GOVT/COMM 3189

Taking America’s Pulse: Creating and Conducting a National Opinion Poll
Spring Semester 2014
Tuesday and Thursday 10:10 - 11:25am (Baker Laboratory 135)

Instructors

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Overview

This is a University Course. University Courses (http://universitycourses.cornell.edu/) at Cornell are designed to teach students to think from the perspectives of multiple disciplines, across departments and among diverse fields of study. University Courses foster intellectual discovery, promote debate, and address complex issues. Students taking University Courses enroll alongside students from across the university and examine engaging subjects through new and different lenses.

This course aims to meet these goals by having students create, conduct, and analyze a national public opinion poll. Students will determine the questions asked on the survey, they will help conduct the telephone interviews, and they will analyze the data. The survey is a collaborative endeavor that depends on the entire class working together. There are no prerequisites for this course. Relying on methods and perspectives from Political Science and Communication, we will teach you everything you need to know to analyze the data.
In addition to generous support from University Courses, this course is also made possible through the support of Cornell’s Survey Research Institute (https://www.sri.cornell.edu/sri/). SRI provides survey research, data collection, and analysis services to the Cornell community as well as to other academic, non-profit, governmental, and corporate clientele.

**Objectives:**

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- write clear, valid, and reliable survey questions.
- evaluate conclusions drawn from survey data.
- analyze public opinion data and present results.

**Texts and Software**


- Stata (http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/campus-gradplan/). *Note:* Stata/IC 13 for 6 months ($69.00) will be sufficient for this course.¹

**Evaluation**

Your performance in this class will be assessed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete 5 Survey Interviews</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class &amp; Section Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-Ed</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Poster</td>
<td>35%</td>
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**Survey Interviews**

Conducting survey interviews is an integral component of this course, both in terms of learning about surveys and in terms of collecting necessary data. Grading of the surveys will be as follows. Less than 4 completions=0%. 4 completions=60%. 5 completions=100%.

¹Stata is available through Cornell’s Remote Desktop (http://ciser.cornell.edu/) as well as in most computer labs on campus, but having your own copy greatly facilitates in-class and in-section activities. See us if you plan to rely exclusively on CISER to access Stata.
Every additional completion (up to 10) corresponds to 5 additional percentage points (i.e., 10 completions=125%).

**Question Proposal**

As a class, we will collaborate to create and conduct an original national public opinion survey. The targeted length of our survey will allow each student to include a question that interests them. Although submitting a survey question is a required assignment for this course, note that completing the assignment does not guarantee that your question will be included in the survey. We will provide specific details in the coming weeks.

**Research Poster**

The Research Poster will be a group project. The instructors will assign groups of 3-4 people. We will provide specific details in the coming weeks.

**Free Lunch**

Starting February 3, every Monday Professor Enns and Schuldt will meet at the entrance of Willard Straight at noon. At 12:05pm we will go down to Okenshields for lunch. We will buy students’ lunch too! If you’re interested, sign up here: http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/wshju. We will continue these lunches until we run out of money or until we get tired of having lunch with each other.

**Readings and Assignments**

We have listed the assigned readings below. *Complete the day’s reading before coming to class.* All readings that are not from the assigned text will be available through Blackboard. We may assign additional readings throughout the course. We may also revise portions of the syllabus as appropriate.

- Week 1 (No Sections)
  - Th. 1/23: Class Introduction

- Week 2 (Section: Come with 3 research questions/ideas. In Section: Discuss research interests, ways to collaborate, possible survey questions, etc.)
  - Tues. 1/28: Survey Questionnaires
    * Rea & Parker: Chapters 1 & 2
    * Gallup Survey 1937
    * ANES 2012 Survey
– Th. 1/30: Question Wording  
  * Rea & Parker: Chapters 3 & 4

• Week 3 (Section: Bring 3 potential survey questions that you wrote. (You will turn this in.) In Section: Find similarly worded questions on the Roper Center Website and write these down. (Bring a laptop.)

