Fundamentals of Survey Methodology
Sociology 752/ Spring, 2015
Mondays 1:00 p.m. - 3:40 p.m.
7th floor Bolton Hall Classroom

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Office: Room Bolton 760
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Office hours: Mondays, 10-12, via email, and by appointment
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Overview of the Course

The field of survey methodology draws on theories and practices developed in several academic disciplines — mathematics, statistics, psychology, sociology, computer science, and economics. To become an accomplished professional in the survey research field requires a mastery of research literatures in these various fields as well as experience designing, conducting, and analyzing surveys. Survey methodology is a field in which the professional is constantly assessing alternatives—knowledge of the theoretical and empirical literature across a broad range of scholarly fields is vital to becoming a good methodologist.

This course introduces the student to a set of principles of survey design that are the basis of standard practices in the field. The course uses the concept of total survey error as a framework to discuss coverage properties of sampling frames, alternative sample designs and their impacts on standard errors of survey statistics, alternative modes of data collection, field administration operations, the role of the survey interviewer, impacts of non-response on survey statistics, the effect of question structure, wording and context on respondent behavior, models of measurement error, post-survey processing, and estimation in surveys. We will examine both the theoretical and empirical literature related to the quality of survey data as well as applied literature—the “how to” of survey research methods. Some course assignments, particularly those about sampling, require comfort with elementary statistical concepts and formulas.

The course is intended as an introduction to the field, taught at a graduate level. Lectures and course readings assume that students understand basic statistical concepts (at the level of an undergraduate course) and have exposure to elements of social science perspectives on human behavior. For those lacking such a background, supplementary readings are recommended.

It is expected that students will spend about 10 -12 hours per week completing tasks related to this course. As a general guide, students should expect to spend about 6-8 hours reading assigned course materials, about 1-2 hours working on short assignments and about 1-2 hours working on the semester long proposal project or preparing for exams.
Course Assignments, Requirements, and Grading

The course has five main components:

(1) **Lectures.** The class will be a seminar-style class, including a mix of formal presentation, student-generated discussion questions, and open discussion of the material. In addition, there will be student-lead discussion of one or more of the key readings. Class participation is important to the success of the class and is worth 5% of the course grade. Note that class contributions are evaluated on the basis of quality, not quantity.

(2) **Readings.** These are companions to the lectures that give the student a fuller discussion of key concepts and research findings. **Readings should be completed prior to the lecture covering the material.**

(3) **Exercises.** Each topic area of the course will have one or more short exercises that will further integration of the knowledge presented in lectures and reading. The exercises are graded using the following scale: 0=incomplete, poorly presented, showing little effort; 1=complete, substantially correct, well documented; 2=exceptional (rarely given). Individual problems will not be marked but some problems will be discussed in class. If your grade is borderline, the quality and timeliness of your exercises will contribute to your grade. **You must complete all exercises to receive a grade for the class.** You may collaborate on exercises.

(4) **Short Papers:** Complete three short papers. The short papers present realistic research situations that require research decisions, and give you practice applying the approaches and research presented in class and the readings. The short papers require you to apply readings discussed in the text and listed in the course syllabus. You may need to supplement the text and assigned readings with additional readings to improve the final product. You must work independently on the papers. The maximum length of each assignment is four (4) pages of text. Each short paper contributes 15% to the final course grade, for a total of 45% of the course grade.

(5) **Project proposal** due May 8, 2015. The course project will require you to develop an online questionnaire, pretest that instrument, and draft a sample and study design protocol. Details concerning the project will be handed out by mid-February to allow you sufficient time to research the topic and complete all phases of the project. Student’s choice as to the topic of the questionnaire and project. The course project is worth 50% of the final grade.
Some points to remember concerning this class:

- **General Instructions for Assignments:** All course assignments and exercises are to be written in a professional style—edited, proofed, and type. Minimum font size is 10. All exercises and assignments must be turned in on paper—I do not accept electronic attachments.

- **Grading.** Exercises, short papers, and the final project will be evaluated based on both the substance of the work (e.g., correct use of relevant concepts, creativity with respect to problem solving, comprehensiveness as well as the feasibility of the solution) and the style of the presentation (e.g., organization, clarity, grammar).

