MEJO 861:1: Seminar in Survey Research Methods
Fall 2018
M 12:30-3:15 CA 338

Instructor: Daniel Riffe
Office: 383 Carroll Hall
UNC-Chapel Hill
Office Phone: 919-962-4082
Email: driffe@email.unc.edu

Office hours: TBA
and by appointment

Purpose

One of the most widely used techniques for collecting information is the sample survey. It is used by political scientists and political campaign managers, by students of health communication and by public health practitioners, by journalists/mass communicators and by mass communication scholars, to name only a few applications. As these uses suggest, survey research, like all scientific and evidence-centered approaches, can be used to generate data for testing theory in a seminar room or for making effective decisions in the board room. **Evidence trumps intuition every time.**

Of course, some organizations and individuals will parade "data" that they claim are generated on legitimate survey research, but that are not.

This seminar provides an in-depth look at survey research methods through extensive reading on the method's technical points, critique of published survey-based studies, and "hands-on" participation in different phases of the method's application. The strategy is for students to learn by developing a personal survey project and, when appropriate, by observing a large-scale, survey conducted by the instructor (e.g., a statewide or national survey).

The content of the seminar addresses both the theory and practice of survey research, including *training in research on human subjects* (as needed), *problem conceptualization, study planning and design, choice of survey mode*, *sampling* decisions, steps in *developing valid and reliable opinion/attitude/belief/behavior measures* (including dealing with institutional review board [IRB] procedures), *questionnaire construction, interviewing*, post-collection *analysis* options (including, time permitting, secondary analysis of existing data), and *statistical analysis* of data.

Each class member will select a survey topic, present an **initial research proposal** for a survey, and produce a **final project**. Ideally, the final project will be a completed report on the survey that was proposed (recognize that not all surveys involve phoning huge statewide or national samples). Far less desirable, the final project will be an extended version of the proposal, and should at minimum reflect a level of detail (i.e., including a completed questionnaire or interview schedule, and Institutional Review Board approval) and development (i.e., including pre- or pilot-testing of the instrument) a student would have achieved **after** meeting with his/her dissertation

committee. Figuratively speaking, such a survey would be "ready to go," if resources and IRB approval are obtained.

Text and Readings

The required text for this course is Don A. Dillman, Jolene D. Smyth, and Leah Melani Christian, *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* 4th edition (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014). This book is the most-cited reference in contemporary survey research.

Additional required readings will be posted to Sakai.

Optional resources:
The world's most useful book is W. Paul Vogt, *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide for the Social Sciences* 3rd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1990). The second- and third-most useful books are the first and second editions of Vogt's *Dictionary*.

The fourth most useful book is Delbert Miller, *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*, 3rd edition. The sixth edition includes co-author Neil J. Salkind (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002) and is not among the world's most useful books.

A valuable resource is the "search" function on the American Association for Public Opinion Research's (AAPOR) website: http://www.surveypractice.org
Type in any term of interest and see the articles.

Course Prerequisite: JOMC 701(RT) or equivalent

Requirements for this class are based on the assumption that survey research methods are best learned through hands-on work with fellow researchers. Consequently, course requirements involve seminar participation, reading, discussion, completion of a series of homework assignments, development of a survey proposal, and a ***completed personal survey project*** (including human subjects training, conceptualization, operationalization of measures, instrumentation, IRB approval, data collection, and analysis), and submission of either a final report on a completed survey or the fully developed proposal described above.

Personal Survey Project Progress: Class members will prepare a series of homework assignments during the semester that relate to the study each student is designing. These assignments will help convey course concepts as well as keep class members moving forward on their research. Dates are indicated in the syllabus below and on the detailed handout for each assignment. Although the assignments "build upon" one another, **students are strongly advised to read *all* nine assignments *now*.** You do not need to wait to do the work for an assignment if your project demands it. Moreover, knowing what lies ahead may help you determine the course to take.

