This course is about survey data and where it comes 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 is pre-statistical in the sense that it considers issues that are dealt with before statistical analysis of data begins and in the sense that course assignments require no statistical analysis. But the exercises 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.

Course Assignments and Requirements

**Five Exercises.** Each exercise will be handed out on a Tuesday and will be due the following Tuesday. The exercises present realistic research situations, require research decisions, and give you practice applying the approaches and research presented in class and the readings. The exercises require you to apply readings in the course syllabus and you are encouraged to supplement them with other readings, if that will improve the final product. The maximum length of each exercise is 4 pages. I count only the four best grades, so you may skip one exercise if you are satisfied with your grade. Each exercise contributes 10% to the final course grade, for a total of 40% of the course grade.

**Project.** The course project 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. The maximum length of the project is 15 pages of text, and it contributes 60% to the course grade.

**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.

**Discussion Questions.** For every class, beginning in the second week, I will assign several
students to prepare discussion questions based on articles from the syllabus. This is a required assignment, but will not be formally graded. The number of articles each student will be responsible for depends on how many students register for the class. Email discussion questions -- in the text of the message, not as an attachment – by 9 a.m. on Monday morning. The subject line should say: “Soc 751 – Discussion question.”

No incompletes. All assignments must be completed on time. I deduct a letter grade for each day an assignment is late.

General Instructions for Assignments. All course assignments are to be written in a professional style. In the exercises, you will practice analyzing problems and proposing solutions in the style that you will use in writing research papers and grant proposals. Exercises and the project must be edited, proofed, and typed in the following format, except under extreme circumstances (such as broken fingers): 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 not read assignments that do not follow these guidelines. (Note that restrictions of this type are also common in requests for proposal.) All assignments must be turned in on paper. I do not accept attachments.

Be sure to keep your exercises and the project 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 and readings and whether additional sources are appropriately incorporated. I also consider the practicality, comprehensiveness, and creativity of the solution to the problem presented in the assignments. Finally, I take into account how well you present your solution--whether the presentation is organized, clear, and professional.

Office Hours. 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.

Readings

Readings average 80-100 pages each week. Be warned that reading assignments in some weeks are lighter than in others.

Required books. A book is "required" if more than one chapter is required reading, so that chapters could not be included in the coursepack. (This is the university's implementation of copyright restrictions.) I ordered these book at Canterbury Bookstore.

Book selections and articles. A coursepack of required readings that are not in required books is available at the Social Science Copy Center.
Reserve readings. Articles and book selections are on reserve in the Social Science Reading Room on the 8th floor of the Social Science Building. The Social Science Reading Room is on the 8th floor of the Social Science building. Take the rear elevator. Books from which required selections are taken are also on reserve at Helen C. White.

NOTE: All articles and books on reserve in the Social Science Reading Room are my personal copies. As a courtesy to 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


Other General Sources


Michigan: Wiley.


Aldine.

Course Outline

The course outline lists required and a few of many possible recommended readings. Required readings in the coursepack are marked with *. I use the following abbreviations:

ASR American Sociological Review     JASA Journal of the American Statistical Association
JMR Journal of Marketing Research     SM Sociological Methodology
SMR Sociological Methods and Research

Week 1: Introduction


Weeks 1 and 2: Errors in Surveys


Week 2: Assign Exercise 1


**Week 3: Basic Sampling Concepts**


**Weeks 4 and 5: Mode of Survey and Interview**


**Weeks 4 and 5: Other Data Collection Methods and Issues**


**Weeks 6 and 7: Nonparticipation**


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**Weeks 8, 9, 10: Instruments and Response Issues**


Weeks 11 and 12: Interviewers and Interviewing


Weeks 13 and 14: Computer Assisted Methods


Week 15: Confidentiality, Privacy, and Standards of Practice


PROJECT due Monday 16 December at noon. Turn in to CDE office, 4412 Soc Sci.