POLS 8500 Special Topics in Research Methods: Survey Methods
Fall 2021
Thursday, 3:55-6:40pm
Baldwin Hall 104B

Instructor: Dr. Geoffrey Sheagley
Office: Baldwin Hall 380G
Email: geoff.sheagley@uga.edu
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/

- 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
   a. Order online, this book is not available at the UGA bookstore
   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.

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<th>Participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project 1</td>
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<td>Project 3</td>
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I use the following scale when assigning letter grades:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
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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
- Groves et al. (Ch. 1)

New Directions

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

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**
- Handbook (Ch. 4)

**Online vs. Probability Samples**

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)
- Handbook (Ch. 3)

**New Methods of Recruitment & Difficult Populations**
- Handbook (Ch. 8)

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


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)

*Open-ended vs. Closed-ended Questions*


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

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

*Scale Points*

• 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](https://www.surveypractice.org/article/2950-how-many-scale-points-should-i-include-for-attitudinal-questions)

**Scales**


**Branches**


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

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

**Non-Opinion/Don’t Know**


**Question Wording**


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

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

**List Experiments**
- Imai, Kosuke. [Examples of list experiments](#).

**Social Desirability**

**Implicit Attitudes**
- [Example IAT Test](#).

**Deadlines:** Project 2

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

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

**Readings:**
Week 14 – Survey Weights (11/18)

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

*Introduction to weights*

*Computing Weights*
- DeBell, Matthew. 2018. “Computation of Survey Weights.” In *Palgrave Handbook of Survey Research* (Ch. 6).

*Additional considerations*

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

Week 16 – Survey Critique Presentations (12/2)

*Deadlines: Project 3*