COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides an introduction to the conceptual issues raised by conducting measurement using self-reports in surveys, an overview of the literature that addresses theoretical and practical problems in questionnaire design, and practice in developing, reviewing, and writing standardized questions and questionnaires. Particular attention is paid to recent work that draws on cognitive psychology to inform designing standardized instruments. The course is structured around the stages of instrument development: developmental interviewing, question writing, question testing, pretesting, and questionnaire formatting. Issues involved in telephone interviews and computer-assisted interviews will be considered at several points, but the course focuses on face-to-face interviews conducted with paper instruments. The material covered in this course is relevant for standardized measurement in many social research contexts in addition to surveys, such as laboratory experiments.

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. The course provides conceptual and practical tools to use in planning and executing your own research.

Lectures assume that you have completed the assigned readings before the lecture, and lectures do not systematically summarize the readings. The schedule of readings given here is fixed, regardless of how much the lectures appear to deviate from the schedule.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS: Course grades are based on 6 assignments. The assignments provide an opportunity to work on a single problem through most stages of questionnaire design. For the final project you revise the assignments and prepare a final, complete, instrument. The reports required with the assignments must be written in a professional style and typed, and all instrument (questionnaire) drafts must be typed.

Six Assignments. You choose to work on a topic that I assign--or select one of your own--and the assignments lead you through the steps of developing a complete, though limited, instrument on that topic. I will hand out the instructions for all the assignments during the first week of class. Each assignment requires drafting a small portion of an instrument, testing it in two interviews, revising it, and writing a brief report. In the last assignment you put the pieces of the questionnaire together into a complete instrument,
pretest it, and write a final report. The final assignment is due Monday, 15 May. You must complete all six assignments.

**General Instructions.** All course assignments are to be prepared in a professional style. Reports prepared as part of the assignments 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, page-numbered, and stapled. Reports and instruments may use a fixed-font (e.g., courier) of 10 cpi or larger or a proportional font (such as Times Roman) of 12 points or larger. **Check your font.**

Be sure to keep your assignments and project if you think you will want to ask me for a letter of recommendation later based on your work in this course.

**Grading.** I deduct a letter grade for each day an assignment is late. I drop the lowest grade from the first 5 assignments, and the 4 best grades each contribute 20% to the final grade. The final assignment contributes 20% to the final grade.

**Auditors.** Students auditing or sitting in on the class must present discussion questions and complete a portion of assignment 1 and the instrument portion of assignments 2 through 5. Auditors need not write the reports or complete the final assignment. I will review these assignments, but not comment on them systematically or grade them.

**Criteria for Evaluation.** In evaluating class assignments I consider how well the work applies relevant concepts and findings presented in lectures and readings. The reports should explicitly refer to relevant results from the readings and show that you have read and understand the material; I consider how well you deploy the readings when I grade the reports. In grading the instruments, 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.

**Class Participation.** 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. If your grade for the class as a whole is "borderline," I take contributions to class discussion into account in assigning the final grade. The number of articles each student will be responsible for depends on how many register for the class.

**No incompletes.** All assignments must be completed on time.

**READINGS:** Readings average 80-100 pages each week.
Required books. Selections from required books are marked ** in the course outline. If I assigned more than 30 pages from the book, I cannot include it in the coursepack unless the book is out of print, so the book is “required.” Copies of these books are on reserve at Helen C. White and are for sale at Canterbury Books (315 W. Gorham at State St.; 258-9911; email: books@madisoncanterbury.com; Tue-Thur 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., Fri and Sat 8 a.m.- midnight, Sun 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. Canterbury will be open Monday the 24th from 11a.m.-6 p.m.) Some of the books are also on reserve in the Social Science Reading Room (SSRR) on the 8th floor of Social Science building.

NOTE: Canterbury receipts may be saved and cashed in (they are transferrable) for a night in their “inn,” so keep your receipts. If you don’t want yours, I can collect them to turn into the department to use to house visitors to the department. Or, if I get enough for one night, I’ll pick a student in the class at random to receive them.

Required book selections and articles. Articles and chapters from other books are marked * in the course outline. A coursepack with these materials is for sale in the Social Science Copy Center on the 6th floor. A copy of the coursepack is on reserve in the SSRR. Most books from which required selections are taken are on reserve at Helen C. White and in the SSRR.

The Social Science Reading Room is on the 8th floor of the Social Science building. Take the rear elevator.

NOTE: All articles and overheads on reserve in the SSRR are my personal copies. Please do not write on them. As a courtesy to your colleagues, if you need to keep an article for more than 1 day, please make a copy of it.

Required Books


**Additional Sources**

The following additional sources may be useful. Most are on reserve at Helen C. White.


**Course Outline**

The course outline lists required readings. Required readings from required books are marked with **. Required readings in the coursepack are marked *_. 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
- **POQ** Public Opinion Quarterly
- **SMR** Sociological Methods and Research
- **SM** Sociological Methodology

**Week 1 -- Course Introduction and Measurement in Surveys**

*Blalock, Hubert M. 1982. "Introduction" and "Fundamental Measurement, Scaling, and


Week 2 -- Question Development: Developmental Interviewing


*Schaeffer, Nora Cate, and Elizabeth Thomson. 1992. "The Discovery of Grounded
Uncertainty: Developing Standardized Questions about Strength of Fertility Motivation."


Week 3 -- Question Development (Continued) ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE **

Week 4 -- Questions about Behaviors and Events: Errors


Week 5 -- Questions about Behaviors and Events: Cognition and Memory Assignment 2 DUE **


*Belli, Robert F., Michael W. Traugott, Margaret Young, and Katherine McGonagle.*

**Week 6 -- Questions about Behaviors and Events: Writing Questions**


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**Week 7 -- Questions about Behaviors and Events (continued)**

**SPRING RECESS, Week of March 13**

**Week 8 -- Questions about Subjective Things: Errors and Cognitive Processes**

**Assignment 3 Due**

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**Week 9 -- Questions about Subjective Things: Choices and Ratings**


**Fowler, Floyd J. 1995. "Questions to Measure Subjective States." Chapter 3 in


Week 10 -- Questions about Subjective Things (Continued)

Week 11 -- Questions about Subjective Things: Writing Questions Assignment 4 DUE **


**Week 12 -- Question Testing**


**Week 13 -- Background Questions and Questionnaire Format Assignment 5 DUE**


**Week 14 -- Mode of Interview and Interviewing**


the AAUP 67:358-370.

* FINAL ASSIGNMENT IS DUE AT MY OFFICE ON MONDAY 18 MAY 10 a.m. **