

Political Science 351
The Social Survey in Contemporary Society
Fall 2017

Professor: Leonie Huddy
Class Time: Tu Th 2:30 – 3:50
Class Location: Frey Hall, Room 309
Office Hours: Tu Th 12:00-1:30 or by appointment (632-7639), SBS S-727
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Course Outline: This is an interdisciplinary course on the theory and practice of surveys. The course covers the uses, design, and implementation of the public opinion survey, a technique used increasingly in modern society to canvas public opinion on topics as diverse as new consumer products, presidential candidates, and changing social mores. While increased use of the social survey makes it easier to talk with some credibility about what most people want, believe, value and so on, it can also lead to abuses, and the possible misrepresentation of public opinion. Obviously, the accuracy of survey findings is undermined by a poorly drawn sample, or ambiguously worded questions. One of the main objectives of this course is to improve understanding of the strengths and limitations of survey data by explaining how public opinion surveys are conducted, and by getting involved in conducting a survey.

Lectures and readings begin with a brief history of survey research. This is followed by readings and lectures on how survey research is conducted. Topics include: sampling theory, question wording and order effects, the interview setting, and the analysis and interpretation of survey findings.

As a complement to readings and lectures on how to conduct a survey, students will be involved in the design and implementation of a survey on a political topic. Students will be involved in designing, analyzing, and interpreting survey findings. To keep up with the progress of the survey it is important to attend class regularly.

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students requiring emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information:
<http://www.ehs.sunysb.edu/fire/disabilities.asp>

Assessment: There will be five pieces of course assessment: three short assignments worth 10% each, two short answer tests, worth 15% each, and a research paper (10-15 pages) worth 35% in which you describe class survey procedures and explain a subset of findings of interest to you. The remaining 5% of the grade will be based on class participation. Details on the final research paper will be provided during the semester.

Blackboard: Students are required to check Blackboard before each class for course information. The syllabus, class assignments, and copies of required articles and book chapters will be posted on the site. Blackboard can be accessed at the following site: <http://blackboard.sunysb.edu> Class_slides will be posted on blackboard.

Readings: There are three required texts that are available for purchase or rent at various on-line stores. Please let me know if you are having difficulty finding the texts and I can provide scanned copies of the initial chapters. Readings for each topic covered in the course include a selection of chapters from these three books. There are additional readings (marked with an asterisk) that will be posted on Blackboard. The following texts are required class readings:



Erikson, Robert and Tedin, Kent. 2010. *American Public Opinion*. New York, N.Y.: Pearson Education. 9th edition. ISBN-13: 978-0133862676, ISBN-10: 0133862674



Weisberg, H. F., Krosnick, J. A., & Bowen, B. D. 1996. *An introduction to survey research and data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN-13: 978-0803974029, ISBN-10: 0803974027



Baglione, Lisa A. 2016. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: CQ Press. 3rd edition. ISBN-13: 978-1483376165, ISBN-10: 1483376168

In addition, students will be required to download SPSS from the SBU softweb site. The program will be used to manage and analyze the survey data.

- 8/29** **I. Course Overview: Organization and Introduction.** An overview of the uses of surveys and polls in the political process and examples of common kinds of survey questions. Discussion of course requirements. Possible topics for class survey. (Wolfgang? Johanna? distribute syllabus)
- 8/31** **Class Canceled**
- 9/5** **No Classes**
- 9/7-12** **II. American Public Opinion and Polling (1): The Basics.**
A brief history of public opinion polling. Some common aspects of public opinion, its limits and uses. Some of the basics concerning polling and methods. Trends over time in American public opinion and some of the psychology behind public opinion.

Erikson & Tedin. Chapter 1, Public Opinion in Democratic Societies; Chapter 4, Macrolevel Opinion; Chapter 10, The Public and its Elected Leaders.
- 9/14-19** **III. American Public Opinion and Polling (2): The Dynamics of Public Opinion and Trends in Policy Views.** The psychology of public opinion; knowledge, ideology, and partisanship as key factors that structure American public opinion.

Erikson & Tedin. 2007. Chapter 3, Microlevel Opinion; Chapter 6, Public Opinion and Democratic Stability; Chapter 7, Group Differences in Political Opinions.