The **initial study proposal** for your **final project** describes your thinking and plan of action for the entire study you complete, much of which may already be underway when you present the proposal. It follows the general form described in the "Outline of Steps in Research Design" appendix to this syllabus, which is itself based on the fourth-most useful book in the world, the third edition of Delbert C. Miller's *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement*. The proposal should be six to ten double-spaced pages, excluding endnotes, graphics, and appendices. The draft questionnaire for the project should be included as an appendix to the proposal. **The topic for the study proposal (Assignment 1) is due the second week of the semester (noon, Wednesday, Sept. 5), the oral presentation of the proposal for peer feedback is due in class Oct. 22, and the initial study proposal paper is due at noon, 12 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 26.**

The **completed final project report** should be about 5,000 words or 15 to 20 double-spaced pages, excluding endnotes, tables, and appendices. It must complete or fully develop the work specified in the Study Proposal. **The oral presentation of the final project for peer feedback is on Dec. 3, during the final regular meeting of the seminar. The completed hard-copy study manuscript is due at noon, Friday, Dec. 14, but may be submitted earlier.**

Participation. Consistent and enthusiastic class participation is required because scholarship is a shared endeavor among those who seek a better understanding of their discipline and who want to communicate that understanding to others. You will profit from the insights and concerns of others. Your own comments and suggestions will help others to do their best research. In addition, class members and the instructor will help each other in various steps of the research process.

Grades

Components of student performance are measured as follows:

Class Participation	10 percent
Homework Assignments	20 percent
Initial Research Proposal	25 percent
Final Project Paper	45 percent

Those components will be used to determine a final assessment:

H Student reads and critically engages with all of the assigned material. Participation in discussion and written assignments exhibit the ability not only to apply the material, but also to extrapolate ideas, expand into new areas, and contribute to the body of scholarship in the area. Reserved for truly extraordinary work.

P Student usually reads and engages critically with the assigned material. Able to apply material and extrapolate ideas. Consistently good work done on time.

L Student reads and engages critically with only some of the assigned material. Able to apply the material and extrapolate ideas in only some instances.

F Student occasionally misses class, does not always read the material, fails to critically engage with it, and is unable or unwilling to apply the material.

The *participation* grade will be assessed based on attendance at class sessions and demonstrated willingness to comment appropriately and helpfully during class meetings. Willingness and dedication to helping class members accomplish their studies is also part of class participation.

"Regular" ***homework*** assignment grades are based on their completeness in addressing the specified assignment tasks. Homework Assignments must be submitted to the instructor **as specified in this syllabus.** A 0 is given for a late assignment. Assignments may be revised and resubmitted no later than one week after they are returned. Grades for revised assignments will be substituted for the original grades.

The ***initial proposal*** will be assessed based on relevant criteria in the Outline of Steps in Research Design at the back of this syllabus. The proposals may also be revised and resubmitted, with grades for the revised work being substituted for original grades. The deadline for ***proposal resubmissions*** is one week following their return to the class. Proposal revisions following that deadline will not be re-graded.

The ***completed final project*** will be assessed based on standards used for a peer-reviewed journal or for a dissertation proposal defense. Major review criteria include study purpose and conceptualization, study relevance to theory and past research, appropriateness of the research design, effectiveness of proposed data collection and analysis, and appropriateness and relevance of conclusions. Clarity and competence in organization, writing, and style will also be considered.

Submission to peer-reviewed venues requires that manuscripts be prepared according to the style requirements of those venues. Failure to do so is a sign of poor scholarship, poor academic training, poor upbringing and improper home training, and poor planning. For this seminar, students should adhere to *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition) for citations and other matters of style, or APA style. Abbreviated guides are available online at:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/introduction/index.html

Organization of the Course

The first half of the course will focus on survey research as a method of communication research, itself a subset of scientific research. The emphasis will be on learning basic survey research concepts and procedures for the **final project**, but within a larger framework of social science research and mass communication theory and research. Class members will be able to develop

their projects in the context of the homework assignments discussed in class during this period. This part of the course culminates with students presenting their **initial project proposals** in class and submitting a written copy the week after fall break.

