Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to survey research design and implementation. Although students will be introduced to the theoretical questions that need to be understood before one can conduct sound survey research, the chief objective will be to teach students how to carry out a survey research project from the beginning to the end. This will be a nuts and bolts course where students will be taught all the “tricks” of the trade in survey research. Students will be expected to execute their own survey research projects and uphold the rigorous standards of proper social science survey research, as promoted by the American Association of Public Opinion Research. When students complete this course they should feel quite comfortable with the world of polling.

Seminar Topics by Week

Week 1, Jan. 19: Introduction to survey research as an academic and professional field: polls; polling sites; types of polls; reading polls; their multiple uses in business and politics: a $5 billion dollar plus industry; polling accuracy: myth v. reality; examples of their worth: what can presidential exit polls tell us about electoral behavior?; why are citizen surveys so popular?; what information do such surveys provide to city planners? Applying your knowledge of survey research to your careers? Start thinking about your survey research topic.

Week 2, Jan. 26: Good and bad survey research. What makes surveys/polls good or bad ones?; polling accuracy revisited; looking at professional and ethical standards in survey research; reputable polls, interest group polls, push polls; media polls; kinds of surveys: phone polls, mail surveys, Internet surveys: the pros and cons of each.

Week 3, Feb. 2: Getting started. Creating your research questions and developing your survey research design to answer your research questions. Issues in questionnaire design. Developing an understanding that survey research is challenging because you must understand the whole process before you begin to avoid devastating consequences that may undermine the credibility of your results: an explanation of the critical links in the survey research chain.

Week 4, Feb. 9: Developing the questionnaire. Issues in questionnaire design (e.g., wording, placement bias, response sets, filter questions, length, ordering, question clusters)
Week 5, Feb. 16: Questionnaire design (continued). Resolving problems in the development of your questionnaire. Making sure that your questionnaire meets professional survey research standards and will answer your research questions. Getting the OK to start administering your questionnaire from your client.

Week 6, Feb. 23: Finalizing the questionnaire and drawing your representative sample. The importance of obtaining a representative sample. Interviewing the right number of people and the “right” people to insure representativeness. Calculating the error margin and confidence level and understanding error margins.

Week 7, March 1: Administering your survey. The importance of using trained interviewers: issues and problems in conducting interviews (e.g., interviewer biases). What research has revealed about bias stemming from various types of interview situations.

Week 8, March 8: Administering your survey (continued). Questions and answers: resolving your problems.

Week 9, March 15: Spring Break

Week 10, March 22: Collecting, coding, and entering your data. Resolving coding problems and adopting proven techniques to reduce entry errors.

Week 11, March 29: Processing your data. Using the right statistical tests and graphics to substantiate your research findings and highlight your main findings. Understanding and applying basic SPSS applications.

Week 12, April 5: Using basic inferential statistics to place your findings into perspective.

Week 13, April 12: Drafting your survey research report. How to organize and present your research findings in an interesting and informative report that your client will appreciate. Start the presentation of oral reports.

Week 14, April 19: Drafting your research report (continued). Resolving problems in writing your survey research report. Continue presentation of oral reports.

Week 15, April 26: Finalizing and submitting your final written, bound report and preparing for your oral presentation to your client. Finish presentation of oral reports.

Week 16, May 3: Last day, assessment, celebration
Required Readings


Order this book online from amazon.com. It should cost only a few dollars. I will make no royalty money on this book since you will be buying it online, not from my publisher. I want you to read this book to get to know me better, but to also get a better feeling for the real and dynamic world of polling.

**NOTE:** Reading assignments will be made in class and “hand-out-readings” will be distributed or assigned on a timely basis.

**Attendance Policy:** This is a seminar, so students are expected to attend all classes, except for excused absences (e.g., illness, death in the family).

**Grading Policy**

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance/participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed survey research project</td>
<td>250</td>
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</tbody>
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**Total**  400 points

**Contact Information**

My phone numbers: 977-3036 (office); 977-3035 (department office);

963-0451 (home office --- call here only when very important)

Office, McGannon Hall, Room 135

Office Hours: immediately before and after class hours and by appointment or any time you can find me in my office. I also can be reached by phone at the above numbers.

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The numerical equivalents of letter grades are:

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<td>91-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 65</td>
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Modes of Assessment and Skills/Knowledge Being Assessed

Students will be assessed on their ability to learn and retain course materials, as well as on their ability to think critically about the subject matter of survey research. Students will be assessed on their retention of the assigned materials and on their ability to apply what they have learned to the development and execution of an actual survey research project.

In-Class Activities

In-class activities will consist of lectures on survey research and seminar discussions pertaining to survey research design and implementation. Most of the course will involve working with students to help them successfully design and complete a survey research project. Much of the class will take the form of a workshop.

Course Evaluation

During the last week of the semester, students will need to complete a course evaluation.

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic Integrity and Honesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student,
securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. Possible sanctions for violation of academic integrity may include, but are not limited to, assignment of a failing grade in a course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. Students should review the College of Arts and Sciences policy on Academic Honesty, which can be accessed on-line at http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/ under “Quicklinks for Students” or in hard copy form in the Arts and Sciences Policy Binder in each departmental or College office.

Students with Special Needs - Disability Services

Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course - as outlined in the syllabus - due to presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action. Please telephone the office at 314-977-8885, or visit DuBourg Hall Room 36. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.