

## **POLS 8500 Special Topics in Research Methods: Survey Methods**

Fall 2021

Thursday, 3:55-6:40pm

Baldwin Hall 104B

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**Office Hours:** Wednesday 9:30-11:30am

### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to survey methods in political science. The beginning of the course covers the foundations of surveys, including the distinction between populations and samples, random vs. non-random sampling, and survey mode (e.g., telephone vs. internet). The second portion of the class covers survey questions and survey questionnaire design. The class ends by covering other important topics.

### **Structure**

The course will primarily be delivered as a seminar, however some sessions will include lectures. Participation by everybody is essential to a successful semester. Questions and thoughtful discussion about the course material are essential and I expect everybody to come to class prepared to participate.

### **Qualtrics**

Qualtrics is a web-based survey tool. We will make use of Qualtrics throughout the semester and all students should activate their Qualtrics account through the University of Georgia:

[https://eits.uga.edu/web\\_and\\_applications/qualtrics/](https://eits.uga.edu/web_and_applications/qualtrics/)

- Note, if you have a prior Qualtrics account, such as from a previous University or college, you should still activate your UGA account.

### **Assignments & Expectations**

*Attendance & Participation* – You are expected to attend every class, read all materials carefully, and contribute to all seminar discussions. In short, you are expected to actively participate in every single class. If you are not participating, you are hurting yourself & your chance to be successful in this class.

*Readings* – In addition to the required books, each week we will read academic articles. I expect that you will locate most of the readings for class. At times I will provide the reading for you by posting it to our class Slack.

*Project 1* (Sampling Plan) – For this paper you will develop a plan to sample a specific population. An assignment sheet will provide more concrete guidelines, including a list of groups around which you will choose to design your assignment.

*Project 2* (Example Survey) – This assignment requires you to program a survey in Qualtrics. There will be some basic requirements that you will need to follow, but the subject matter is up to you. Thus, if you want to practice programming a survey relevant to your own work you can. You will not field this survey for the class. Rather, you will be evaluated on the quality of your survey design.

*Project 3* (Survey Critique) – This paper requires you to identify a published article that uses a survey as the primary method of research. You will evaluate the survey in light of the author(s) research questions and provide a critique. You will present your critique during the final class session.

### Required Books

1. Groves, Robert M. et al. 2009. “Survey Methodology” (2nd Edition). Wiley Press.
  - a. Order online, this book is not available at the UGA bookstore
2. Rae Atkeson, Lonna and R. Michael Alvarez (eds). 2018. “The Oxford Handbook of Polling and Survey Methods”
  - a. A free digital copy of this textbook is available through the UGA library.

### Grading

The following are the areas in which you will receive points in this class and the weight that each area has on your final grade.

<b>Participation</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Project 1</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Project 2</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Project 3</b>	<b>25%</b>

I use the following scale when assigning letter grades:

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent</b>
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F	<60

## **Course Policies**

### Valid Absence Excuses

If you have a significant conflict that causes you to miss class (e.g., a personal, family, or medical emergency), you should email me within a week of the missed due date to make sure you can complete the assignment or exam in a timely manner.

### Academic Honesty

The University of Georgia has an academic honesty policy. Academic integrity is required for a positive learning environment. All students enrolled in university courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F in the course. Additionally, I will forward your name to the University. You can read the policies in their entirety here: <https://honesty.uga.edu/>

### Disability resource center

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

## Course Schedule

This is a tentative schedule and assigned readings, topics, etc. Groves et al. refers to the “Survey Methodology” textbook. Oxford Handbook refers to “The Oxford Handbook of Polling and Survey Methods.”

### Week 1 – Introductions (8/19)

*Topic(s):* Class introduction, history of surveys, current perspectives on survey research

#### *Introductions*

- Delli Carpini, Michael X (2011). “Constructing Public Opinion” in Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion (Ch. 18).
- Groves et al. (Ch. 1)

#### *New Directions*

- Berinsky, Adam J. (2017). “Measuring Public Opinion with Surveys.” *Annual Review of Political Science*
- Lupu, Noam and Kristin Michelitch. (2018). “Advances in Survey Methods for the Developing World.” *Annual Review of Political Science*.

### Week 2 – Error & Opinions (8/26)

*Topic(s):* Survey basics, error as a concept, opinion formation/expression

#### *Basics of Surveys*

- Groves et al. (Ch. 2)
- Oxford Handbook (Ch. 1)

#### *Opinion Formation/Expression*

- Converse, Philip E. 1964. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics.”
- Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. “A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions Versus Revealing Preferences.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Alvarez, R. Michael and John Brehm. 2002. “Hard Choices, Easy Answers” (Ch. 4).

