

ELMP 8890 NA, Fall 2015
Survey Research
Wednesday, 5:00-7:10 PM
Jubilee Hall 120

REVISED 10/28/15

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Monday 4-7, Wednesday 2:30-4:30, or by appointment

Course Description

In the field of education, surveys are all around us. From large-scale surveys of students, schools, and colleges conducted under the purview of the National Center for Education Statistics to smaller surveys to explore students' satisfaction regarding a portion of their educational experience, surveys have become an important portion of education research and practice. While some students enrolled in this course will likely consider using a survey to collect data for their dissertations, being able to both effectively consume survey research results and create simple—yet effective—surveys are valuable skills for today's education professionals.

This course will provide an introduction to survey research, focusing on the dual goals of effectively analyzing existing surveys and being able to produce original surveys based on a set of research questions or hypotheses. We will begin by discussing the key large-scale national surveys that can be used as survey templates and are often ideal for dissertation research. We will then cover how researchers write about surveys for academic and non-academic audiences, as well as ways to present results. Finally, the majority of the course will be devoted to developing a draft survey on a topic of your choosing.

Course Expectations

Attendance and Class Participation: Students are expected to attend and participate in each class during the course of semester. Although there is no explicit credit given to regular attendance, it is unlikely that a student will succeed in the course without attending class. I recognize that many of your schedules are extremely busy and that a class may be occasionally missed, so please let me know in advance if you will be unable to attend.

Office Hours: I hope that everyone in the class meets with me on a one-on-one basis at least once during the semester to discuss course assignments and your goals for the class and graduate study. Appointments are not necessary during regular office hours, but are encouraged to avoid a potential wait. I am happy to arrange alternative office hours, either in person or via Skype or Google Hangout, if the regular office hours do not work for you.

Communications: I will use both Blackboard and e-mail to communicate important course messages. E-mails will be sent to your SHU account so I can guarantee that they are received. I typically respond to student e-mails within 24 hours; if the message is urgent and you have not received a response acknowledging receipt, please send your message again.

Submitting Assignments: All assignments must be submitted via Blackboard, and feedback will be returned in the same manner. If Blackboard is not working, please e-mail me to let me know and you can submit via Blackboard once service is restored. I anticipate returning all assignments with feedback and a grade within one week of the due date.

Academic Integrity: All students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity. All completed assignments must be original work for this course, must consist of original ideas and writing, and must include appropriate citations of others' ideas. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. As a student in this course, you are responsible for knowing and adhering to the spirit of University and ELMP policies regarding academic integrity and student conduct. Please contact me immediately if you have any questions about the academic integrity policy or if you are concerned about some of your writing inadvertently being considered plagiarism. It is far better to ask questions upfront than face a penalty later in the semester.

Department of ELMP – Cheating and Dishonesty

I. Statement —The Department of ELMP will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. Infractions will be appropriately penalized; students should understand that suspension or expulsion from the University is a possible result.

II. Definitions — “Academic Dishonesty” shall be understood to encompass at least the following:

Cheating — whether on tests or on other course assignments, whether by the giving, receiving or taking of information.

Plagiarism — stealing and/or passing off as one's own the ideas or words of another; using without crediting the source. It includes: (1) copying of text/research/assignments; (2) using someone else's papers/research/assignments without permission and citation; (3) representing as one's own work what is really the work of another person. This includes downloading from WEB sources.

III. Penalties:

1. A student determined to be cheating on any test or who plagiarizes on a course assignment will be appropriately penalized at the **discretion of the instructor**. This may include receiving a zero on the assignment or “F” for the course.
2. Notice that a student has cheated or plagiarized will be sent to the department chair. All cases of plagiarism resulting in an “F” for the course will be reported to the Dean. This can result in a recommendation to the Dean for suspension or expulsion from the university.
3. If the chair of the ELMP department finds that a student has been found to have committed acts of academic dishonesty in more than one ELMP course, the student is expelled from the ELMP program after due notice of the discovery. After one year, the department may rescind the expulsion upon the application of the student provided the student evidences a genuine, informed, and vigorous commitment to academic integrity to the satisfaction of the department’s faculty as a whole.
4. All department or instructor actions resulting from suspected violations of this policy will be taken in accordance with the students’ due process rights. Nothing in this policy statement shall be construed to preclude the department from taking appropriate disciplinary action against forms of academic dishonesty not stipulated here.

Services: Disability Support Services offers services to students with disabilities to facilitate their full participation in all campus activities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The office provides documentation review, reasonable accommodations, training groups, resource materials and referrals. For more information, see <http://www.studentaffairs.shu.edu/dss/>

Course Evaluation and Assignments

Evaluating a large national survey: For the first assignment, you will produce a report describing and evaluating a large national survey of your choosing. You may choose any survey that states to be nationally representative of some population of interest. Either individuals/families or organizations such as schools or colleges may be the unit of analysis. This assignment has the following criteria:

- Choosing a survey: What survey did you choose for this assignment? Why did you choose it?
- Who conducts the survey: Which organizations are responsible for developing, administering, and funding the survey? Note that many large surveys funded by the federal government are contracted out to private companies to be administered.