After fall break, the remainder of the course will focus on lecture, discussion, and consultation (LDC) on additional issues in design, data collection, and analysis for the semester projects (e.g., refining and improving measurement [different types of scales and indices]; improving sample representativeness and response; planning data analysis, etc.). The last session of the course will focus on student presentations of the completed **final project**.

Special Accommodations

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at https://accessibility.unc.edu/

Honor Code

Each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (http://honor.unc.edu). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean, or speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

Diversity

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the Undergraduate Bulletin http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

861 Class Schedule

Except for the first class, readings should be completed **by the date listed, even if related assignment is not due until the following session. The first class assignments and second class assignments should be done by Sept. 10.**

Aug. 27: Negative political advertising and its effects. Course Introduction: Theory and Method in Mass Communication Research. Knowledge, the Scientific Method, and Research. Introduction to Survey Research: definitions and decision points: goal/population/sample/questionnaire/collection method/processing and analysis (Phil Meyer).

Defining a goal: the metaphor of the mirror ball (aka "disco ball")

Read: chapters 1-3 AND ALL NINE ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS.

Tom W. Smith, "Survey-Research Paradigms Old and New," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 25 (2, 2013): 218-229. On Sakai.

J. Lovejoy, D. Riffe, and H. Cheng, "Campaign Interest and Issue Knowledge: Did the Media—and Negative Political Advertising—Matter in 'Battleground Ohio'?" *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 20 (4, 2012). On Sakai.

Brian G. Southwell, James T. Hamilton, and Jonathan S. Slater, "Why Addressing the Poor and Uninsured is Vexing," *Health Communication* 26 (2011): 583-585. On Sakai.

Read: Creative Research Systems, "How to Begin Your Survey Design Project," at http://www.surveysystem.com/sdesign.htm

Assignment 1: Topic Selection due at noon, 12 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 5.

Sept. 10: Introduction to Survey Design: Decision Points Revisited and a Framework for Discussion of Class Interests and Topics; Goals, Feasibility, and Different Modes of Data Collection. Human subjects (**IRB)** and the scientific method.

Read and Register for: Qualtrics Web-based survey program, through UNC's Odum Institute. At https://software.unc.edu/qualtrics/

Compare: Surveymonkey. At http://www.surveymonkey.com/Home_Landing.aspx

Examine IRB application samples on Sakai site. Go to http://research.unc.edu/offices/human-research-ethics/

Then go to "Getting Started" in the left-hand column.

Assignment 2: "Guerilla" Literature Review due 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 14.

Sept. 17: Advanced Survey Design: Beyond Cross-sectional Snapshots; Decision Points Revisited and Discussion of Class Interests and Topics; Goals, Feasibility, and Different Modes of Data Collection.

Read: chapters 8, 9, 10, & 11 (for Assignment 3)

Pew Center for People and the Press report on representativeness of contemporary survey sampling. At: http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/Assessing%20the%20Representativeness%20of%20Public%20Opinion%20Surveys.pdf

Colleen Cook, Fred Heath, and Russel L. Thompson, "A Meta-analysis of Response Rates in Web- or Internet-based Surveys," *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 60 (6, 2000): 821-836. On Sakai.

Ethan Brown and Timothy P. Johnson, "Diffusion of Web Survey Methodology, 1995-2009," *Survey Research: Newsletter from the University of Illinois at Chicago Survey Research Laboratory* 42 (1, 2011): 1-3

Jolene D. Smyth, Don A Dillman, Leah Melani-Christian, and Allison C. O'Neill, "Using the Internet to Survey Small Towns and Communities: Limitations and Possibilities in the Early 21st Century," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53 (9, 2010): 1423-1448. On Sakai.

Assignment 3: Discussion and Defense of Survey Mode and Design due in class, Sept. 24.

Sept. 24: Survey Design, Sampling, and Mode of Data Collection Interaction. Measurement Issues.