  – Tues. 2/4: Data Collection: What information do you need to answer your research question?
    * Kahan. 2014. “What sorts of inferences can/can’t be drawn from the”Republican shift” (now that we have enough information to answer the question)?”
    * Newport. 2013. “Most Americans Say Religion is Losing Influence in U.S.”
    * Maday. 2013. “LFTB concerns affect consumer behavior”

– Th. 2/6: Survey Experiments
  * Homework: “Pilot” your survey questions.
  * Druckman & Lupia “Experimenting with Politics”
  * Mutz Population-Based Survey Experiments, Chapter 1

• Week 4 (Section: Bring 10 (total) demographic and control variable questions including response categories. (You will turn this in.) In Section: Assign groups of 3-4 and each group comes up with a list of 10-12 demographic/control questions. Each section nominates one group’s list.

  – Tues. 2/11: Demographic Questions
    * Draft Question Proposal Due

– Th. 2/13: What can (and can’t) surveys tell us?
  * Glynn et. al. Public Opinion, Chapter 3: Methods of Measuring Public Opinion (BB)
  * Asher Polling and the Public, Chapter 2: The Problem of Non-Attitudes (BB)
  * Question Proposal Due

• Week 5

  – Tues. 2/18: No Class (February Break)
  – Th. 2/20: Review Final Survey in Class

• Week 6 (No Sections: Mandatory Training at SRI—You must sign up for a training time.)
– Tues. 2/25: In Class Survey Training
  * The Belmont Report
– Th. 2/27: No Class—You must complete Online IRB Training
  (http://www.irb.cornell.edu/training/citi/)

• Week 7 (No Sections: Conduct Survey Interviews at SRI)
  – Tues. 3/4: Descriptive Statistics
    * Rea & Parker: Ch. 5
  – Thurs. 3/6: Survey Sampling
    * Rea & Parker: Ch. 6

• Week 8 (No Sections: Conduct Survey Interviews at SRI)
  – Tues. 3/11: Confidence Intervals and Hypothesis Testing
    * Rea & Parker: Ch. 7
  – Th. 3/13: Margin of Error
    * Rea & Parker: Ch. 8

• Week 9: Week 3 of Survey
  – Tues. 3/18: Total Survey Error
  – Th. 3/20: Writing about Survey Results
    * Gelman “More on Those Happy Conservatives”
    * AAPOR “Questions to Ask” (BB)

• Week 10: Final Week of Survey
  – Tues. 3/25: Survey Weights
    * Rea & Parker: Ch. 9
– Th. 3/27: Cross Tabs
  * Draft Op-Ed Due
  * Rea & Parker: Ch. 10

• SPRING BREAK

• Week 11: Survey Data Delivered
  – Tues. 4/8: Difference of Means
    * Rea & Parker: Ch. 11
  – Th. 4/10: Analyzing Experiments

• Week 12
  – Tues. 4/15: Measures of Association
    * Weisberg, Krosnick, and Bowen. An Introduction to Survey Research, Chapter 12
  – Th. 4/17: Measures of Association
    * Op-Ed Due (Including confirmation of submission and replication .do file.)

• Week 13
  – Tues. 4/22: Correlation & Regression
    * Rea & Parker: Ch. 12
  – Th. 4/24: Correlation & Regression
    * Oxley, et. al. 2008. “Political Attitudes Vary with Psychological Traits”

• Week 14
  – Tues. 4/29: Presenting Results
    * Evergreen. 2013. “How to Present Data Effectively”
– Th. 5/1: Presenting Results
  * Kastellec & Leoni. 2007. “Using Graphs Instead of Tables in Political Science”

• Week 15
  – Tues. 5/6: Final Thoughts
    * Reading TBD

• Poster Session - During Final Exam Period

Students with Disabilities

Please give me your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that I have adequate time to arrange your approved academic modifications. Meeting with me in my office hours will help ensure confidentiality. If you need an immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me and/or SDS at sds_cu@cornell.edu. If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS.

Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity (http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work.

Turnitin Policy

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.