### Week 3 – Sampling 1: Populations & Probability Sampling (9/2)

*Topic(s):* Populations, how to define samples, types of random sampling

- Asher, Herb. *Polling and the Public* (Ch. 4).
- Groves et al. (Chs. 3-4)

## Week 4 – Sampling 2: Online & Non-probability Samples (9/9)

*Topic(s):* Online sampling; sampling without known probabilities of inclusion; implications for use of online samples

### *Online Recruitment*

- Rivers, Doug. 2006. “Sample Matching: Representative Sampling from Internet Panels.” [YouGovPolmetrix white paper](#).
- Baker, Reg et al. 2013. “Summary Report of the AAPOR Task Force on Non-probability Sampling.” *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*.
- Handbook (Ch. 4)

### *Online vs. Probability Samples*

- Yeager David S. et al. 2011. “Comparing the Accuracy of RDD Telephone Surveys and Internet Surveys Conducted with Probability and Non-probability Samples. *Public Opinion Quarterly*.
- Coppock, Alexander and Oliver McClellan. 2019. “Validating the Demographic, Political, Psychological, and Experimental Results Obtained from a New Source of Online Survey Experiments. *Research & Politics*.
- Smith, Brianna, et al. 2020. “TRENDS: How Internet Search Undermines the Validity of Political Knowledge Measures.”

## Week 5 – Sampling 3: Survey Mode and New Sources of Samples (9/16)

*Topic(s):* Survey mode, alternative methods for sample recruitment, hard to reach populations

### *Survey Mode*

- Groves et al. (Ch. 5)
- Ansolabehere, Stephen and Brian F. Schaffer. 2014. “Does Survey Mode Still Matter? Findings from a 2010 Multi-Mode Comparison.” *Political Analysis*.
- Handbook (Ch. 3)

### *New Methods of Recruitment & Difficult Populations*

- Handbook (Ch. 8)
- Heckathorn, Douglas D. 1997. “Respondent-Driven Sampling: A New Approach to the Study of Hidden Populations.” *Social Problems*.
- Zhang, Baobao et al. 2018. “Quota Sampling using Facebook Advertisements.” *Political Science Research and Methods*.

## Week 6 – (Non)Response Error (9/23)

*Topic(s):* Types of nonresponse error; motivations for survey takers; nonresponse bias

### *Definitions*

- Groves et al. (Ch. 6)
- Brehm, John. 1993. “The Phantom Respondents.” (Chs. 3 & 4; Optional – Ch.5)

### *Effects of Nonresponse*

- Berinsky, Adam. 2002. "Silent Voices: Social Welfare Policy Opinions and Political Equality in America." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Keeter, Scott. 2018. "The Impact of Survey Non-Response on Survey Accuracy. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Survey Research* (Ch. 47).
- Clinton, Joshua D. et al. 2021. "Reluctant Republicans? Partisan Non-Response and the Accuracy of 2020 Presidential Pre-election Polls." *Working Paper*.

### Week 7 – No class due to APSA Meeting (9/30)

*Deadlines:* Project 1 (Sampling)

### Week 8 – Qualtrics Workshop (10/7)

*Topic(s):* Learning about Qualtrics!

*Readings:* TBD

### Week 9 – Questionnaires 1: Overview & Closed vs. Open-Ended Questions (10/14)

*Topic(s):* Introduction to survey questionnaires; open- vs. closed-ended questions

#### *Introduction to Questionnaires*

- Krosnick, John A. 2018. "Questionnaire Design." In *Palgrave Handbook of Survey Research* (Ch. 53)
- Handbook (Ch. 6)
- Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Stanley Presser. 2003. "The Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 29: 65-88.

#### *Open-ended vs. Closed-ended Questions*

- Converse, Jean M. 1984. "Strong Arguments and Weak Evidence: The Open/Closed Questioning Controversy of the 1940s." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 48: 276-282.
- Geer, John G. 1988. "What Do Open-Ended Questions Measure?" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 52: 365-371.
- Glazier, Rebecca A., Amber Boydston, and Jessica Feezell. 2021. "Self-coding: A Method to Assess Semantic Validity and Bias When Coding Open-ended Responses." *Research and Politics*.

### Week 10 – Questionnaires 2: Constructing Questions (10/21)

*Topic(s):* Scale points; branching options; Agree/Disagree

#### *Scale Points*

- Cox, E. P. 1980. "The Optimal Number of Response Alternatives for a Scale: A Review." *Journal of Marketing Research*. 17: 407-422.

- Maitland, Aaron. 2009. "How Many Scale Points Should I Include for Attitudinal Questions?" *Survey Practice*. 2(5). Link: <https://www.surveypractice.org/article/2950-how-many-scale-points-should-i-include-for-attitudinal-questions>

### *Scales*

- Liu, Mingnan, Sunghye Lee, and Fredrick Conrad. 2015. "Comparing Extreme Response Styles between Agree-Disagree and Item-Specific Scales." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 79(4): 952-75. and item-specific scales." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 79(4): 952-975.
- Revilla, Melanie A., Willem E. Saris, and Jon A. Krosnick. 2014. "Choosing the Number of Categories in Agree-Disagree Scales." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43(1): 73-97
- Lelkes, Yphtach and Rebecca Weiss. 2015. "Much Ado about Acquiescence: The Relative Validity and Reliability of Construct-specific and Agree-Disagree Questions." *Research and Politics*.