Read: chapters 4 & 5 (for Assignment 4)

Explore: PsycTESTS, a site specializing in measurement. Try using "prejudice" and "all text".
http://search.lib.unc.edu/search?R=UNCb7283608
(click on "Available via UNC Libraries" at bottom of page; use onyen to log in)

Assignment 4: Identification of key concepts and first draft of measures due in class, Oct. 1.

Oct. 1: Concept Measurement Issues: knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, behaviors, intentions. Operationalization and measurement validity.

Read (for Assignment 6): link to multiple articles in roundtable on "Summaries of Address-Based Sampling Presentation" in *Survey Practice*, June 2009, Vol. 2, issue 5. At http://www.surveypractice.org

"Building a New Foundation: Transitioning to Address Based Sampling after Nearly 30 Years of RDD," Michael W. Link, Gail Daily, Charles D. Shuttles, L. Tracie Yancey, Anh Thu Burks, and H. Christine Bourquin, The Nielsen Company.

"Using Address-based Sampling to Survey the General Public by Mail vs. Web plus Mail," Benjamin L. Messer and Don A. Dillman, Washington State University.

"Address Based Sampling and Address Matching: Experience from REACH U.S.," Katie Dekker and Whitney Murphy, NORC at the University of Chicago.

Assignment 5: Identification of key concepts and second draft of measures due in class, Oct. 8.

Oct. 8: Sampling Revisited. Types of Samples. Sampling error.

Read: chapter 6 & 7 (for assignment 7)

Assignment 6: Specification of universe, population, sampling frame, and sample due in class, Oct. 15.

Oct. 15: Further Development of Operational Measures of Concepts and Variables; "from questions to questionnaire." Reliability and Validity Concerns.

Assignment 7: Draft of Full Questionnaire due in class Oct. 22. Please provide both a hard copy and an advance electronic copy (Word format) for posting to Sakai.

(Oct. 18-21: Fall break: Young brave swept upward)

Oct. 22: Class Presentation of Research Proposals: Discussion, Commentary and Suggestions. **Hard copy of refined proposal due at noon, 12 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 25.**

Oct. 29: Preview on Data Analysis and Presentation. Measurement issues: Practical to

Conceptual. Revisiting the mirror ball and thinking about multidimensional measurement. Improving the Quality of Measurement. Indices and Scales. Unidirectional and Multidimensional Scaling; Likert Scales; Semantic Differential Scales; Thurstone Scales.

Read: Riffe, "SPSS Basics" at Sakai.

Assignment 8: Draft of Plan for Data Analysis due beginning of class, Nov. 5.

Nov. 5: Previewing Data Analysis and Presentation. Revisiting the mirror ball and thinking about multidimensional measurement. Improving the Quality of Measurement. Indices and Scales. Unidirectional and Multidimensional Scaling; Likert Scales; Semantic Differential Scales; Thurstone Scales. Lecture, Discussion, and Consultation (LDC)

Assignment 9: Refined Plan for Data Analysis due beginning of class, Nov. 19.

Nov. 12: Reporting Survey Results. Substance over Style, But….. Purpose, Structure, and Getting the Wind at Your Back. Cases and Guidelines: What makes a good survey research-based paper? Optional: Secondary Data Analysis Opportunities. (LDC)

Nov. 19: What makes a good survey research-based paper? The literature review does what? Improving the Quality of Analysis: Beyond Chi-Square. (LDC)

Nov. 21-25: University closed for Thanksgiving holidays. No class Nov. 21.

Nov. 26: Improving the Quality of Inference: Design Variations; Secondary Data Analysis (LDC). Planning your ***next*** survey, and the next, and the next. Linking survey data to other data.

Read: chapter 12.

Barry Hollander, "Tuning Out or Tuning Elsewhere? Partisanship, Polarization, and Media Migration from 1998 to 2006," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 85 (spring 2008): 23-40. On Sakai.

