

Introduction to Survey Research Syllabus

POLI SCI 373, JOURN 373, URB R PL 373

Professor Powell

Spring 2018

Syllabus Version: January 24, 2018

Office Location: 216 North Hall

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30, Signup Online

Sign-Up for Office Hours: <https://calendar.wisc.edu/scheduling-assistant/public/profiles/kmk0orft.html>

Email: eleanor.powell@wisc.edu

Lecture: Monday & Wednesday 9:55am-10:45am

Location: Ingraham 120

TA: Anna Meier, Email: ameier5@wisc.edu

Overview

Welcome to POLI SCI 373: Introduction to Survey Research!

This class is an introduction to polling and survey research. We will briefly cover all aspects of survey research including: questionnaire design, question wording, survey mode (in person, mail, telephone, online), sample size, nonresponse, standard error, margin of error, and ethical issues in survey research

This semester we will particularly focus on polling in advance of the 2018 congressional elections, presidential approval and congressional approval.

Polling and survey research are widely used in a variety of fields and career paths. While this class will focus on political polling, the concepts and practical skills learned can be applied to careers in market research, journalism, economics, sociology, and many more. In addition to these practical career applications, the concepts learned in the course will help students to be informed consumers of polling results.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Ability to formulate and construct logical arguments about political phenomena and an ability to evaluate those arguments using survey research.
- Understanding of theoretical components of survey research.
- Ability to interpret survey results in general with a particular focus on political polling.

- Development of practical survey research skills including: questionnaire design, question wording, survey mode, sample size, nonresponse, standard error, and margin of error.
- Developing an understanding of ethical issues in survey research.
- Development of programming skills in both R and qualtrics.
- Practice with both critical writing and oral presentation skills.

Number of Credits Associated with the Course: 3 Credits

How the Credit Hours Are Met By the Course

This class meets for three 50-minute class periods each week (two lectures and one section meeting) over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, problem sets, studying, group project, etc) for about 2 hours out of classroom for every class period (a total of 6 hours per week).

Office Hours

I would like to get to know you all, and hope you will come see me during office hours. To sign up for office hours please use the online scheduling assistant available here: <https://calendar.wisc.edu/scheduling-assistant/public/profiles/kmk0orf.html>. If you are unable to come during office hours, please email me for an appointment. If you have questions about the course material, please ask them as they arise during lecture.

Prerequisites

Junior Standing. There are no other formal prerequisites.

Students interested in pursuing survey research are strongly encouraged to enroll in additional classes on statistics (political methodology), and public opinion.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend lecture, participate, and be prepared to discuss the readings. Some material will be covered exclusively in lecture and other material will be covered exclusively in the readings. If you miss a lecture for any reason, it is your responsibility to get the material you missed from a classmate.

Attendance in section is mandatory. Section attendance and participation is the major component of your participation grade (10% of your grade in the course). Students who miss more than 2 sections will not receive a grade for the course.

Laptops are permitted in lectures.

Communication

I will send class updates and announcements by email. Students are expected to check their email regularly (at least daily) to look for class communications.

Textbook and Readings

Fowler, Floyd J., Jr. 2015. *Survey Research Methods*, 5th Edition. Los Angeles: Sage.

All other readings will be available on the Learn@UW Canvas course website.

Assignments

Assignments will be submitted online at Learn @UW. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per day. No extensions or lateness will be allowed for the in class presentations or for the final individual project.

Due Dates

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Individual Assignment #1 | 2/5 |
| CITI Training | 2/12 |
| Group Project #1 Topic & Method | 2/19 |
| Group Project #2 Questionnaire | 3/5 |
| Group Project #3 Final Field Plan | 3/12 |
| Group Project #4 Final Questionnaire | 3/21 |
| Individual Assignment #2 | 4/9 |
| In-Class Group Presentations | Weeks 13 & 14 |
| Final Individual Project | 5pm 5/11 |

CITI Training: Each student must individually complete UW Madison's Online Human Subjects Training. Available Here: <https://my.gradsch.wisc.edu/citi/index.php>. Forward your TA the confirmation email you receive upon success completion of the Training course. Please make the subject line: PLSC 544.

Individual Assignment #1: Problem set.

Group Project #1 Topic & Method: I will randomly assign students into groups of 4-5 people. Each group will be responsible for picking a political topic on which to conduct survey research and decide on a method of how they will conduct that polling.

Group Project #2 Questionnaire: Each group will design a questionnaire for their project. The questions should include some (at least 2) questions that are identical to a publicly available poll on that topic (so the results can be compared), and at least 2 unique questions created by the group. In addition to the group questions, each student will individually be responsible for writing 2 unique questions.

Group Project #3 Final Field Plan: Detailed document including final version of questionnaire, and specifics of survey implementation.

Group Project #4 Final Questionnaire: Final version of the questionnaire. If using qualtrics, sharing the survey via qualtrics. In addition each group must submit a document explaining identifying their replication questions, the original source of those questions, and identifying the individual questions for each student.

Individual Assignment #2: 4 Page Research Paper (double spaced, 12 pt font) examining one instance of major failure of political polling. Students will be expected to incorporate concepts from the course, but to also cite at least 10 outside readings (journal articles and media coverage) that you find on your own. The paper should be organized into a cohesive essay with introduction, thesis statement, evidence, conclusion and bibliography.

