This course is about survey data and where they come from. The course examines the principal features of survey design and how they contribute to total survey error. Topics include: mode of interview, basic sampling concepts, effects of nonparticipation, issues in instrumentation, interviewing, and computer assisted data collection. Most of the course is spent reviewing research that describes the effects of features of survey design on survey error.

This course considers issues that arise before analysis of data begins. Some course assignments, particularly those about sampling, require some comfort with elementary statistical concepts and formulas. The assignments and readings require familiarity with principles of research design. The conceptual and practical tools introduced in this course may be useful in planning and executing your own research.

Lectures proceed somewhat independently of the readings. The schedule of readings given here is fixed, regardless of how much the lectures appear to deviate from the schedule. Lectures do not systematically summarize the readings.

Prerequisites: Sociology 361 or equivalent.

Course Assignments and Requirements

Short papers. Complete at least three of four short papers. The short papers present realistic research situations require research decisions, and give you practice applying the approaches and research presented in class and the readings. The short papers require you to apply readings discussed in the text and listed in the course syllabus. You usually need to supplement the text and assigned readings with additional readings to improve the final product. You must work independently on the papers. The maximum length of each assignment is 4 pages of text. I count only the three best grades, so you may skip one short paper if you are satisfied with your grade, but you must complete at least three short papers to receive a grade for the class. Each short paper contributes 10% to the final course grade, for a total of 30% of the course grade.

Long paper. The long paper requires you to write a brief proposal to conduct a survey. I will provide a detailed description of the project at least 4 weeks before the project is due. You must work independently on the paper. The maximum length of the project is 10 pages of text (there is no limit on appendices), and it contributes 70% to the course grade.

Chapter exercises. There are weekly exercises from the textbook. These exercises will sometimes be the basis for class discussion and must be handed in, but will not be formally graded. I will use the following scale: “1” if complete, substantially correct, and well-documented; “2” if excellent. Most assignments receive “1,” and sometimes an assignment receives a “2.” On rare occasions, an exercise could receive “0” if incomplete, poorly presented, or showing little effort. Individual problems will not be marked, but some problems will be discussed in class. If your grade is borderline, the quality and timeliness of your chapter
exercises will contribute to your grade. You must complete all exercises to receive a grade for the class. You may collaborate on the exercises.

**Articles for discussion.** There are several weeks in which the schedule of assignments indicates that you should come to class prepared to discuss specific articles.

**Human subjects training.** Although you will not be conducting research as part of this class, you are required to complete the CITI training if you have not already done so. This is part of the assignment for week 15. Email me confirmation that you have completed training using this subject line: “Soc751 – CITI Training confirmation.” Go to this link to get started: [http://www.irb.wisc.edu/arrow-gettingstarted.htm](http://www.irb.wisc.edu/arrow-gettingstarted.htm)

**Class participation.** If your grade for the class as a whole is borderline, I take contributions to class discussion into account in assigning the final grade.

**Late penalties and incompletes.** All assignments, graded and ungraded, must be completed to receive a grade for the class, and you must complete assignments on time to avoid a penalty. I deduct a letter grade for each day an assignment is late. I may discuss the content of assignments in class after the due-date, so that accepting late assignments is not fair to the other students. However, I recognize that emergencies happen, so I allow a one-day grace period for one assignment.

**General instructions for exercises and papers.** The title page for all exercises must indicate which chapter the problems are from. The title page for all exercises and papers must show your student ID and indicate whether you are US or an International student. Do not put your name on your assignments.

All course papers are to be written in a professional style. In these assignments, you practice analyzing problems and proposing solutions in the style that you will use in writing research papers and grant proposals. Papers must be edited, proofed, and typed in the following format: at least 1 inch margins, double-spaced (not 1.5-spaced), upper-lower case, 10 or 12 point fixed-space type (like Courier) or 12 point variable-spaced font (like Times New Roman), page-numbered, and stapled. I may refuse to read assignments that do not follow these guidelines. (Note that restrictions of this type are also common in requests for proposal.)

Be sure to keep your exercises and the papers with my comments if you think you will want to ask me for a letter of recommendation later based on your work in this course.

**Criteria for evaluation.** In evaluating class assignments I consider how well the work applies relevant concepts and findings presented in lectures, class readings, and additional readings that you find in your own exploration; it is difficult to obtain a high grade without incorporating readings and additional literature in your reports. I also consider the practicality, comprehensiveness, and creativity of the solution to the problem presented in the assignments. Finally, I take into account of how well you present your solution--whether the presentation is organized, clear, and professional.

**Communication.** I regret that my schedule fills quickly; please do your best to make appointments in advance. Put the text “soc751 - ” at the beginning of the subject line of every email message. This allows me to find your email easily if I lose track of it. I do not accept the short or long papers by email.
Office hours and appointments. There is a sign up sheet outside my office. If no one signs up by the end of class on Tuesday, office hours may be cancelled. My schedule tends to be very full because of standing meetings that I cannot move around. Last minute office appointments are rarely possible, but I can often arrange to talk by phone in the evening.

Readings

Be warned that assignments and exercises are lighter in some weeks than in others.

Reserve readings. Articles and chapters are on electronic reserve. I will also put some of the edited volumes on reserve in the Social Science (Sewell Building) Somers Reading Room, on the 8th floor of the Social Science building. Take the rear elevator.

NOTE: All articles and books on reserve in the Social Science Reading Room are my personal copies. As a courtesy to me and other students, please do not write on them. If you need to keep an article for more than 1 day, please make a copy of it.

Required Books

Ordered at University Book Stores


Recommended Books

Some other recent basic books you may find useful, but that I did not assign or order. Buy only if you think will be useful for your work:


Classic and Contemporary General Sources

Soc 751: Course Outline

Readings not in the textbooks are available in a coursepack. I use the following abbreviations:

- **ASR** American Sociological Review
- **JOS** Journal of Official Statistics
- **JASA** Journal of the American Statistical Association
- **JMR** Journal of Marketing Research
- **SMR** Sociological Methods and Research
- **POQ** Public Opinion Quarterly
- **SM** Sociological Methodology

*article is on electronic reserve

**Week 1: Introduction**

SM, Chapter 1, “An Introduction to Survey Methodology”


**Week 2: Errors in Surveys**

SM, Chapter 2, Inference and Error in Surveys


**Weeks 3, 4, 5 Basic Sampling Concepts**

SM, Chapter 3, Target Populations, Sampling Frames, and Coverage Error
SM, Chapter 4, Sample Design and Sampling Error


**Weeks 6 and 7: Mode of Survey and Interview**

SM, Chapter 5, Methods of Data Collection


**Weeks 8 and 9: Nonparticipation**

SM, Chapter 6, Nonresponse in Sample Surveys

AAPOR Standard Definitions – revised 2011 [http://www.aapor.org/For_Researchers/4362.htm](http://www.aapor.org/For_Researchers/4362.htm)


Week 10: Interviewers and Interviewing

SM, Chapter 9, Survey Interviewing


Week 11: Evaluating and Testing Survey Questions

SM, Chapter 8, Evaluating Survey Questions


Weeks 12 and 13: Measurement, Instruments, and Response Issues - NOTE: Thanksgiving is Thur 28 November in Week 13

SM, Chapter 7, Questions and Answers in Surveys


Week 14: Post-Survey Processing, Estimation, and Documentation

SM, Chapter 10, Postcollection Processing of Survey Data


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Week 15: Confidentiality, Privacy, and Standards of Practice

SM, Chapter 11, Principles and Practices Related to Scientific Integrity


UW Guidelines for Research on Human Subjects and UW-Madison Policy on Student Research. Access from here: