



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

JOHN GLENN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Course Syllabus Public Affairs 6525, Survey Design
Page Hall Room 40
Mondays, 5:30-7:20 pm
Credit Hour: 1

Lecturer: Hugh M. Clark, Ph.D.
President, CJI Research Corporation
Email clark.2591.osu.edu

My objective in this course is to provide students the tools to use surveys to their advantage in a public policy career. Surveys can be a useful, even vital, tool for planning and public policy. But getting reasonable answers from a survey is a tricky combination of science and art.

The course will provide a basic understanding of key issues in designing and conducting surveys. Practical applications from the news, from the instructor's public affairs research business, from academic and other professional sources will be used to illustrate. In addition, surveys and polls have been very much in the news in 2016, and will provide illustrations of many challenges facing survey research currently.

- Wonder why the presidential polls appeared to go off the rails in 2016? Are there survey design reasons?
 - How did polls miss the Brexit, Sanders and Trump, and FARC phenomena?
 - Why was Clinton's loss such a surprise to so many?
 - Why were national polls right and state polls wrong?
- On a more practical level, we will examine how survey methods may be useful in a public service career.
- How do you distinguish valid from bogus surveys in the news?
- Just what is "margin of error?" And is that statistic so fundamentally important that it is the one error source reporters and clients focus on?
- Puzzled about the differences among online, telephone, mailed, and other surveys?

We will deal with all of these and a host of other subjects. Mostly I want students of public policy to understand the ins and outs, the costs, the benefits, the science, and the art of survey design.

Please note: This is NOT a statistics class.

This IS a course about basic survey research design, sampling, questionnaire design, potential sources of bias, and so forth. You are expected only to understand basic percentages and means (averages) and to work hard and learn a lot in a short time and have some fun with information.

Seven weeks is a short time to learn survey design. The lecture/discussions will cover a great deal of materials, and you will need to do the readings take lecture/discussion notes carefully because you will need the materials for your paper and you will be expected to participate in the class discussions.

Context. This is a time of fundamental change in survey research. The rapid spread of cell and smartphones, caller ID, texting, social media, have utterly disrupted the previous standard practices of telephone-based survey research. This is a fascinating time of change in the practice of survey research and in the survey industry.

Course overview and objectives

This is a “skills” course. My objective is to provide you with the skills to think critically about surveys and the credibility of results of surveys you may read in the news or use in a career. My assumption is that students taking this class are likely to need skills to utilize surveys in public policy careers. Or they may be at a beginning stage of learning about survey practices and need a basic understanding before moving to advanced levels.

Content. We will consider the following:

- When a survey is an appropriate tool and when an alternative would be preferable
- Defining survey objectives
- How to design and prepare a sample
- Data collection methods, and associated sources of bias, and associated costs
- Questionnaire design, including the minimization of bias
- Basic analysis – percentages, means, etc. Nothing complex. No stats background needed.
- Presentation of results.

Office hours by appointment. I intend to be very accessible. But I am very busy. I operate an active national survey research consultancy with public agencies as my clients. I make every effort to respond very quickly to emails and usually can do so. However, depending on my travel and current demands of my business there may be some delay. For a very urgent matter or emergency, call my direct office line: 614-338-1008.

Required Text: *Survey Research Methods, Fifth Edition (Applied Social Research Methods Series)* by Floyd Fowler, Jr., Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2014 (ISBN: 978-1-4522-5900-0)

Optional supplements:

- *Applied Survey Sampling*, by Edward Blair and Johnny Blair, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2015 (ISBN 978-14833-3433-2)
- *The Complete Guide to Writing Questionnaires, How to Get Better Information for Better Decisions*, by David Harris, I&M Press, Durham, North Carolina, 2014 (ISBN 978-0-615-91776-2)

Students can access textbook information via the Barnes & Noble bookstore website: www.shopOhioState.com as well as from their BuckeyeLink Student Center. This information is disseminated by B&N to all area bookstores. You may buy from a store of your choice and/or shop for books (always use ISBN# for searches) on line.

