
PSC 203: Survey Research Methods

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Course Info:
Semester TBD
Time TBD
Location TBD

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the understanding of politics through data analysis, with particular emphasis on surveys of the mass public. We will study sample selection, survey design and execution, interpretation of survey results, correction of survey bias, and measurement of survey accuracy.

Objectives

- To acquaint students with the fundamentals of applied statistics
- To familiarize students with the presentation of public opinion data in American politics
- To develop students' critical thinking and analytical skills through class discussion and written assignments

Readings

Agresti, Alan, and Barbara Finlay. 1997. *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*.

Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau. 2005. *Survey Methodology*.

Pollock, Phillip H., III. 2005. *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*.

Weisberg, Herbert F., Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen. 1989. *An Introduction to Survey Research and Data Analysis*.

Grading Policies

Grades will be based on the exam, worth 25%, the data analysis assignments, worth 25%, the final project, worth 25%, and class participation, worth 25%.

The exam will be given about two-thirds of the way through the class, which will cover basic data analysis and survey analysis.

Participation in class discussion is expected, along with regular class attendance. In addition, you should present at least once during the semester. Presentations may be based on a reading I have assigned or one of the data analysis projects. If you like, you may present more than once to build up extra class participation credit.

Data analysis assignments will be assigned 6-7 times throughout the semester, which will require the use of SPSS. We will be using Excel and SPSS in this class. You may use SPSS in the computer lab, or purchase a student copy for about \$40.

The final project will require you to design, implement, and analyze a survey, using the different techniques we will cover in class. I will provide the exact details later in the course. The final project will be due at the end of the semester, at a date announced in class. The final two classes of the semester will involve short student presentations of the final projects.

Readings for the course can be found on the course web page. I reserve the right to update the readings on the syllabus, but I will indicate on the course website which readings will be assigned at least one week in advance. To supplement the readings, I will post lecture notes for some of the topics we cover.

Academic honesty is expected. Turn in material that you have completed yourself. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Both cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses that will be reported for disciplinary action. Please refer to the University Handbook and/or speak with the instructor if you have any questions in this area.

Course Outline

Topic 1: Overview

- Weisberg, Herbert F., Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen (1989). An Introduction to Survey Research and Data Analysis. Chapter 1.
- Kolata, Gina (2006). Low-Fat Diet Does Not Cut Health Risks, Study Finds.

Topic 2: Sampling

- Weisberg, Herbert F., Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen (1989). *An Introduction to Survey Research and Data Analysis*. Chapter 3.
- Squire, Peverill (1988). Why the Literary Digest Poll Failed. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52:125-133.
- Mystery Pollster FAQ: Are Polls Missing People with Mobile Phones.

Topic 3: Descriptive Statistics

- Agresti, Alan, and Barbara Finlay (1997). *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. Chapter 2, Section 1, and Chapter 3.

Topic 4: Sampling Error

- Agresti, Alan, and Barbara Finlay (1997). *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.
- Mystery Pollster FAQ What Does the Margin of Error Mean?

Topic 5: Nonresponse

- Mystery Pollster Should We Weight by Party ID?
- Newport, Frank (2006). Gallup Position on Weighting an Entire Sample to Reflect a Target Distribution of Party Identification.
- Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau (2004). *Survey Methodology*. Chapter 6.
- Berinsky, Adam J. (2006). American Public Opinion in the 1930s and 1940s: The Analysis of Quota Controlled Sample Survey Data. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70:499-529.
- Keeter, Scott, Carolyn Miller, Andrew Kohut, Robert M. Groves, and Stanley Presser (2000). Consequences of Reducing Nonresponse in a National Telephone Survey. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 2:125-148.
- Tutorial on Weighting.

Topic 6: Likely Voters

- Mystery Pollster Likely Voters FAQ.
- Erikson, Robert S., Costas Panagopoulos, and Christopher Wlezien (2004). Likely (and Unlikely) Voters and the Assessment of Campaign Dynamics. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68:588-601.

Topic 7: Questionnaire Design

- Fowler, Floyd J., Jr. (1995). *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation*. Sage.
- Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau (2004). *Survey Methodology*. Chapter 7.
- Online Gambling Myths and Facts.
- Mystery Pollster Analysis of Online Gambling Myths and Facts.
- Another Gambling Poll.

Topic 8: Adjusting Polls

- Political Arithmetik Posts on House Effects.

Topic 9: Exit Polls

- Mystery Polls Exit Polls FAQ.
- Nate (2008). Ten Reasons Why You Should Ignore Exit Polls.
- Freeman, Steven (2004). The Unexplained Exit Poll Discrepancy. Working Paper.
- Evaluation of Edison/Mitofsky Election System 2004.
- Leaked Exit Polls 1.
- Leaked Exit Polls 2.
- Leaked Exit Polls 3.
- Leaked Exit Polls 4.
- Leaked Exit Polls 5.
- Leaked Exit Polls 6.
- Leaked Exit Polls 7.

Topic 10: Internet Surveys

- Malhotra, Neil, and Jon A. Krosnick (2007). The Effect of Survey Mode and Sampling on Inferences about Political Attitudes and Behavior: Comparing the 2000 and 2004 ANES to Internet Surveys with Nonprobability Samples. *Political Analysis* 15:286-323.
- Polimetrix Methodology.
- Harris Interactive Methodology.

Topic 11: The Accuracy of Pre-election Polls

- Mystery Pollster Do Undecided Voters Break for the Challenger
- Mystery Pollster Why Do Polls Show Contradictory Results
- The Persistent Myth of the Bradley Effect.
- Hopkins, Daniel (2009) No More Wilder Effect, Never a Whitman Effect: When and Why Polls Mislead about Black and Female Candidates.