

## SURVEY RESEARCH

Semester: **Fall 2017**  
Course Number: **34:833:635**  
Lecture Period: **Thursday, 6:10pm to 1:55 pm**

Course Instructor: **Dr. Debbie Borie-Holtz**  
Contact Information: [dbholtz@ejb.rutgers.edu](mailto:dbholtz@ejb.rutgers.edu)  
Office Hours and Location: **Thursday, 4:00-5:30 pm and by appointment**  
**Civic Square Building, 33 Livingston Avenue, Room 256**

### Required Text:

**Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Kepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau. (2009). *Survey Methodology*, 2nd ed. (Wiley).**

**Dillman, Don A., Smyth, Jolene D., and Christian, Leah Melani. (2014). *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*, 4th edition. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.).**

### Additional Materials:

**Readings and datasets are on Sakai. SPSS is available in the computer labs and on the Rutgers scarlet apps.**

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## COURSE OVERVIEW AND LEARNING GOALS

According to the Bloustein School's most recent course catalogue, this course teaches *[h]ow to conduct, analyze, and evaluate surveys. Topics covered include problem formation, sample design and selection, questionnaire wording and layout, modes of survey administration, field procedures, data reduction, and data analysis.* Notably absent from that course description is any insight into what, exactly, is “survey research.” While its common-language use is fairly easily understood (“polls, right?”), its technical dimensions and applications are the subject of higher-order study in research methodology. This course in survey methodology, then, provides instruction in “the theories and practices of the various data collection and analysis activities that are called ‘survey research’” (Groves, et al., 2009), toward the overarching goal of teaching you “to understand what it takes to do a good survey and the multiple sources of error that can reduce the accuracy of survey results...” (Dillman, et al., 2014: 3).

This, then, is a second-level empirical research methodology course in the arts and sciences of *survey research*, the main set of data collection mechanisms available to the social sciences. While survey research is, itself, a primary methodological tool, the concept of “survey research” invokes virtually any quantitatively ordered mechanism for collecting sample data from populations.

With that in mind, we will gather together for 14 weeks for a 2.5-hour-per-week discussion focused on *survey research and related data collection techniques*. I will facilitate all aspects of our collective engagement with these materials; however, your input and suggestions for supplementary readings from the academic press, popular press, or otherwise, are welcome. Just email them in; we like to consider methods in real time. After all, that's how we're going to use them, in real time. My pedagogical goal is that you have available to you all the reasonable and necessary means by which to achieve the learning goals I've determined fit this course, i.e., three pedagogical process goals, and familiarity with two substantive learning domains (simply, theory and praxis).

*Learning Goal #1: Operationalizing the Central Organizing Question of Survey Research:*

**“What do you want to know and from whom do you want to know it?”**

*Learning Goal #2: Funding, i.e., Achieving the Central Organizing Question of Survey Research:*

**“To properly fund a survey research project we always need to balance precision with cost.”**

*Learning Goal #3: Understanding and Deploying the Correct Data Collection Method(s):*

**“The method follows the question.” [or, more wordy, “The research method follows the research question.”]**

## ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism, failure to cite sources, fabrication and falsification, stealing ideas, and deliberate slanting of research designs to achieve a pre-conceived result. Penalties for misconduct can range from failing an assignment, exam, or a course, to suspension or dismissal from the university. For greater detail see: [http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nb-ug\\_current/pg21724.html](http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/nb-ug_current/pg21724.html). The Bloustein School is appending this memorandum to your course syllabus because we recently have detected obvious cases of plagiarism. We have found far fewer cases of other forms of academic misconduct, but we find several every year. It is imperative that you understand that unethical academic conduct is intolerable, and it is completely preventable.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

There are five components to the aggregate course grade you may earn, the maximum of which is 100:

- (1) Theory Chapter Exercises, from the Groves Text: Paced by our progress through the Groves text, we will have three problem sets completed that will be worth 10 points each for a total of 30 points.

(2) Practice Chapter Quizzes, for the Dillman Text: Paced by our progress through the Dillman text, we will have 6 quizzes over the course which will be available on Monday and cover roughly two weeks of material. Each quiz will be worth 5 points and you may drop the lowest grade, for a total of 25 points.

(3) The Questionnaire and Survey Protocol Development will be an opportunity to earn up to 20 course points. While we will discuss this in further detail in class, this assignment has two components including a hands-on application of Qualtrics administration and a relevant “best practices” questionnaire.

(4) The final project will consist of a group project which will be due December 7 @ 5pm. This project will include an assessment of the design and analysis of a “live” project to assess methodological strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for future longitudinal studies of the target population.

(5) “Engagement with the course,” which includes, most basically, attendance, preparedness, and participation, and, more loftily, consciousness, presence, and intellectual investment in the course experience (5 points, assigned by me under the totality of the circumstances).

Course letter grades will be assigned as follows:

90 to 100%	=	A	75 to 79%	=	C+
85 to 89%	=	B+	70 to 74%	=	C
80 to 84%	=	B	0 to 69%	=	F

Four Caveats:

1. Grades are not negotiated; they are earned. Occasionally, however, I may make a mistake in grading, ranging from adding up the points wrong, to completely not comprehending your answer. You are always welcome to raise these issues with me. The best time to do so is during break or immediately after class.
2. The policy on carrying “Incompletes” has been tightening and, as a result, I am very unlikely to agree to a final grade of Incomplete; rather, the remedy is to assign a final grade based on the points earned up the grades submission period.
3. There are no opportunities to “make up” a missed Dillman Chapter Quiz, are there any opportunities to “make up” a missed Groves Chapter Exercise Set. There are no “make ups.”
4. There is no such thing as “extra credit,” and when assigning final grades, I round up to the next highest letter grade based on a rule of reason applied under the totality of the circumstances.