In addition, various reading assignments (PDF's posted on Carmen) will be drawn from studies conducted by the instructor or other research organizations, especially the Pew Research Center¹.

Grading. This is a very brief course. It should be informative and the ratio of enjoyable learning to pain should be positive (more pleasure than pain). We have no classroom time to spend on lengthy exams.

¹ <http://www.pewresearch.org/> Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, media content analysis and other empirical social science research. Pew Research Center does not take policy positions. It is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Grading scale

93 – 100	A	80 - 82	B-	68 – 69	D+
90 – 92	A-	78 - 79	C+	64 – 67	D
88 - 89	B+	73 - 77	C	63 & below	E
83 - 87	B	70 - 72	C-		

Prep session to assure success with your course project. In the third week we will not have class. Instead, each student should set an appointment for a meeting (30 minutes to one hour) with Dr. Clark to discuss application of survey research to your own professional interests. At this point in the course, you will have enough information on sampling methods, sources of bias, and various data collection options, their strengths and weaknesses, to be able to discuss one or two ideas for your term paper with the instructor.

PLEASE NOTE: Previous experience shows that students in this Survey Design course bring widely varied experience, training and interests to this class. The objective of holding individual meetings is to customize the instruction to your needs and interests as far as possible in such a brief course. To accomplish this, the specific purpose of the meeting is to think through the project and how it may relate to your further studies or career objectives.

I want to be sure your project is tailored to your interests and that the survey design you are beginning to write for your paper is on the right track from the start.

First graded element. Due during the fourth week, the first graded assignment will be a one or two-page proposal for your term paper. The paper will consist of preparing a survey research design applied to a topic of your choosing refined in your discussion during week three. You will receive feedback. This paper is a dress rehearsal for your term project.

The second graded element: The term project. This is a paper of no more than ten pages in which you present a survey design applied to the area of interest you have defined in the meeting in week three and in your two-page proposal in week four.

In completing the term project, you may consult with me after class or by email for feedback, before submitting the draft. A complete draft will be due on the final day of class. You may, however, resubmit an amended version by Friday 5:00 PM at the end of the final week of class if the final class provides further information you would like to incorporate. Ten-page limit, five pages well written and concise, preferred. All page requirements assume 11 point type 3/4 inch margins and single spacing.

I will not specifically grade language or writing style. You do not need to be a great writer. But you need to express yourself clearly. Unclear expression that leaves the reader uncertain or mistaken about your meaning inevitably causes problems in class as in a career. Proofread. Have a colleague proofread.

Submitting papers. Submit assignments via email or via Canvas or in hard copy. PDF format preferred. Handwritten assignments not accepted.

Grade Appeals

The assigned grade is designed to show the overall quality of work performed by each student. If you believe that any grade was not properly assigned you may write a letter explaining why you believe the grade was incorrectly assigned within one week of receiving the graded assignment back. Each appeal will be considered, and if a re-grade is performed, the entire assignment will be re-graded. The final grade may be greater, less, or equal to the original grade.

Attendance and class conduct:

- I will not take attendance. However, in a small class, I tend to notice who is present and participating. You are expected to participate vigorously in class discussions.
- If you cannot attend class because of a serious situation—a death in the family, a hospitalization, some sort of crisis — please leave me a text or voice mail with information.
- Survey design sometimes gets into political polling. I expect only *civil discourse* and *evidence based opinions* on political topics.