In-Class Group Presentations: Each group will make a 15 minute presentation to the class of the group findings. The group should explain the topic they are polling about, discuss the method they used to conduct their poll, compare their findings to that of publicly available polls and to the election outcome, discuss any differences found, and provide hypotheses for why they found any differences. Each student in the group should participate in the presentation. The class will then ask questions and offer feedback and suggestions to the group that they can incorporate in their final projects. **In addition, each group will need to submit electronically their survey results—both raw data and slides used in their presentation..**

Final Individual Project: Each student will write a 5 page final paper. The paper should cover two topics. The first should discuss the individual questions the student asked on the poll—what were the findings (graphical presentation of data required, not part of 5 pg count), why did you ask those questions, what is the context of those issues, why did they use that wording, what were the results, etc. The paper should conclude by discussing any flaws in the research design and how the student might remedy them in future surveys. **Students should not collaborate on their final papers.**

Grading

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| Class Participation | 10% |
| CITI Training | 5% |
| Group Project #1 Topic & Method | 5% |
| Group Project #2 Questionnaire | 10% |
| Group Project #3 Final Field Plan | 5% |
| Group Project #4 Final Questionnaire | 5% |
| Individual Assignment #1 | 10% |
| Individual Assignment #2 | 10% |
| In-Class Group Presentations | 20% |
| Final Individual Project | 20% |
| Total | 100% |

Software and Survey Resources

Microsoft Excel (or equivalent such as Numbers for Mac or Open Office)

R (<https://www.r-project.org/>) and R Studio

Qualtrics (<https://survey.wisc.edu/>)

Amazon Mechanical Turk (<https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>)

Academic Integrity

I strongly encourage you to review the University’s policies regarding academic integrity. These policies will be strictly enforced in this class. In general, if you have any questions, please feel free to ask me.

Course Outline

| Course Outline | | | |
|----------------|--------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Week | Dates | Topic | Reading |
| 1 | 1/24 | Why Survey Research? | None |
| 2 | 1/29 | Components of Surveys | Ch 1 |
| | 1/31 | Types of Error in Surveys | Ch 2 |
| 3 | 2/5 | Sampling | Ch 3 |
| | 2/7 | Methods of Data Collection | Ch 5 |
| 4 | 2/12 | Ethical Issues in Survey Research | Ch 11 |
| | 2/14 | Nonresponse | Ch 4 |
| 5 | 2/19 | Designing Questions to Be Good Measures | Ch 6 |
| | 2/21 | Evaluating Survey Questions | Ch 7 |
| 6 | 2/26 | Survey Interviewing | Ch 8 |
| | 2/28 | Preparing Survey Data for Analysis | Ch 9 |
| 7 | 3/5 | Analyzing Survey Data | Ch 10 |
| | 3/7 | Survey Workshop Day | |
| 8 | 3/12 | Public Opinion | Ch 12 and See Below |
| | 3/14 | Sensitive Topics | TBA |
| 9 | 3/19 | Group Project Workday | Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz (2012) |
| | 3/21 | Methods of Data Collection: Part II | |
| | 3/26 3/28 | Spring Break | |
| 10 | 4/2 | Challenges in International Survey Research | Heath, Fisher & Smith (2005) |
| | 4/4 | Elite Surveys | |
| 11 | 4/9 | The US Census and other Major Surveys | Ansolabehere & Rivers (2013) |
| | 4/11 | Failure! Understanding Recent Examples | Ch 13 and See Below |
| 12 | 4/16 | Graphical Presentations of Data | Kastellec & Leoni (2007) |
| | 4/18 | Survey Experiments | TBA |
| 13 | 4/23 | Presentations Part I | |
| | 4/25 | Presentations Part II | |
| 14 | 4/30 | Presentations Part III | |
| | 5/2 | Presentations Part IV | |
| | 5/11 | | |

Additional Readings

Public Opinion

Gelman, Andrew, Sharad Goel, Douglas Rivers and David Rothschild. 2016. "The Mythical Swing Voter." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*. 11:103-130.

Methods of Data Collection: Part II

Berinsky, Adam J., Gregory A Huber, Gabriel S. Lenz. 2012. "Evaluating Online Labor Markets for Experimental Research: Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk." *Political Analysis* 20(3): 351-368. <http://pan.>

Challenges in International Survey Research

Heath, Anthony, Stephen Fisher, and Shawna Smith. 2005. "The Globalization of Public Opinion Research." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8: 297-333. <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.polisci.8.090203.103000>

The US Census and other Major Surveys

Ansolabehere, Stephen and Douglas Rivers. 2013. "Cooperative Survey Research." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 16:307-329.

Failure! Understanding Recent Examples

Silver, Nate. 2016. "Pollsters Probably Didn't Talk to Enough White Voters Without College Degrees." *Five Thirty Eight Politics*.

Hopkins, Dan. 2016. "Voters Really Did Switch To Trump At The Last Minute." *Five Thirty Eight Politics*. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/voters-really-did-switch-to-trump-at-the-last-minute/>.

Silver, Nate. 2015. "Polling Is Getting Harder, But It's A Vital Check On Power." *Five Thirty Eight Politics*. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/polling-is-getting-harder-but-its-a-vital-check-on-power/>

Graphical Presentations of Data

Kastellec, Jonathan P. and Eduardo L. Leoni. 2007. "Using Graphs Instead of Tables in Political Science." *Perspectives on Politics*. 5(4): 755-771.