Hye-Jin Paek, So-Hyang Yoon, and Dhavan V. Shah, "Local News, Social Integration, and Community Participation: Hierarchical Linear Modeling of Contextual and Cross-level Effects," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 82 (autumn 2005): 587-606. On Sakai.

Dec. 3: Oral presentation of final project.

Friday, Dec. 14, noon: Hard copy of the completed project manuscript is due.

OUTLINE OF STEPS IN RESEARCH DESIGN

Adapted from the *Handbook of Research Design and Social Measurement* by Delbert C. Miller. A research project should include the steps outlined below to assure a meaningful study.

I. SELECTION AND DEFINITION OF A COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEM

- A. Present clear, brief statement of the problem.
- B. Describe the significance of the problem with reference to one or more criteria below:
    1. Is timely
    2. Relates to a practical problem
    3. Relates to a wide population
    4. Relates to an influential or critical population
    5. Fills a research gap
    6. Permits generalization to principles of communication process or theory
    7. Sharpens the definition of an important concept or relationship
    8. Has many implications for practical problems
    9. Creates or improves an instrument for observing and analyzing data
    10. Provides opportunity for gathering data that is otherwise restricted

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- A. Describe the relationship of the problem to a theory or paradigm (if appropriate).
- B. Discuss previous research related to or relevant for the problem.
    1. Especially discuss any work related to your study's dependent variable.
    2. Especially discuss any work related to your study's independent variables.
- C. Present your own ideas on the problem and relate them to theory and past research.

III. HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- A. Clearly state any hypotheses and explain their rationales, making explicit Independent and Dependent Variable relationships.
- B. Indicate the significance of hypotheses to theory and previous research.
- C. Define the concepts of the variables in the hypotheses at the conceptual level.
- D. Draw a picture of the above using arrows to represent causal flows from Independent to Dependent variables and + or - signs to indicate positive or negative influences.
- E. Define any other relevant variables and include them in the drawing.
- F. If hypotheses are inappropriate, specify research questions, noting relevant parts of A to E above.

IV. STUDY METHOD

- A. Survey Research Design:
    1. State why this design is appropriate to the problem
    2. Note any limitations of the design for the problem
- B. Survey Sampling Procedures:
    1. Describe sample you will study
        a. Specify the population to which the hypotheses or questions relate.
        b. Explain determination of size and type of sample
        c. If the study uses a purposive (non-random) sample, justify why
        d. If the sample is randomly drawn, specify acceptable sampling error

2. Specify the method of drawing sample and relate this to the study goals

C. Data Collection

1. Describe the variables and concepts of interest (e.g., knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, behaviors, intentions, etc.)
    a. Specify the variables and concepts to be analyzed
    b. Specify procedures for identifying the concepts of interest
    c. Describe the bounds of the analysis in terms of time frame or material
    d. Describe how the concept measures will be processed prior to analysis
2. Include the following in description of concept measurement:
    a. Specify and define measures for independent and dependent variables. Specify and define measures of other variables.
    b. Describe the measurement of variables, including level of measurement
    c. Describe if/how interviewers will be trained
    d. Specify interviewer reliability procedures
    e. Address validity issues

D. Data Analysis

1. Specify method of analysis of collected data.
    a. Use "hypothetical" data to illustrate how hypotheses and questions are addressed
    b. Specify and Illustrate statistical measures needed
2. If random sampling is used, note necessary tests of statistical significance
3. Use tables, graphs, charts, etc. to illustrate how data will be presented

V. FINDINGS

A. General Descriptions of Findings — Frequencies on main variables
B. Findings for Hypotheses (if any)
C. Findings for Research Questions (if any)
D. Other Relevant Findings
E. Limitations

VI. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

A. Discuss how study outcomes relate to theory or past research (speculate for proposal).
B. Discuss future research indicated by study outcomes (speculate for proposal).
C. Discuss any practical implications of results (speculate for proposal).

VII. ENDNOTES, BIBLIOGRAPHY AND QUESTIONNAIRE