- Population and sampling frame: What justification is given for their population of interest? How is the sampling frame (the subjects selected to receive the survey) identified from the population?
- Getting a sample: What methods are used to get potential respondents to complete the survey? What is the survey response rate, and are there differential response rates by different types of respondents? (Note that federal surveys of institutions may not have issues with response rates because providing data can be a condition of federal funding.)
- Survey topics and constructs: What are some of the key topics that the survey seeks to cover? Are there portions of the survey that are attributed to other surveys? Is there information available about reliability of survey constructs?
- Presentation and use of results: How does the organization responsible for conducting the survey present results? (And what is your assessment of their presentation?) Can the public access the underlying survey data? Has other research used the survey data? Please provide a few references of studies that have used the data and how they used it.

The assignment is due on **September 30 at 5 PM** and will be worth **25%** of your semester grade. The report has a 10-page limit (double-spaced in proper APA format, excluding tables and references) and should cover all of the above points. If information is not available on any of the above points, please be sure to note that in the paper.

Summarizing and critiquing an article using survey data: In the second assignment, you will examine and summarize a peer-reviewed journal article that uses survey data, evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and make recommendations for improvement. You may work in groups of up to three students on this project. Please contact me if there are questions regarding whether the article is peer-reviewed or if the survey is appropriate for the assignment. The critique should have the following components:

- Introducing the article: What is the article? What journal is it in? And why did you choose the article—based on the data source, the topic, the author, or some combination of the above?
- Summarizing the article: What are the key findings of the article? Summarize the main goals of the article in approximately 2-3 paragraphs.
- Describing the survey: What is the survey that the author(s) used? Is it a survey that was already conducted (secondary data analysis), or was it something that they developed for the purposes of this research project? What information is available about the types of questions asked on the survey?
- Selecting the population and sampling frame: How did the creator(s) of the survey choose their population of interest and the sampling frame? Is there information available about survey response rates and the possibility of differential response rates by subgroups of students or institutions?

- Reliability and validity: What information is available about the reliability of survey measures or the validity of constructs? Do authors mention whether any of their questions are from previously validated surveys, and if so, do the samples seem reasonably similar?
- Quality of the study: Just because an article is peer-reviewed doesn't necessarily make it high-quality. Do you think that the survey results are credible, or are there concerns about response rates, validity, or how the analyses were conducted? Should the author(s) have considered research methods other than using surveys? Are there other things the author(s) could do to improve the quality of the study? Do you have some suggestions for future research after having read the study?

The paper should be no more than 10 double-spaced pages in length (excluding tables and references) in standard APA format. The paper is due **November 4 at 5 PM** and is worth **30%** of your semester grade.

Draft survey and report: The culminating experience for this course will be the creation of a draft survey in an area of your choosing, accompanied by a report explaining the decisions that you made in creating the survey. The report should have the following components:

- Introducing the topic: Why did you choose this topic for your survey? Why is a survey an appropriate mode of gathering information on your topic—are there other ways to get information that would also be useful?
- Research questions or hypotheses: What are the primary research questions or hypotheses guiding the creation of your survey? How do they influence the types of questions you are including in your survey?
- Population and sampling frame: What is the population you are interested in studying, and why are you interested in them? What is your desired sampling frame, and how would you identify it? What steps would you try to take to ensure external validity?
- Survey administration mode(s) and length: How would you administer your survey (Web, paper, phone, in-person, or a combination of methods)? Why is your method appropriate for your desired sample? What is the length of your survey? Are there cost considerations for your choices?
- Survey questions and main themes: You don't need to describe each question in the report, since you will also be submitting a survey. But you should break down each of the main themes in your survey and how you will get information on each of these themes from your respondents. Pay particular attention to justifying the order of questions on our survey to potentially maximize response rates.
- Reliability and validity: What information is available about the reliability and validity of your survey constructs? If your questions are based on other surveys, what information is available? Otherwise, if you were actually to conduct the survey, what steps would you take to establish reliability and validity?

- Potential strengths and weaknesses: What do you see as the potential strengths and weaknesses of your proposed survey? What steps would you take to shore up any weaknesses before going out into the field with the survey? What else would you like to learn before conducting the survey?

The grading weights and deadlines for the final paper are as follows:

Survey Proposal (5%, due October 28 at 5 PM): You will be expected to submit a one-page summary of your plans for the survey, which includes the topic, desired population/sample, and types of questions you're interested in (open-ended, Likert scale, etc.). The proposal must also include a brief timeline of how you will finish the assignment by the due date listed below. Full credit will be awarded for proposals that meet these requirements. Early submissions are encouraged, as are inquiries about the feasibility of potential topics. Students should meet with me before substantially changing their focus from the submitted proposal.

