Welfare by Any Other Name Would Smell Sweeter," *POQ* 51 (1987), 75-83
- **Norman Bradburn and Carrie Miles**, "Vague Quantifiers," *POQ* 43 (1979), 92-101

B. **Developing & Testing Survey Questions and Scales** [Disc: ] CRP=C

- **Howard Schuman**, "Ordinary Questions and Policy Questions," *POQ* 50 (1986), 432-442 [You will have to scroll ahead a few pages.]
- **Amy O'Donnell et al.**, "Using Focus Groups to Improve the Validity of Cross-National Survey Research," *Qualitative Health Research* 17 (2007): 971-981

C. **Cultural Influences** [Disc: ] CRP=D


D. **Sensitive Issues** [Disc: ] CRP=A

- **Matthew Streb et al.**, "Social Desirability Effects and Support for a Female Presidential Candidate," *POQ* 72 (2008), 76-89

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**Take-home examination distributed in class on February 18th and is due (in Sakai) by the end of the day on February 25th.**

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**Spring Break, no class on March 4**

Survey Methodology, chaps. 9

Emily Kane and Laura Macaulay, "Interviewer Gender and Gender Attitudes," POQ 57 (1993), 1-28

March 15th deadline for email submission of papers for article review assignment.

7. Respondent Effects (3/16) [Disc: Huang] CRP=C

Stanley Presser, "Is Inaccuracy on Factual Items Item-Specific or Respondent-Specific?" POQ 48 (1984), 344-55

8. Sampling (3/25 [topic A], 4/1 [topic B], 4/8 [topic C])

Survey Methodology, chaps. 3-4, 6, 10
*Salant & Dillman, How to Conduct, chs. 5
*Andres, Designing, ch. 6, 8

A. General Issues [Disc: ] CRP=D


B. Sampling Difficult Populations/Situations: Non-Probability Methods [Disc: ] CRP=A

Margaret Newby et al., "Survey Research Among Women in Bangladesh," American Behavioral Scientist 42 (1998), 252-75


George Rothbart et al. , "On Finding and Interviewing the Needles in the Haystack," POQ 46 (1982), 408-421

9. Post-Collection Data Adjustments (4/15) [Disc: CRP=C

Howard Acoc, "Working with Missing Values," Journal of Marriage & the Family 67 (2005), 1012-28
Gary King et al., "Analyzing Incomplete Political Science Data: Multiple Imputation," American Political Science Rev 95 (2001), 49-69
10. Legal/Ethical Issues in Survey Research (4/22) [Disc: ] CRP=D

Survey Methodology, chap. 11
*Dillman & Salant, How to Conduct, chs. 9-10
*Andres, Designing, ch. 9

Fred Morgan, "Judicial Standards for Survey Research," Journal of Marketing 54 (1990), 59-70

April 28th - Paper due electronically (in Sakai) by 5:00pm