- **Plagiarism.** In recent years, I have seen an uptick in violations of the University Code of Academic Conduct related to plagiarism. Be extremely mindful of taking account of citations and never copy material verbatim without the appropriate quotation marks (or offset) and citation. Err on the side of inclusive rather than place yourself in jeopardy. Here, from the UWM Graduate School is the definition of plagiarism:

  Plagiarism: As a general working definition, the Graduate School considers plagiarism to include both the theft or misappropriation of intellectual property and the substantial unattributed textual copying of another's work. It does not include authorship or credit disputes. [http://www.graduateschool.uwm.edu/research/data-policy/policies/plagiarism/](http://www.graduateschool.uwm.edu/research/data-policy/policies/plagiarism/)

  And, as noted by the UWM libraries web site:

  Plagiarism is presenting another person's words or ideas as your own. In academic writing, any time you use a work's information or ideas, credit must be given to your source. The only exception to this rule is that commonly known facts do not require attribution. Plagiarism includes not only the presentation of other's original ideas as your own, but the act of weakly paraphrasing another's writing style and passing it off as your own prose. **Plagiarism is a serious instance of misconduct. Several professional careers have been ruined by the discovery of an act of plagiarism.** As a general rule and whenever in doubt, it is always better to include a citation rather than risk the appearance of plagiarism. Please see the UWM Libraries guide Avoiding Plagiarism for more information. [http://guides.library.uwm.edu/content.php?pid=235714&sid=1949820#6509800](http://guides.library.uwm.edu/content.php?pid=235714&sid=1949820#6509800)

Sanctions will be imposed for anyone found to plagiarize material, in accordance with the University’s Policies and Procedures for Academic Misconduct. See [http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm)
Required Books


Readings not in the textbooks are available on the D2L website. I use the following abbreviations:

ASR American Sociological Review  JASA Journal of the American
JMR Journal of Marketing Research  POQ Public Opinion Quarterly
SMR Sociological Methods and Research  SM Sociological Methodology

Recommended Books

Some other recent basic books you may find useful, but that I did not assign or order. Buy only if you think will be useful for your work:


Classic and Contemporary General Sources


Schwarz, Norbert, and Seymour Sudman, eds. 1992. Context Effects in Social and


Week 1 (January 26): Introduction and Errors in Surveys

SM, Chapter 1, "An Introduction to Survey Methodology"

SM, Chapter 2, Inference and Error in Surveys


Weeks 2 and 3 (February 2, February 9): Basic Sampling Concepts


Aday, L and Cornelius, L (2006) "Deciding How Many Will Be In the Sample." Chapter 7 in Designing and Conducting Health Surveys. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Weeks 4 and 5 (February 16 and February 23): Modes and Methods of Data Collection

SM, Chapter 5, Methods of Data Collection


Weeks 6 and 7 (March 2 and March 9): Measurement, Instruments, and Response Issues

SM, Chapter 7, Questions and Answers in Surveys


**Spring Break: March 16**

**Week 8 (March 23): Evaluating and Testing Survey Questions**

SM, Chapter 8, Evaluating Survey Questions


**Week 9 (March 30): Workshop/Lab on Qualtrics**
Weeks 10 and 11 (April 6 and April 13): Nonresponse/Nonparticipation

SM, Chapter 6, Nonresponse in Sample Surveys


AAPOR Standard Definitions – revised 2011 http://www.aapor.org/For_Researchers/4362.htm


**Week 12 (April 20): Interviewers and Interviewing**

SM, Chapter 9, Survey Interviewing


**Week 13 (April 27): Post-Survey Processing, Estimation, and Documentation**

SM, Chapter 10, Postcollection Processing of Survey Data


**Week 14 (May 4): Confidentiality, Privacy, and Standards of Practice/ Course Summary**

SM, Chapter 11, Principles and Practices Related to Scientific Integrity


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<td>Final Project Due (Handed in; Bolton Room 760)</td>
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The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that web page is: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf

**Students with Disabilities.** Verification of disability, class standards, the policy on the use of alternate material and test accommodations can be found at the following: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/DSAD/SAC/SACltr.pdf)

**Religious Observances.** Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found at the following: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S1.5.htm)

**Students called to active Military Duty.** Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty are found at the following: [http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm)

**Incompletes.** You may be given an incomplete if you have carried a course successfully until near the end of the semester but, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond your control, have been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of course work. An incomplete is not given unless you prove to the instructor that you were prevented from completing the course for just cause as indicated above. The conditions for awarding an incomplete to graduate and undergraduate students can be found at the following: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S31.pdf)

**Discriminatory Conduct** (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policies regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S47.pdf)

**Academic Misconduct.** Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Policies for addressing students cheating on exams or plagiarism can be found at the following: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/OSL/DOS/conduct.html)

**Complaint Procedures.** Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policies may be found at: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S49.7.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S49.7.htm)

**Grade Appeal Procedures.** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School. Procedures for student grade appeal can be found at: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S28.htm)

**Final Examination Policy.** Policies regarding final examinations can be found at the following: [http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S22.htm](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/acad%2Badmin_policies/S22.htm)

**Book Royalties.** In accord with Department of Sociology policy, the royalties from the sale of faculty-authored books to students in their classes are donated to a UWM Foundation/Sociology Account to support future awards and activities for UWM students in Sociology.