- 9/19** **First Assignment Due: Discussion of Public Opinion on a Key Policy Issue**
- 9/21-28** **IV. Partisan Polarization: Class Survey Topic.** Evidence on the existence of partisan polarization. Discussion of class survey topic. An introduction to online polling resources.
- *Abramowitz, Alan I. *The Polarized Public*. Pearson, 2012. Chapter 1, The Polarized Public.
- *Iyengar, Shanto, and Sean J. Westwood. "Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59, no. 3 (July 1, 2015): 690–707. doi:10.1111/ajps.12152.
- *Huddy, Leonie, Mason, Lilly, and Aaroe, Lene. 2015. "Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity." *American Political Science Review*. 109 (1): 1-17.
- 10/3** **First short-answer test**
- 10/5-17** **V. Writing a Questionnaire Parts 1 & 2:.** The process of answering a survey question, survey response effects, question order effects. The use of cognitive interviews. A discussion of different types of questions, including the role of memory in answering biographical questions. More on the construction of survey questions: question format, open ended and close-ended questions, assessing attitudes, values and beliefs, democratic values and elections. Some discussion of the topics to be covered in the class survey. An introduction to Qualtrics, the program used to write online surveys.
- Weisberg, Chapter 4, 7
- *Dillman, Don A. 2009. *Internet, Mail and Mixed Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. 3rd ed. Chapter 4 "The Basics of Crafting Good Questions" (pp. 65-106).
- 10/17** **ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE: Questions on partisan polarization for the class SURVEY**
- 10/19-24** **VI. Web and Mail Surveys:** Sampling, design, administration. Commence the collection of class survey data.
- *Dillman, Don A. 2009. Chapter 6 "From Questions to a Questionnaire" (pp. 151-233),
- 10/26-31** **VII. Obtaining a Sample.** Different kinds of samples with a focus on telephone and web; problems with increasing reliance on cell phones; when to use a random sample; ways of collecting sample. Discussion of how to obtain a sample for the class survey.
- Weisberg et. al., Chapter 3.

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 2, The Scientific Assessment of Public Opinion.

- 11/2-7** **VIII. Problems of Non-Response.** Nature of Threat Posed by Individual Non-Response. The most common reasons for non-participation; the implications of this for sample integrity. Possible solutions, including the use of post-stratification weights. **Begin data collection.**
- * Floyd J. Fowler. 2002. Survey Research Methods (Applied Social Research Methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: sage. [Chapter 3, Nonresponse: Implementing a Sample Design.]
- *Keeter, Scott, Courtney Kennedy, Michael Dimock, Jonathon Best, Peyton Craighill. 2006. Gauging the Impact of Growing Nonresponse on Estimates from a national RDD Telephone Survey. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70(5), 759-779.
- 11/9** **Second short-answer test**
- 11/14-16** **X. The Logic of Research & Data Entry:** Hypothesis testing, refresher in basic statistics; how to write a research paper.
- Weisberg, Chapter 6, 8, 9, 10
- Baglione; Chapter 2 Getting Started: Finding a Research Question; Chapter 4 Making Sense of the Scholarly Answers to your research Question: Writing the Literature review; Chapter 5 Effectively Distilling Your Argument: The Thesis, Model and Hypotheses.
- 11/21** **THIRD ASSIGNMENT DUE: Hypotheses for final paper**
- 11/21-28** **XI. Data Entry, Cleaning, Analysis, Statistics and Report Writing (1)** Handling data, scale construction, hypothesis testing, basic overview of SPSS, basic statistics, discuss findings, report writing.
- Weisberg et. al. Chs. 11-13, 16
- Baglione; Chapter 7, Making your Plan and Protecting Yourself from Criticism of Your Research Design; Chapter 8, Evaluating the Argument: The Analysis and Assessment Section
- 11/23** **NO CLASS THANKSGIVING**

11/30-12/7 XII. Data Entry, Cleaning, Analysis, Statistics and Report writing (2).

Weisberg et. al. Chs. 14-15

Baglione, Chapter 9, Bringing the Paper Together in Three Essential Ways: The Conclusion, Introduction, and the Title

12/15 FINAL PAPER DUE