Political Science 702: Questionnaire Design

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Tuesday, Thursday 11:30-1:18
272 Baker

This course will present psychological theories of the survey response process and their implications for questionnaire construction. The course is part of the Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization in Survey Research.

Requirements and Grading

1. Reading required assignments prior to the class sessions at which they are discussed and participating in those discussions (10%)
2. In-class presentation and critique of a published survey (10%).
3. Mid-term examination (30%)
4. Final project, consisting of a verbal and written report of an original survey of the student’s own design, due by Midnight, Wednesday, March 15 (50%).

This project includes timely completion of weekly assignments.

Readings


Week 1: Theories of the Response Process (January 3, 5)


Assignment: Turn in a 1-paragraph description of your research area.

Week 2: Memory (January 10, 12)


Assignment: Meet with your research team to discuss common interests

**Week 3: Objective Questions (January 17, 19)**


Assignment: Turn in at least one formal research hypothesis and two additional hypotheses or research questions.

**Week 4: Opinion Questions (January 24, 26)**


Norman M. Bradburn, Seymour Sudman and Brian Wansink. "Asking Questions about Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions." Asking Questions... Chap. 4.


Assignment: Turn in draft questionnaire

**Week 5: Attitudes and Non-Attitudes (January 31, February 2)**


Take-home midterm examination distributed January 31, due February 6
Week 6: Context Effects (February 7, 9)


Week 7: Question Wording (February 14, 16)

Norman M. Bradburn, Seymour Sudman and Brian Wansink. "Organizing and Designing Questionnaires." Asking Questions... Chap. 10., "Questionnaires from Start to Finish." Asking Questions... Chap. 11.


Assignment: Turn in final questionnaire

Week 8: Sensitive Questions (February 21, 23)


Norman M. Bradburn, Seymour Sudman and Brian Wansink. "Asking Threatening Questions about Behavior." Asking Questions... Chap. 3.


Assignment: Data collection

Week 9:  Mapping (February 28, March 2)


Assignment: code, enter, and analyze data

Week 10:  Group Reports (March 7, 9)
More on Requirements

Mid-term examination

A take-home examination will be distributed via e-mail. It will consist of a few questions covering material in the first half of class. Return your answers by e-mail.

In-class critique of published survey

Part of your discussion grade will be based on an in-class presentation and critique of a published survey. You will find a recently published poll, either from a news source or a scholarly article. Present the survey instrument, and offer your evaluation of its performance. Your presentation should last no more than 20 minutes. Consider the following points:

- What is the scientific hypothesis? Is a survey the proper method to apply?
- Is the operationalization of variables adequate?
- What is the mode of data collection? Does it impact data quality?
- Are the response alternatives adequate?
- In general, how would the survey benefit from the application of principles from this class?

Final project

The final project consists of an oral and written report on an original survey of your own design. To conduct the survey you will meet with a small group of fellow students with similar research interests. You will design an instrument consisting of a small number of survey questions for each researcher. Depending on the size of groups and the number of questions, you may be asked to combine instruments with another group for purpose of data collection. In the latter half of the class you will collect data, either through paper and pencil "person on the street" interviews, telephone interviews, or online interviews. You must code and enter the data by the final week of class. The final week of class will be devoted to in-class presentations by research teams. The final report is due via e-mail.

An important part of this project is the completion of weekly assignments. These assignments are intended to keep you on schedule for the timely completion of your project. Individual assignments will not be graded, but points will be deducted for late submissions. It is in your interest to devote adequate time to these assignments so that the final project is the best it can be.