

Survey Research · 34:833:635 · Spring 2011
Public Policy program · Edward J. Bloustein School

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Office Hours T 11:00 – 12:00; W 4:00 after class & by appointment

This is a course in the art and science of survey research, a primary methodological tool of the social sciences and program/policy analysis. You will learn how to design, implement and analyze surveys. The class will cover all the steps in the process: (1) problem formation; (2) choice of a data collection mode; (3) sample design and selection; (4) questionnaire development and layout; (5) data collection; (6) data reduction; and (7) data analysis and reporting.

While this course is designed to train you how to consume, conduct and analyze surveys, we will also take a look at how surveys are used in the political process and for program evaluation. There will also be a number of practitioners coming to visit class to share their knowledge and experiences, and a field trip to a data collection center.

And, most importantly, we will have a **real project** to do. The absolute best way to learn survey research is by doing it. It is in the *application* of theory and academic knowledge that the best learning takes place. So, for the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, we'll be doing a national study of recent college graduates looking into the question of how well their college experiences prepared them to get jobs.

Course Textbooks

There are two required books for the course, each of which has been recently revised and represent the current state of knowledge about survey research:

Author: Don Dillman, et al
Title: Internet, mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method 3rd ed
Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, 2009 ISBN 978-0-471-69868-5

Author: Bob Groves, et al
Title: Survey Methodology, 2nd ed
Publisher: John Wiley & Sons, 2009 ISBN: 978-0-470-46546-2

The reading from these books is heavily concentrated in the portion of class before Spring break. There are a few other readings. These will be distributed in class or made available as PDF documents on the class Sakai web site. Sakai will be the main interface by which we transact business between class sessions; all important information will be posted on this site. We're survey_research_2011@sakai.rutgers.edu, also known as 34:833:635 on your Sakai tab.

Because we will have a specific project, this syllabus covers fully only the first eight weeks, through Spring break. Real research is an iterative process with each step reacting to the one(s) made before it. We'll probably have to re-organize ourselves at least once during the semester. As Albert Einstein once observed, "If we knew what is was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?" We're spending the semester trying to learn, understand and apply an empirical methodology. That will make it a little frustrating, in that we don't know for sure in advance where we are going. But it's the best way to

learn, so you'll have to deal with the ambiguity of not having all 14 weeks fully mapped out in advance. Here's what I suspect will happen when.

Course and Survey Schedule, Topics and Readings

Week & Date	Topics	Readings
1 1/19	Class Overview	Dillman 1 Groves 1
2 1/26	Stages of the survey research process RCG (Recent College Graduates) Goals	Dillman 2 Groves 2.1-2.7; skim 2.36 & 2.37
3 2/2	Sampling & Probability RCG research design	Dillman 3 Groves 3.1-3.2; 3.4-3.6; 3.8-4.2
4 2/9	Questionnaire Design Principles / Cognitive Model of Survey Response RCG questionnaire design	Dillman 4; pp 65-89 Groves 7
5 2/16	Questionnaire Design Wording RCG questionnaire design	Dillman 5 Poynter
6 2/23	Questionnaire Design Layout RCG questionnaire layout	Dillman 89-106; 151-82
7 3/2	Questionnaire Design Pretest / Advanced topics RCG Pretest	Dillman 183-229 Groves 8.1 to 8.6
8 3/9	Field Implementation & Ethics RCG survey in field	Dillman 7, 11 Groves 9/1- 9.22; 9.4 - end; 11.1 to 11.6
	SPRING BREAK RCG survey in field	
9 3/23	Modes of Survey Data Collection & Mixed Modes RCG survey in field	Dillman 8 Groves 5.1-5.3
10 3/30	Weighting, Probability Theory, Election Polling RCG post data collection adjustments	Groves 10; skim 6
11 4/6	Data Analysis Presenting Survey Findings, Graphs, Topline & Tables RCG data analysis	Dillman 182-218
12 4/13	Data Analysis Longitudinal and Panel Data RCG data analysis	Dillman 9
13 4/20	Data Analysis Special Types of Surveys Program Review, Establishment RCG data analysis	Dillman 10, 12
14 4/27	The Future of Survey Research/Wrap Up	Dillman 13 Zukin Pres. Address

Course Evaluation

Your grade will be based on your performance on two main papers, a brief book report and your work on the RCG survey, including class participation.

(1) **Survey Design and Questionnaire Assignment:** You will identify a research question that interests you, choose a data collection mode and write a questionnaire. The survey design will cover the first steps in the process: a statement about the goals of the research, sampling strategy and choice of survey mode. The questionnaire design will cover the wording and ordering of survey questions. This will be due March 9. This should run about 10 to 15 pages and counts for about one-third of your grade.

(2) Each student about will write a **data analysis** based on survey data. Ideally you would write on a substantive or methodological concern on the RCG project, but if you don't like topics that will come out of it you are free to work on your own data set and empirical questions. In this eventuality, I will work with you on an individual basis to identify a data set on a topic that satisfies your research interests. The final deadline for this is May 4. This should run about 15 pages and will also count for about one-third of your final grade.

(3) The final third of your grade will come from your work/**homework on the RCG project**, book review and your participation in class. Each student will be doing some tasks as we get the survey ready to go into the field. This might include looking for past studies on the topic, drafting questions, and/or preparing implementation memos.

Please be mindful of the University's policy on academic misconduct, or plagiarism.

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Resources

You'll be using a variety of resources in the course. Here are some of the portals you'll be exploring.

AAPOR stands for the American Association for Public Opinion Research. It is the governing body that regulates survey research. Their web site is www.aapor.org, and you will find useful links to other sites there. I will occasionally pass along the day's traffic of AAPORNET, a discussion listserv for members.

The single best site I know for following polling issues and controversies of the day is Mark@huffingtonpost.com written by Mark Blumenthal. I'm sure I'll be forwarding you some items from this, as well as some from TheNumbersGuy, aka Carl Bialik at the Wall Street Journal's on-line site, and Gary Langer of ABC News.

The Roper Center at the University of Connecticut serves as one of the main archives for survey research data. Rutgers has an account that allows you to search questions asked by a wide variety of research organizations. www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ipoll.html is the site. Rutgers has an institutional account here. All of the Heldrich data is archived there. You can search for the data sets by typing in the key words "work trends".

Other useful data archives include the Inter university Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/index-medium.html>, and survey research institutes at the Berkeley <http://srcweb.berkeley.edu> and the National Opinion Research Center <http://www.norc.uchicago.edu> at the University of Chicago.

Excellent sites for contemporary survey research data are the Pew Research Center(s) at www.people-press.org, the Annenberg 2004 national election survey www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes and Gallup www.gallup.com.

The American Association for Public Opinion Research has partnered with the Poynter Institute in putting together a course on survey research for journalists. It can be found at www.newsu.org.