Week 1 (Week of Jan 9th): How on earth can you conduct a survey in second decade of the twenty-first century?**The essentials:**

- Organizing the survey
 - Setting objectives – Clearly defining the purpose of your survey
 - Understanding the context – knowing the environment in which the survey will be conducted
- First stage: The sample
 - Defining the population
 - Determining the *sample frame*
- Technical elements of sample design
 - Probability (random) sampling, concept and practice
 - The concept of *sample error*.
 - The many other sources of error in surveys: “Total Sample Error.” Avoiding the fixation on “Margin of Error,” also called “Sample Error.”
 - Random sampling in the age of fractured and mobile communications, caller ID, and of survey overload and non-response
- Key terminology - Population – Sample frame – Random sample -- Representative sample – Margin of Error – Confidence - Bias

The fun stuff: Class discussion

When polls go wrong: What do you think about polling in the 2016 presidential election? (Readings will be posted to Carmen to help you prepare for the discussion). How about Brexit? Colombia, The FARC agreement referendum?

Readings:

Fowler, Chapters 1 – 3, Introduction; Types of Error in Surveys; Sampling.
Chapter 11 Ethical Issues in Survey Research

Additional current readings will be posted on Carmen, including readings on various “explanations” of why the polls failed to predict Trump’s win, and readings on specific aspects of survey design. This includes

Week 2 (Week of Jan 16). Martin Luther King Holiday. No class. Individual Tutorial Discussion Meetings

Individual meetings, Tuesday through Friday. Expect to spend up to an hour. A schedule will be posted for you to sign up. The meeting is required, not optional.

- The objective is to provide the instructor with way to customize information to your individual needs and help you get more out of the course. It will also strengthen your foundation for preparing a course paper. The objective is to tailor instruction to your level of pre-course survey knowledge (even if you had no knowledge of surveys at all prior to the course).
- The meeting will start with your interests and build a survey approach around them for your paper. Come prepared by attending week 1 and doing the readings for weeks 1 and 2. Bring questions and ideas. This will be an in-depth individual discussion of your professional interests and how survey design knowledge may be useful to you. Come prepared with ideas to discuss for a paper topic. They need not be highly refined at this point. We will explore. We will follow up via email and/or phone as needed.

Readings:

Fowler: Chapter 4: Non-response: Implementing a sample design
Additional current readings will be posted on Carmen including the following:
Overview of the survey process - Sage Chapter 8 Survey Research.
This is a pdf of a Sage publication that provides a review of the entire survey process. Long but a useful supplement to Fowler.

Week 3 (Week of Jan 23rd): Digging Deeper - How sampling works in practice

You really think you can conduct a survey in an era of mobile communication and a skeptical, resistant, busy, surveyed-to-death public, most of whom have caller ID? Are you serious?

The dry but essential stuff:

More on survey sample design – theoretical and practical aspects of sampling, random and otherwise:

- Random probability sampling
 - Defining and obtaining the sample frame, concepts and practicalities
 - Sample stratification
 - “Dual frame” surveys.
- Non-probability sampling
 - Credible interval: The Bayesians v the Frequentists
 - Representative, Convenience samples
- How data collection modes relate to sampling and Total Survey Error
- Special challenges in sampling design
 - The mobile phone
 - Random sampling within well-defined populations (e.g., students, transit riders, small geographic areas).
 - Cluster sampling
- Three types of non-response
 - Non-participation (refusal, unavailability)
 - Limitations of sample frame (mobile phones, likely/unlikely voters, other)
 - Item non-response (more in sessions on questionnaire and analysis sections)

The practical stuff

Discussion: How would you design a sample to...

- Examine likely results of the 2018 US Senatorial election in Ohio?
- Examine the likely composition of the US House Congressional delegation in 2018
- Examine Measure demand for new public services in a small area?
- Measure customer demographics among customers of a social enterprise restaurant
- The costs of samples

Readings:

Fowler: Chapter 5 Methods of Data Collection

Other readings will be posted on Carmen

Week 4: The Questionnaire -- It's more than just asking some questions – The art (and some important science) of questionnaire design