### *Branches*

- Malhotra, Neil et al. 2009. "Optimal Design of Branching Questions to Measure Bipolar Constructs." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 73: 304-324.
- DeBell, Matthew et al. 2021. "Optimal Response Formats for Online Surveys: Branch, Grid, or Single Item?" *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology*. 9:1-24.

## Week 11 – Questionnaires 3: Measurement Considerations (10/28)

*Topic(s):* Don't know/No opinion; Question Wording

### *Non-Opinion/Don't Know*

- Krosnick, Jon A et al. 2002. "The Impact Of 'No Opinion' Response Options On Data Quality: Non-Attitude Reduction Or An Invitation To Satisfice?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66(3): 371-403.
- Luskin, Robert and John Bullock. 2011. "Don't Know Means Don't Know: DK Responses and the Public's Level of Political Knowledge." *The Journal of Politics* 73(2): 547-557.

### *Question Wording*

- Baker, Andy and Lucio Renno. 2019. "Nonpartisans as False Negatives: The Mismeasurement of Party Identification in Public Opinion Surveys." *The Journal of Politics*. 81(3): 906-22.
- Clifford, Scott, Youngkwang Kim, and Brian Sullivan. 2021. "An Improved Question Format for Measuring Conspiracy Beliefs." *Working Paper*.

## Week 12 – Special Topics 1: “Hidden” Opinions (11/4)

*Topic(s)*: List experiments; implicit attitudes

### *List Experiments*

- Imai, Kosuke. [Examples of list experiments](#)
- Ahlquist, John S., Ken Mayer and Simon Jackman. 2014. “Alien Abduction and Voter Impersonation in the 2012 US General Election: Evidence from a Survey List Experiment” *Election Law Journal*. 13(4).

### *Social Desirability*

- Rosenfeld, Byrn, Kosuke Imai, and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2016. “An Empirical Validation Study of Popular Survey Methodologies for Sensitive Questions.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 60(3): 783-802.
- Axt, Jordan R. 2018. “The Best Way to Measure Explicit Racial Attitudes Is to Ask About Them.” *Social Psychological and Personality Science*. 9(8): 896-906

### *Implicit Attitudes*

- [Example IAT Test](#)
- Theodoridis, Alexander. 2017. “Me, Myself, and (I),(D), or (R)? Partisanship and Political Cognition Through the Lens of Implicit Identity.” *The Journal of Politics*. 79(4): 1253-67.

*Deadlines*: Project 2

## Week 13 – Special Topics 2: Survey Context (11/11)

*Topic(s)*: Interviewer effects; within-survey priming; demand effects; recency effects

### *Readings*:

- Malhotra, Neil. 2008. “Completion Time and Response Order Effects in Web Surveys.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 72(5): 914-34.
- Druckman, James N. and Thomas J. Leeper. 2012. “Learning More from Political Communication Experiments: Pretreatment and Its Effects.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56(4): 875-896.
- Mummolo, Jonathan and Erik Peterson. 2019. “Demand Effects in Survey Experiments: An Empirical Assessment.” *American Political Science Review* 113(2): 517-529 .
- Clifford, Scott, Geoffrey Sheagley, and Spencer Piston. 2021. “Increasing Precision without Altering Treatment Effects: Repeated Measures Designs in Survey Experiments.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Sheagley, Geoffrey and Scott Clifford. “No Need for a Panel Study: Conditional Treatment Effects in Survey Experiments.” *Working paper*.



## Week 14 – Survey Weights (11/18)

*Topic(s):* Weights, weights, and more weights.

### *Introduction to weights*

- Kalton, Graham and Ismael Flores-Cervantes. 2003. “Weighting Methods.” *Journal of Official Statistics*. 19(2): 81-97

### *Computing Weights*

- DeBell, Matthew. 2018. “Computation of Survey Weights.” In *Palgrave Handbook of Survey Research* (Ch. 6).
- Pasek, Josh, Matthew DeBell, and Jon Krosnick. 2014. “Standardizing and Democratizing Survey Weights: The ANES Weighting System and anesrake.” *Working Paper*.

### *Additional considerations*

- Mercer, Andrew, Arnold Lau, and Courtney Kennedy. 2018. “For Weighting Online Opt-In Samples, What Matters Most?” *Pew Research Center*.
- Miratrix, Luke W. et al. “Worth Weighting? How to Think About and Use Weights in Survey Experiments.” *Political Analysis*

## Week 15 – No Class due to Thanksgiving (11/25)

## Week 16 – Survey Critique Presentations (12/2)

*Deadlines:* Project 3