

Government 234 – Polling and Public Opinion in the United States

Georgetown University

Professor

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Office Hours: Wed 1:00-4:00pm

Meeting Times

Spring 2015
Tuesday and Thursday
9:30am-10:45am
ICC 105

Course Description

Survey research is used to study a broad range of important parts of politics. These include measuring political preferences in the mass public, predicting elections, and planning and evaluating public policies. This course introduces students to modern methods for conducting and interpreting public opinion surveys, including writing a questionnaire, drawing a survey sample, interviewing and weighting. In doing so, the course also covers the psychology processes involved of holding political opinions and answering survey questions.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- a) Be familiar with the psychology of political opinions and how they change
- b) Understand how and when actions by politicians change mass-level opinion
- c) Know how to interpret opinion polls conducted by others and identify strengths and weaknesses
- d) Know the basic principles of questionnaire design and have experience writing your own questionnaire
- e) Be able to write survey questions that get meaningful responses and capture the intended concepts
- f) Understand how to draw survey samples with the most common survey modes used today, including phone, mail and internet interviewing.
- g) Be able to calculate confidence intervals on survey results and interpret them appropriately.
- h) Understand the basic principles of survey weighting

Books

Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau. 2009. *Survey Methodology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Interscience.
Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

You need to buy these two books. They are available at the Leavey Center book store, but used copies of both are available. I encourage you to search widely and find the best prices. The only limitation is that you need to get the second edition of the *Survey Methodology* textbook, not the first.

Web links to other readings are provided when available. Readings not available online are on electronic reserve at the Lauinger Library.

Grading

Course grades will be a weighted average of, class participation (10%), the weekly short assignments (40%) and the course project (50%).

Weekly assignments will be graded with a check-plus, check, or check-minus. They will be reduced by one grade if they are late. Students will receive a zero on the assignment if it is more than 2 days late

Late Final Projects will be reduced by a half-grade for each day they are late.

Standard Disclaimers

Please be aware that the only valid excuses for turning in a paper or taking an exam late are those approved by the Georgetown College (or SFS) Dean's office. If you are ill, have a family emergency, or similar problem, you should notify the University and they will contact all your professors excusing you from courses. Excepting that, makeup exams will not be given and late papers will be treated as unexcused.

I am reluctant to review grades. If you would like one of your assignments to be re-graded, you must resubmit the original assignment along with a 1-page memo to me explaining why you think your grade on the assignment was incorrect. Please submit this material to me, not the T.A. When re-grading assignments, your grade may go up or down (or stay the same), depending on my reassessment.

Government Department Policy on Grading Distributions: "Grades in the Department of Government reflect high standards and university norms. For the four introductory courses, no more than 40 percent of the grades will be A-minus or higher. For other undergraduate level courses, the expectation is that no more than 50 percent of grades will be A-minus or higher. Classes with substantially higher percentage of A-minus and higher grades will be reviewed by the Department. In certain cases, such as Honors courses or courses with demonstrated high levels of effort and learning, grading percentages may go higher, but the basis for these higher grades will need to be documented."

Course Schedule

Week 1 (1/8): Introduction and Course Overview

Week 2 (1/13, 1/15): The Psychology of Answering Survey Questions; The Central Role of Party Identification

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Chapters 1-6 (pp. 1-116) and skim Chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 151-211).

Week 3 (1/20, 1/22): The Role of Attitudes toward Racial Groups

Kinder, Donald R. and Tali Mendelberg. 2000. "Individualism Reconsidered: Principles and Prejudice in Contemporary American Opinion." In David Sears, James Sidanius and Lawrence Bobo, eds, *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America*, Chicago: Chicago University Press. **Reserve.**

Sniderman, Paul M., Gretchen C. Crosby, and William G. Howell. 2000. "The Politics of Race." In David Sears, James Sidanius and Lawrence Bobo, eds, *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America*, Chicago: Chicago University Press. **Reserve.**

Tesler, Michael. 2012. "The Spillover of Racialization Into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3): 690-704. (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00577.x/abstract>)

Week 4 (1/27, 1/29): Patterns in Aggregate Public Opinion over Time

"What the Public Wants from Government," "The Horse Race: Finding Meaning in Presidential Campaigns," and "Between the Campaigns: Public Approval and Disapproval of Government." Chapters 2, 4 and 5 from: James A. Stimson, 2004. *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press. **Reserve.**

Week 5 (2/3, 2/5): Types of Surveys and What They Can Tell Us

Groves et al., *Survey Methodology*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Johnston, Richard and Henry E. Brady. 2002. "The Rolling Cross-Section Design." *Electoral Studies* 21(2):283-295. (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261379401000221>)

Bartels, Larry. 2006. "Three Virtues of Panel Data for Analysis of Campaign Effects." Chapter 6 from: Henry E. Brady, and Richard Johnston, eds. *Capturing Campaign Effects*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. **Reserve**.

