

SOCIOLOGY 7100
Advanced Survey Research Techniques
Spring 2017

Professor:	Courtney Flint	Class Time:	Wednesdays 3:30 – 6:00 pm
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Office Hours:	Tuesdays/Thursdays 1:30 to 3:00 pm or by appointment		

Course Description and Objectives

This course focuses on the best practices for designing and conducting social science surveys. We will consider conceptual and epistemological issues related to survey research along with procedures including operationalization and measurement, index and scale construction, questionnaire design, sampling strategies and procedures, and various delivery options and procedures for administering surveys. We will discuss limitations and sources of bias and error that can undermine the validity and reliability of survey-based data. Students will review the use of survey methods in their own fields of study. Upon completion of the course, students will be prepared to evaluate survey research conducted by others and pursue their own survey-based research projects.

Course Organization and Expectations

This course is a practice-oriented class that emphasizes the application of assigned reading materials and in-class discussions to realistic research contexts and examples. This will be accomplished through a variety of “hands on” activities and assignments, including review and discussion of illustrative research studies and survey instruments, in-class exercises, and individual and group assignments.

To make this format work, it is critical that students be prepared to actively participate in class by asking questions, sharing observations and comments, providing critical review of materials, etc. The class is designed around an exchange of ideas and observations. Consequently, you must be willing to fully prepare for each class meeting by carefully reading all assigned material and completing any required out-of-class assignments before the scheduled class meeting. Regular attendance is essential if you expect to benefit from the course or to earn a satisfactory grade.

Course Policies

Incompletes: I do not give incomplete grades for students who fail to complete assignments or who wish to avoid an unsatisfactory course grade. University policy states that incomplete grades are to be assigned only in those instances when "a student may be unable to complete all of the work in a course due to extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance." Moreover, the implied contract between student and instructor calls for the instructor to organize a course that can be completed during the semester it is scheduled, and for the student to complete course work during that same period of time. The bottom line, therefore, is that you should plan to get everything done by the scheduled due dates. If you have questions about readings, lectures, or other matters that cannot be dealt with in the context of class discussions, please arrange to see me during office hours. If you cannot see me during the scheduled office hours, I will be happy to make an appointment at some other mutually convenient time.

Academic Dishonesty: Acts of academic dishonesty (i.e. cheating, falsification, plagiarism) will not be tolerated in this class. I will follow University guidelines regarding my academic dishonesty policy (details can be found in Article V and Article VI of the *Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University*). Be aware that all written assignments must reflect *your own original work* and cannot duplicate

material from papers you have written for other courses you have taken (or are taking) for credit. If you directly quote or use strong paraphrasing from the work of another author, you must use correct citations to attribute the source of the material. Any evidence of plagiarism, copying any part of another student's work, or of "recycling" papers that have been submitted for another class (at USU or elsewhere) will result in assignment of an "F" for this course; I will also provide a full report to the Graduate School for further University disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities: The SSWA Department is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and to cooperation with the USU Disability Resource Center. If you have a documented disability and need reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, please visit with the instructor immediately and we can arrange the necessary accommodation. The disability must be documented by the Disability Resource Center. Course materials may be requested in alternative formats.

Course Assessment Components

1. Class participation and contributions to discussions

Each student is expected to complete all readings and be prepared to respond to questions and actively participate in class discussions. Less than full preparation and participation will lower final grades.

2. Assignments – Two-thirds of consideration toward final grade

Initial Preparatory Work:

- Initial reference list of survey-based research articles (8-10) – Due Jan 18
- Personal survey research statement – Due Jan 18

Assignments:

- Survey development draft and participation in peer review process – Due Jan 25
- Index/scale presentation – Due Feb 1
- Survey questionnaire critique – Due Feb 8
- Review of sampling techniques from literature – Due Feb 22
- Survey sampling assignment (group work is acceptable) – Due March 1
- Review of survey administration modes from literature – Due March 22
- Review of treatment of bias and error from literature – Due April 5
- IRB CITI certification/training – Due April 12
- Presentation of survey questionnaire and implementation plan – April 19 or 26

3. Final – One-third of consideration toward final grade – Due May 3 by 5pm

Part A: Survey questionnaire and implementation plan, including objectives, operationalization, administration and implementation details, sampling strategy, and analysis plans

Part B: Review of survey-based research in your field of study (5-8 pages based on 16-20 articles)

Grades

All assignments will be graded as ✓+, ✓, ✓- (roughly equivalent to A, B, C). **There will be no late assignments accepted** (thus, late or missing assignments will be graded as 0 or F). In the case of documented emergencies, contact me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Rubric: ✓+ = Fine work or exceeds expectations; ✓ = Acceptable work, possibly a bit incomplete or lacking effort; ✓- = Unacceptable work, incomplete and clearly lacking effort

Readings

The only required text for this class is:

- Dillman, D.A., J.D. Smyth, L.M. Christian. 2014. *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. 4th Edition. Hoboken, NY: Wiley.

