

**17.951**  
**Survey Research: Design and Analysis of Public Opinion Polls**

Fall 2004  
Wednesday 1:00-3:00  
Room E51-061

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Public opinion polls are both praised and maligned in the American political system. But regardless of one's view on the merit of polls, surveys have become a critical part of American politics. This course is designed to help students interested in polls learn the basic skills required to design, use, and interpret opinion surveys.

This course is both a reading course on survey analysis and a practicum on collecting and analyzing survey data. While this is not a course on quantitative methods, I expect you to be familiar with and comfortable with quantitative analysis. The formal curriculum for the course will cover four major areas. (1) Survey design and implementation, including survey sampling and questionnaire construction; (2) The nature of the survey response, including the psychology of political attitude expressions, issues of question wording and context, interviewer effects, and social desirability pressures; (3) The analysis of an existing poll designed to measure attitudes on environmental issues; and (4) Time permitting, the design of a new survey to measure environmental attitudes.

### **Grading**

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Class participation: 35%

Class assignments: 20%

Environmental survey research project: 20%

Final Paper: 25%

Please note that course participation is a critical part of your grade for this course. I expect that you will come to class prepared to discuss the week's readings.

### **Required Reading**

I have not ordered books or prepared a coursepack. The readings will be made available by the instructor.

### **Course Outline**

#### **I: Basic Survey Design and Implementation**

##### **1. Introduction and Course Overview (September 8)**

**2. Measuring Public Opinion (September 15)**

Lippman, Walter. [1922] 1997. *Public Opinion*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks. Chapter 1.  
Warren, Kenneth F. 2001. *In Defense of Public Opinion Polling*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.  
Chapter 2.

**3. Drawing a Sample (September 22)**

Kalton, Graham. 1983. *Introduction to Survey Sampling*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications. Entire

**4. The Survey Interview and the Nature of the Survey Response (September 29)**

*Note: Exercise 1 Due (Sampling and Response Rate)*

Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36:579-616 (J)

Tourangeau, Roger, Lance J. Rips, and Kenneth Rasinski. 2000. *The Psychology of Survey Response*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.

Converse, Jean M. and Stanley Presser. 1986. *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications. Entire.

Berinsky, Adam. 2004. *Silent Voices*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Introduction, Chapter 1.

**II: Issues of Survey Research**

**5. Question Wording and Ordering Effects (October 6)**

Schuman, Howard and Stanley Presser. 1981. *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys*, Chapters. 2-4.

Tourangeau, Roger, Lance J. Rips, and Kenneth Rasinski. 2000. *The Psychology of Survey Response*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 7.

**6. Measurement Error: Reliability, Validity and Scaling (October 13)**

*Note: Exercise 2 Due (Survey Design)*

Carmines, Edward and Richard Zeller. 1979. *Reliability and Validity Assessment*, pp. 9-51.

King, Gary; Christopher J.L. Murray; Joshua A. Salomon; and Ajay Tandon. 2004. "Enhancing the Validity and Cross-cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research," *American Political Science Review* 98:191-207.

**7. The Modern Survey Interview: New Developments and New Problems (October 20)**

*Note: Exercise 3 Due (Scaling of NES Data)*

Johnston Richard and Henry E. Brady. 2002. "The Rolling Cross-Section Design." *Electoral Studies* 21(2): 283-295.

Couper, Mick P. 2000. "Web Surveys: A Review of Issues and Approaches." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64:464-494

Witte, James and Philip E. N. Howard.. 2002. "The Future of Polling: Relational Inference and the Development of Internet Survey Instruments." In Jeff Maza et al (ed). *Navigating Public*

*Opinion: Polls, Policy and the Future of American Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### III: Election Polls

#### 8. Pre-Election Polls: Patterns and Pratfalls (October 27)

Mitofsky Warren J. "Was 1996 a Worse Year for Polls than 1948?" *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1998, 62:230-249.

Warren, Kenneth F. 2001. *In Defense of Public Opinion Polling*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Chapter 10.

McDermott, Monika L. and Kathleen A. Frankovic. 2003. "Horserace Polling and Survey Methods Effects: An Analysis of the 2000 Campaign" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 67:244-264.

#### 9. Election Polls: 2004 in Review (November 3)

*Note: Exercise 4 Due (Compile Election Polls)*

Plissner, Martin. 2003. "An \* for 2002: Another bad election night for VNS." *Public Perspective*. Available at [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/pubper/pdf/pp14\\_1c.pdf](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/pubper/pdf/pp14_1c.pdf)

### IV: Advanced Issues

#### 10. Issues of Non-Response (November 10)

Berinsky, Adam. 2004. *Silent Voices*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 2-4, Conclusion.

Brehm, John. 1993. *The Phantom Respondents: Opinion Surveys and Political Representation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Chapters 2-3.

Keeter S., Miller C., Kohut A., Groves R.M., and Presser S. "Consequences of Reducing Nonresponse in a National Telephone Survey." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 2000, 64:125-148.

Langer, Gary. 2003. "About Response Rates: Some Unresolved Questions." *Public Perspective*. Available at [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/pubper/pdf/pp14\\_3c.pdf](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/pubper/pdf/pp14_3c.pdf)

#### 11. Survey Research in the Comparative Context (November 17)

Inglehart, Ronald and Marita Carballo. 1997. "Does Latin America Exist? (And Is There a Confucian Culture?): A Global Analysis of Cross-Cultural Differences." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 30: 34-47. (J)

Bischoping, Katherine and Howard Schuman. 1992. "Pens and Polls in Nicaragua: An Analysis of the 1990 Preelection Surveys." *American Journal of Political Science*, 36: 331-350. (J)

### IV: Designing an Opinion Poll

#### 12. Environmental Poll: Analysis of Existing Data (November 24)

**13. Environmental Poll: Draft Questionnaires (December 1)**

**14. Environmental Poll: Pilot and Critique Data (December 8)**