Week 6 (2/10, 2/12): Populations and Sampling Frames

Groves et al., *Survey Methodology*, Chapter 3.

Erin C. Cassese, Leonie Huddy, Todd K. Hartman, Lilliana Mason, and Christopher R. Weber. 2013. "Socially Mediated Internet Surveys: Recruiting Participants for Online Experiments." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46 (4):1–10.
(<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=9016832&fileId=S1049096513001029>)

David Scott Yeager, Jon A. Krosnick, Linchiat Chang, Harold S. Javitz, Matthew S. Levendusky, Alberto Simpser, and Rui Wang. 2011. "Comparing the Accuracy of RDD Telephone Surveys and Internet Surveys Conducted with Probability and Non-Probability Samples." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75 (4):709–747.
(<http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/10/05/poq.nfr020.short>)

Week 7 (2/17, 2/19): Sampling

Groves et al., *Survey Methodology*, Chapter 4.

"Stratified Sampling." Chapter 3 in Sharon L. Lohr, 2010. *Sampling: Design and Analysis*, 2nd edition, Centage. **Reserve**.

J. Michael Dennis and many others. 2010. "Research Synthesis: AAPOR Report on Online Panels." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74 (4):711–781.
(<http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/74/4/711.extract>)

Week 8 (2/24, 2/26): Questionnaire Design 1: Operationalizing Concepts

Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Stanley Presser. 2003. "The Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:65–88.
(<http://www.annualreviews.org/eprint/rU4UOoizjrXROhijkRIS/full/10.1146/annurev.soc.29.110702.110112>)

Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Jr. Snyder. 2008. "The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting." *American Political Science Review* 102 (2): 215–232. **Jstor.org**.

Wilcox, Clyde Lee Sigelman, and Elizabeth Cook. 1989. "Some Like It Hot: Individual Differences in Responses to Group Feeling Thermometers." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53 (2):246–257. **Jstor.org**.

"Designing Rating Scales for Effective Measurement in Surveys." Chapter 6 in Jon A. Krosnick, and Leandre R. Fabrigar. 1997. *Survey Measurement and Process Quality*. John Wiley & Sons. **Reserve**.

Krosnick, Jon A., & Berent, Matthew K. 1993. "Comparisons of Party Identification and Policy Preferences: The Impact of Survey Question Format." *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (3): 941-964. **Jstor.org**.

Nadeau, Richard and Richard G. Niemi. 1995. "Educated Guesses: The Process of Answering Factual Knowledge Questions in Surveys." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 59 (3): 323. **Jstor.org**.

Prior, Markus. 2014. "Visual Political Knowledge: A Different Road to Competence?" *Journal of Politics* 76 (1): 41–57. (<https://www.princeton.edu/~mprior/PriorJOP.Visual.pdf>)

Week 9 (3/3, 3/5): Questionnaire Design 2: Getting Accurate Answers to sensitive Questions

Groves et al., *Survey Methodology*, Chapter 4.

Tourangeau, Roger and Tom W. Smith. 1996. "Asking Sensitive Questions: The Impact of Data Collection Mode, Question Format, and Question Context." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60:275–304. **Jstor.org**.

Glynn, Adam N. 2013. "What Can We Learn with Statistical Truth Serum?: Design and Analysis of the List Experiment." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77 (1):159–172. (<http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/77/S1/159.short>)

Michael W. Traugott and John P. Katosh. 1979. "Response Validity in Surveys of Voting Behavior." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 43 (3): 359–377. **Jstor.org**.

Prior, Markus 2009. "Improving Media Effects Research through Better Measurement of News Exposure." *Journal of Politics* 71 (3): 893-908. (<https://www.princeton.edu/~mprior/Prior.JOP2009.pdf>)

Spring Break Week: March 9-13

Week 10 (3/17, 3/19): Survey Mode

Groves et al., *Survey Methodology*, Chapter 5.

Howard Schuman and Stanley Presser. 1979. The Open and Closed Question. *American Sociological Review* 44 (5): 692–712. **Jstor.org**.

Kreuter, Frauke Stanley Presser, and Roger Tourangeau. 2009. “Social Desirability Bias in CATI, IVR, and Web Surveys: The Effects of Mode and Question Sensitivity.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72 (5): 847–865. **Jstor.org**.

Smyth, Jolene D. Don A. Dillman, Leah Melani Christian, and Michael J. Stern. 2006. “Comparing Check-All and Forced-Choice Question Formats in Web Surveys.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 (1): 66–77. **Jstor.org**.