All other course readings are available online via USU Library access or will be provided via Canvas. Articles for student literature reviews will need to be identified and obtained independently.

Draft Course Schedule

Note: This schedule may change at the professor's discretion AND additional readings are may be assigned. A new special methods issue of *JRSS* is anticipated early in the semester and readings will be assigned from this and possibly other sources as we go through the semester.

January 11: **NO CLASS**

Assignments Due January 18th:

- Survey Literature Assembly. Assemble an initial set of research articles that employ survey research methods from your field of study (8-10 articles). Please bring a list of these initial references.
- Personal Survey Research Statement. Prepare a 1 page statement on: a) your personal interest in survey research including what you hope to get out of this class; and b) your initial observations of the role of survey research in your primary field of study.
- Optional Research Methods Reading: If you have little or distant background in general research methods, consider a refresher based on the following readings available on Canvas:
 - Neuman Ch 2 & 4; Singleton & Straits Ch 1 & 4

January 18: **Trends and Issues in Survey Research**

Readings:

- Dillman et al. Chapters 1 and 2
- Groves 2011 "Three Eras of Survey Research"

Assignment: (see above)

January 25: **Writing Questions**

Readings:

- Dillman et al. Chapters 4 and 5
- Fowler 2009 Chapter 6

Assignment:

- Survey Development Draft. Describe a research question related to your own research interests that could be addressed using survey research including the relevant concepts you would measure. Operationalize these concepts into a few survey questions using the guidance provided in the readings. Prepare to present these ideas to another student in a peer review process.

February 1: Measurement: Index & Scale Construction

Readings:

- Willits et al. 2017 “Another Look at Likert Scales” (details forthcoming)
- Spector 1992. *Summated Rating Scale Construction: An Introduction*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Assignment:

- Index/Scale Presentations. Present to class (5 minutes, PowerPoint or handout) on a study that uses a survey with an index or scale to measure a concept. Include a brief description of the survey, its purpose, and the article you reviewed (what was the research question and how did the index/scale fit into the study). Describe the concept of interest, why an index/scale is appropriate, and the index/scale construction. Explain tests for reliability and any limitations.

February 8: Survey Formatting & Construction

Readings:

- Dillman et al. Chapters 6 and 7

February 15: Survey Critique Discussion

Assignment:

- Survey critique (details forthcoming)

February 22: Survey Sampling

Readings:

- Dillman et al. Chapter 3
- Kalton 1983 *Introduction to Survey Sampling*
- Brick 2011 “The Future of Survey Sampling”

Assignment:

- Write 2 page summary of sampling techniques observed in your literature review

March 1: Survey Sampling Assignment Due by 5pm (details available on Canvas)

Spring Break March 6-10

March 15: Survey Implementation I. Self-Completion: Mail & Drop-off/Pick-up Surveys

Readings:

- Dillman et al. Chapter 10
- Jackson-Smith et al. 2017
- Trentelman et al. 2017

March 22: Survey Implementation II. Telephone and Face-to-Face or Intercept Surveys

Readings:

- Dillman et al. Chapter 8
- Flint et al. 2017

March 29: Survey Implementation III. Internet-Based & Mixed Mode Surveys

Readings:

- Dillman et al. Chapters 9 & 11

Assignment:

- Write 2 page summary of survey administration modes observed in your literature

April 5: Non-Response Problems

Readings:

- Groves et al. 2012 “Support for the survey sponsor and nonresponse bias”
- Mitchell 2010. “Are divorce studies trustworthy? The effects of survey nonresponse and response errors”

Assignment:

- Write 2 page summary of treatments of bias and error observed in your literature

April 12: IRB and Data Management & Processing Issues

Readings:

- Singleton and Straits Chapter 3
- Groves et al. 2009 “Postcollection processing of survey data”
- Hamilton 2009 “Data management” and “Summary statistics and tables”

Assignment:

- Human Subjects Research Training. Complete CITI training for human subjects research and email certificate to me before class <https://rgs.usu.edu/irb/training/> (This can take a couple of hours the first time. The refresher is faster.)

April 19: Presentations of Survey Questionnaire & Implementation Plan

April 26: Presentations of Survey Questionnaire & Implementation Plan

May 3: Final Due by 5:00pm

- Part A: Survey Questionnaire & Implementation Plan
- Part B: Literature Review of Survey-Based Research Articles