Survey Presentation (10%, in class on December 2 and 9): You will give a ten-minute presentation to the class summarizing your topic and providing preliminary information about the above criteria. Grades will be awarded based on meeting these requirements.

Completed Survey and Report (30%, due December 16 at 5 PM): The completed survey and accompanying report must be submitted by this time and should meet all of the criteria discussed above.

The survey may be as long as you like, and I am not particular about how it is formatted for the purposes of this class (a simple Word document is just fine). However, I do want you to justify why you chose the types of questions that you did. The accompanying report should be no more than 15 pages (excluding tables and references) and in proper APA format.

Notes on Assignments: Your assignments will be graded in part based on the quality of writing, which includes clarity, proper formatting and citations, and correct spelling and grammar. Students are encouraged to make an appointment with the Writing Center (<http://www.shu.edu/academics/artsci/writing-center/>) as soon as a draft paper is complete in order to receive feedback. All assignments must be submitted via Blackboard; please let me know immediately if you encounter any problems uploading files.

I encourage students to submit a draft of any assignments to me several weeks in advance of the due date, and to meet with me to discuss their progress. In order for me to give feedback to all students, I ask that students only submit one draft for comments (questions on particular parts of a paper are always welcome) and that they allow at least one week for me to provide feedback.

Presentation Guidelines: Learning how to give an effective presentation is one of the most important skills that you can learn in graduate school. The effectiveness of a presentation is

strongly correlated with the amount of preparation, so take time to practice your presentation and make sure it is as clear as possible. I strongly recommend using simple slides with large font sizes that can be easily read in the back of the classroom.

There are three course-specific requirements for presentations. First, slideshows must be submitted via Blackboard by noon that day so it can be loaded on the computer in advance of class. Second, I request that students not use Prezi for presentations and also avoid special graphics for transitions. (My eyes cannot handle the sudden zooms and transitions of Prezi, and they make some other people dizzy.) Finally, course presentation days are designed to be interactive. Grades will be assigned based on both the quality of the presentation and the feedback you provide to other students' presentations.

Late Assignments: There will be a 10% penalty assessed per day for late assignments unless an emergency exists. Late assignments will also receive minimal feedback. Class presentations cannot be made up unless prior arrangements have been made.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for assignments and the overall class is as follows:

93-100 pts- A
90-92 pts - A-
86-89 pts - B+
82-85 pts - B
78-81 pts - B-
73-77 pts - C+
70-72 pts - C
Below 70 pts - F

Textbook

Groves, R. M., Fowler, Jr., F. J., Couper, M. P., Lepkowski, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. (2009). *Survey methodology (2nd Ed.)*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Please make sure to get the textbook in time for the September 16 class. It is readily available on Amazon for approximately \$40-\$50.

Schedule (subject to change)

September 2: First day of class

Introduction

In-class: Kelley, K., Clark, B., Brown, V., & Sitzia, J. (2003). Good practice in the conduct and reporting of survey research. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 15(3), 261-266.

September 9: Introduction to national survey datasets

Watch the National Center for Education Statistics training modules. There are two sets of modules to watch. Everyone should watch the five common modules (<http://nces.ed.gov/training/datauser/#top>) and please watch one of the other sets of modules located lower on the page (ECLS-K, ELS, HSLs, postsecondary, SASS, SSOCS, or international) to become familiar with a dataset of your choice.

September 16: Introduction to survey methods and the survey lifecycle

Groves et al. chapters 1 and 2

September 23: Population, sampling frames, and sample design

Groves et al. chapters 3 and 4

September 30: Data collection methods

Survey evaluation assignment due at 5 PM

Groves et al. chapter 5

October 7: Nonresponse issues

Groves et al. chapter 6

October 14: Writing survey questions

Groves et al. chapter 7

October 21: Evaluating survey questions

Groves et al. chapter 8

October 28: Survey interviews

Survey proposal due at 5 PM

Groves et al. chapter 9

November 4: Processing data and survey ethics

Journal article critique due at 5 PM

Groves et al. chapters 10 and 11

November 11: NO CLASS

November 18: Survey presentations (Mariel, Daria, Monica, Jared, Mursel, Michael, Ryan, Marie, and Lauren)

November 25: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

December 2: How to present data

Huff, D. (1993). The gee-whiz graph AND The one-dimensional picture. Pp. 60-73 in *How to Lie with Statistics*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Tufte, E. (2003). PowerPoint is evil. *Wired*.

Volkwein, J. F. (2010). Reporting research results effectively. *New Directions for Institutional Research 2010*(S1), 155-163.

Look at sample data presentations from the following institutions (on BlackBoard):

Arizona State University

Excelsior College

Monroe Community College

December 9: Survey presentations (all others)

December 16, 5 PM: Survey and final report due