Villar, Ana, Mario Callegaro, and Yongwei Yang. 2013. “Where Am I? A Meta-analysis of Experiments on the Effects of Progress Indicators for Web Surveys.” *Social Science Computer Review* 31(6):744–762. (<http://ssc.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/07/26/0894439313497468>)

Week 11 (3/24, 3/26): Questionnaire Design 3: Planning the Interview

Tourangeau, Roger and Kenneth A. Rasinski. 1988. “Cognitive Processes Underlying Context Effects in Attitude Measurement.” *Psychological Bulletin* 103 (3): 299–314. (<http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/1989-14082-001>)

“Question Order and Response Order,” Chapter 2 in Howard Schuman and Stan Presser. 1981. *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys: Experiments on Question Form, Wording, and Context*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. **Reserve**.

Bartels, Larry M. 2002. “Question Order and Declining Faith in Elections.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66 (1) 67-79. **Jstor.org**.

Galesic, Mirta and Michael Bosnjak. 2009. “Effects of Questionnaire Length on Participation and Indicators of Response Quality in a Web Survey.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (2): 349–360. (<http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/73/2/349.short>)

Week 12 (3/31, No class 4/2 for Easter Break): Survey Evaluation and Pilot Testing

Groves et al., *Survey Methodology*, Chapter 8.

Presser, Stanley, Mick P. Couper, Judith T. Lessler, Elizabeth Martin, Jean Martin, Jennifer M. Rothgeb, and Eleanor Singer. 2004. “Methods for Testing and Evaluating Survey Questions.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68 (1): 109–130. **Jstor.org**.

Stanley Presser and Johnny Blair. 1994. “Survey Pretesting: Do Different Methods Produce Different Results?” *Sociological Methodology* 24:73–104. (<http://www.odum.unc.edu/content/pdf/S1%20Survey%20Pretesting.pdf>)

Week 13 (3/7, 3/9): Effects of Interviewers

Groves et al., *Survey Methodology*, Chapter 9.

Krosnick, Jon A. 1991. "Response Strategies for Coping with the Cognitive Demands of Attitude Measures in Surveys." *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 5(3):213–236.
(<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/acp.2350050305/abstract>)

Reder, Lynne M. and Frank E. Ritter. 1992. "What Determines Initial Feeling of Knowing? Familiarity with Question Terms, Not with the Answer." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 18 (3): 435–451. (<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/xlm/18/3/435/>)

Bishop, George F. Alfred Tuchfarber, and R.W. Oldendick. 1986. "Opinions on fictitious issues: The pressure to answer survey questions." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50 (2): 240–250. **Jstor.org.**

Davis, Darren W. 1997. "The Direction of Race of Interviewer Effects Among African-Americans: Donning the Black Mask." *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (1): 309–322. **Jstor.org.**

Jensen, Carsten and Jens Peter Frølund Thomsen. 2014. "Self-Reported Cheating in Web Surveys on Political Knowledge." *Quality & Quantity* 48 (6): 3343–3354.
(<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11135-013-9960-z>)

Week 14 (3/14, No class 4/16): Recruiting and Nonresponse

Class is canceled on Thursday, April 16. I will be at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago.

Groves, Robert M. 2006. "Nonresponse Rates and Nonresponse Bias in Household Surveys." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 (5): 646–675. **Jstor.org.**

Scott Keeter, Courtney Kennedy, Michael Dimock, Jonathan Best, and Peyton Craighill. 2006. "Gauging the Impact of Growing Nonresponse on Estimates from a National RDD Telephone Survey." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70 (5): 759–779. **Jstor.org.**

Dykema, Jennifer, John Stevenson, Lisa Klein, Yujin Kim, and Brendan Day. 2013. "Effects of Emailed versus Mailed Invitations and Incentives on Response Rates, Data Quality, and Costs in a Web Survey of University Faculty." *Social Science Computer Review* 31(3):359–370.
(<http://ssc.sagepub.com/content/31/3/359.short>)

Dutwin, David and other authors. 2014. "Current Knowledge and Considerations Regarding Survey Refusals." Technical Report, American Association for Public Opinion Research.
(http://www.aapor.org/AAPORKentico/AAPOR_Main/media/MainSiteFiles/RefusalTF_FINAL090814.pdf)

The American Association for Public Opinion Research. 2011. "Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys." Technical Report 7th Edition, American Association for Public Opinion Research.
(<http://www.aapor.org/AAPORKentico/Communications/AAPOR-Journals/Standard-Definitions.aspx>)

Week 15 (4/21, 4/23): Processing Results: Weights, Reponses Rates, and Coding

Groves et al., *Survey Methodology*, Chapters 6 and 10.

“Mechanisms for Nonresponse” and “Weighting Methods for Nonresponse.” Sections 8.4-8.9 in Lohr, Sharon L. 2010. *Sampling: Design and Analysis*, 2nd edition, Centage. **Reserve.**

DeBell. Matthew. 2013. “Harder Than It looks: Coding Political Knowledge on the ANES.” *Political Analysis* 21 (4): 393–406. (<http://pan.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/07/17/pan.mpt010>)

Course Project Due: Monday, May 4, 5pm