The dry but essential stuff

- Setting objectives to govern the structure of the questionnaire
 - The common client misperception of what a respondent can provide: “Just ask what they want.”
- Context of the survey
 - Making assumptions about the voter’s state of knowledge in an era of fractured communication and non-fact-as-fact. The fracturing of civic knowledge about policy and governance.
 - Point of view – Understanding the use of language and the point of view of the respondent. Respondents answer questions within a cultural context. Essential to ground questionnaire writing in a full understanding of the context in which the respondent will be answering
 - Using preliminary qualitative research to help define themes
- Basic considerations in questionnaire design
 - Validity and reliability
 - Reducing non-response
- Common flaws in questionnaire design
 - Social desirability response
 - Leading questions
 - Order bias
 - Embedding two questions in one
 - Mismatch of question and response
- How questionnaire design varies with the method of administration, including interviewer administered and self-administered surveys
- Bilingual surveys – striving for equivalency of meaning rather than literal translation
- Branching -- The challenge of branching in telephone, online, and paper surveys

The practical stuff from the world of survey practice

- California Civic Education Project
- Title VI enforcement and public transportation
- Hot Chicken Takeover
- U Illinois, COTA, or other online study

Readings

Questionnaire design, Fowler, Chapters 6 & 7

Additional current readings will be posted on Carmen

Week 5: Data collection – Practical and budgetary challenges

The several forms of collecting data:

- Face to face, phone, mail, email, other online, intercept, opportunistic, the panel
- Data collection in a cluster sample design – Special challenge of the transit survey: Tablet/interviewer approach v self-administered paper. The dual level sampling problem.

The practical aspects -- Obtaining or defining sample and collecting the data – Real world examples

- Defining the frame or the dual frame – examples including details and actual costs
 - CCEP -- Phone, likely voters only, Hispanic stratum – weighting with sample marginals
 - Displacement – Phone and in-person
 - AAATA community – Phone & ABS and the use of mail and online follow-up
 - Children’s Hospital – Within survey screen – Weighting with ACS marginals
 - Hot Chicken – Intercept
 - Lane Transit District and COTA – Tablet interview v self-administered
 - Costs
 - Bias?
 - Data quality
- Costs of telephone interviewing, intercept interviewing, online interviewing
 - Examples from actual CJJ studies
 - How to cut costs
 - How not to cut costs

Reading: Chapter 4, Non-response: Implementing a sample design and Chapter 5: Methods of data collection

Week 6: Data analysis

The dry but essential stuff

- Defining your analysis approach
 - Academic style hypothesis testing or
 - Policy-driven analysis
- How to organize your approach to analysis of your survey data
- Statistics
 - Basic percentage distributions go a long way
 - Other basic descriptive statistics add depth
 - Standardizing can make comparisons possible
 - Correlation v causation
- The online survey packages combining data collection and analysis
- Practical challenges in analysis
 - Missing data caused by non-response
 - Handling stratification through weighting

The fun stuff

If feasible in class, running data with SPSS or equivalent

Reading:

Fowler, chapter 9, Preparing Survey Data for Analysis and chapter 10, Analyzing Survey Data
Additional current readings will be posted on Carmen

Week 7: Final session - A review of key topics plus a discussion on reporting survey results

Review

- Sampling
- Questionnaire design
- Data collection
- Data preparation and analysis

Becoming a good writer

First a piece of advice. For writing survey reports reading of high quality news and analysis media and contemporary books on related topics. Constant reading provides an understanding of the context of any analysis, but it also models good writing.

Very few students, graduate or undergrad are good writers in the senses that their prose is clear, grammatically solid, and makes the reader want to go on reading. In learning to write well, there is no substitute for a combination of constant reading and disciplined writing, using multiple drafts. Reading of literature is important for any kind of writing.