## **Fall Semester 2017: Summary Overview of Calendar, by Topics and Assignments**

### **I. Beginnings**

#### **#01. 9/7**

Introductions; Overview of the Course; Review of the Syllabus; Acknowledging the Organizing  
(Three-Part) Question that Informs the Entire Course:

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| (1) What Do You Want to Know? and         | Conceptual Domain: “What”           |
| (2) From Whom Do You Want to Know It? and | Conceptual Domain: “Who(m)”         |
| (3) How Do You Get It From Them?          | Conceptual Domain: “How” [protocol] |

- Required reading, texts:
  - o Groves text: Chapter 1: An Introduction to Survey Methodology.
- Required reading, supplementary:
  - o Weisberg, Chapter 1: Scientific Survey Research: The Development of a Discipline.

#### **#02. 9/14**

Paradigms of Theory and Praxis:

- “Total Survey Error” and “Tailored Design”
- Required reading, texts:
  - o Groves text: Chapter 2: Inference and Error in Surveys;
  - o Dillman text: Chapter 1: Sample Surveys in Our Electronic World.

### **II. From Whom? Who Are *They*?**

#### **#03. 9/21**

Who: From Whom Do You Want to Know It (#1)

- Theory: Capturing Samples from Populations
- Praxis: Declining Response Propensity

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 3: Target Populations, Sampling Frames, and Coverage Error;
- o Dillman text: Chapter 2: Reducing People’s Reluctance to Respond to Surveys.

#### **#04. 9/28**

Who: From Whom Do You Want to Know It (#2)

- Theory: Overview of Sampling Theory
- Praxis: Population Coverage and Sampling: Beyond Probability Sampling

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 4: Sample Design and Sampling Error;
- o Dillman text: Chapter 3: Covering the Population and Selecting Who to Survey.

### #05. 10/5

Who: From Whom Do You Want to Know It (#3)

- Theory: The Survey as a Social Process;
- Praxis: Question Order and Testing for Question Order Effects

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 9: Survey Interviewing;
- o Dillman text: Chapter 7: Ordering Questions and Testing for Question Order Effects.

### #06. 10/12

Who: From Whom Do You Want to Know It (#4)

- *Theme: Who Doesn't Take Your Survey, Why, and Whether it Matters*
  - o Theory: Nonresponse, and Assessing and Addressing Non-Response Bias
  - o Praxis: Declining Response Propensity, Revisited

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 6: Nonresponse in Sample Surveys

## III. What? What—Exactly—Do You Want to Know?

### #07. 10/19

What: What Do You Want To Know (#1)

- *Theme: Asking Questions So You'll Get An Answer to the Question You Think You Asked*
  - o Theory: The Questionnaire/Survey Instrument as a Conversation, Part 1;
  - o Praxis: Writing Questions, #1

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 7: Questions and Answers in Surveys;
- o Dillman text: Chapter 4: The Fundamentals of Writing Questions

### #08. 10/26

What: What Do You Want To Know (#2)

- *Theme: Still Asking Questions So You'll Get An Answer to the Question You Think You Asked*
  - o Theory: The Questionnaire/Survey Instrument as a Conversation, Part 2;
  - o Praxis: Writing Questions, #2

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 8: Evaluating Survey Questions;
- o Dillman text: Chapter 5: How to Write Open- and Closed-Ended Questions.

#### IV. How: Protocol, Process, Procedure, Data Output, Costs, and Ethics.

#### #09. 11/2 Survey Project (in lab)

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 5: Methods of Data Collection;
- o Dillman text: Chapter 6: Aural Versus Visual Design of Questions and Questionnaires.

#### #10. 11/9 \*\*\* Election Special

#### #11. 11/16

How: How Do You Get It From Them (#1)

- *Theme: Making The Survey Machinery Work For You So Get Answers To What You Want To Know From Whom You Want To Know It*
  - o Theory: Data Collection: Modes and Protocols
  - o Praxis: Survey Design and Visual Presentation

Required reading, texts:

- o Dillman text: Chapter 8: Telephone Questionnaires and Implementation;
- o Dillman text: Chapter 9: Web Questionnaires and Implementation.

#### #12. 11/21 (Tuesday)

How: How Do You Get It From Them (#3)

- *Theme: Making The Survey Machinery Work For You'll So Get Answers To What You Want To Know From Whom You Want To Know It*
  - o Theory: Ethical Considerations of Survey Research (#2)
  - o Praxis: Modes of Contacting Respondents (#3): Mail
  - o Praxis: Modes of Contacting Respondents (#4): Mixed-Mode

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 11: Principles and Practices Related to Ethical Research.
- o Dillman text: Chapter 10: Mail Questionnaires and Implementation;
- o Dillman text: Chapter 11: Mixed-Mode Questionnaires and Survey Implementation.

**#13/14. 11/30 & 12/7**

How: How Do You Get It From Them (#4)

- *Theme: Specialized Applications of Survey Research and Related Data Collection*
  - o Theory: Post-Survey Process, Turning Raw Data in Sample Statistics of Population Parameters
  - o Praxis: Applications in Survey Research

Required reading, texts:

- o Groves text: Chapter 10: Postcollection Processing of Survey Data;
- o Groves text: Chapter 12: FAQs About Survey Methodology.
- o Dillman text: Chapter 12: Responding to Societal Changes and Preparing for What Lies Ahead.