Preparing the report itself

- How to organize a survey report
 - Order should be topical, not necessarily in the order of the questionnaire
 - Carry a consistent theme throughout
- Presenting results visually – charts and tables
 - Tufte Rules – Avoid Chart Junk (Edward Tufte)
 - Clear labeling is key
- The use of infographics – The Good, the Bad, the Truly Ugly
- The text – sticking to the data, but placing it in context where that is helpful

No readings Final report due

ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR

Due Date	Assignment
Jan 9	First class. Complete readings prior to class.
Jan 16	MLK Day – No class – Individual meetings with students this week
Jan 23	Regular class and optionally 1-2 page draft proposal can be submitted (this will be graded)
Jan 30	Regular class and by this class the draft proposal must be submitted
Feb 6	Regular class
Feb 13	Regular class
Feb 20	Regular class and Final paper due

Every Student should be aware of the following

Workload/Course expectations:

For each credit, there should be about an hour of in class meeting time, and 2 hours out of class work. So for a one-credit class, you should expect 14 hours of in class instruction and about twice that outside of class preparing and doing homework and assignments.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT)

(From: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coamfags.html#academicmisconductstatement>)

The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#) and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct may constitute "Academic Misconduct." Sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

In the Ohio State University's [Code of Student Conduct](#), Section 3335-23-04 defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#) is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include The Committee on Academic Misconduct web page: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html>
Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html>
Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity: www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html

It is also important to be clear on your syllabus about what your policy is regarding collaboration on assignments, as some instructors encourage it, while others prohibit it.

Glenn College Diversity Values Statement:

The Glenn College is committed to nurturing a diverse and inclusive environment for our students, faculty, staff, and guests that celebrates the fundamental value and dignity of everyone by recognizing differences and supporting individuality. We are dedicated to creating a safe space and promoting civil discourse that acknowledges and embraces diverse perspectives on issues and challenges that affect our community.

The following statement about disability services. Please feel free to adjust this statement to suit your personal style. However, the information underlined should be included (in your own words or as suggested below) so as to provide the minimum necessary information for students. The underlined passages are for your reference; please feel free to remove the underlining at your discretion. ADA recommended using 16 point font for the visually impaired:

Accommodation Policy

“Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.”

Mental Health Statement

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the **Office of Student Life Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS)** by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292- 5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614--292--5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1--800--273--TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. Also, the OSU Student Advocacy Center is a resource to help students navigate OSU and to resolve issues that they encounter at OSU – visit <http://advocacy.osu.edu/>.

Workload/Course expectations:

For a one-credit class, you should expect 14 hours of in class instruction for the seven-week period and about twice that outside of class preparing and doing homework and assignments. (Please let me know if the assignments are taking too much time.)

Grade Appeals

The assigned grade is designed to show the overall quality of work performed by each student. If you believe that any grade was not properly assigned you may write a letter explaining why you believe the grade was incorrectly assigned within one week of receiving the graded assignment back. Each appeal will be considered, and if a re-grade is performed, the entire assignment will be re-graded. The final grade may be greater, less, or equal to the original grade.

Helpful Resources

Statistical Consulting: Students wishing to have additional help with any statistical analysis they may utilize for their papers may consult with the Statistical Consulting Service (www.scs.osu.edu/) and enroll in their Stat 5700 course (<http://www.scs.osu.edu/stat5760.html>).

Writing Consulting: Students wishing to have additional help with the writing of their papers can meet with a consultant at the Writing Center (<https://cstw.osu.edu/writing-center>).

Library Assistance: The Glenn College has a dedicated librarian at OSU Libraries, David Lincove (lincove.1@osu.edu), who can help provide research assistance. For more information and links to some common public affairs resources, see - <http://go.osu.edu/8gx>.

Sensitive Content Warning Statement

While the contents of this class are commonly discussed in news media, and are not expected to be especially controversial or sensitive, it is always possible that contents of this course may involve items that may be triggering to some students due to discussions of certain topics including political attitudes and/or surveys concerning sexual imposition. If needed, please take care of yourself while reading or discussing this material (leaving classroom to take a water/bathroom break, debriefing with a friend, contacting a Sexual Violence Support Coordinator at 614-292-1111, or Counseling and Consultation Services at 614-292-5766, and contacting the instructor if needed). Expectations are that we all will be respectful of our classmates while discussing these topics and that we will create a safe space for each other. Failure to show respect to each other may result in dismissal from the class.