

Professor Jamie Druckman
jdruckma@ur.rochester.edu
Office: 324 Harkness

PSCI 203W-01
Fall Semester, 2025
Office Hours: T./Th. 2:00-
3:00/by appointment

Survey Research Methods

This course explores how to use surveys to make inferences in the social sciences. The course begins by situating surveys in the larger research process, touching on validity, ethics, and the evolution of surveys. It then focuses on canonical topics such as probability and non-probability sampling as well as non-response and reaching hard to survey populations. The course next turns to how respondents answer questions and how to write optimal questionnaires. The final classes cover data analysis and reporting, and various domain specific topics (e.g., survey experiments, election polling, artificial intelligence). Students will complete a research project that involves designing their own survey. By the end of the course, students will be able to develop and evaluate social science surveys.

The class meets on Wednesday from 2:00PM-4:40PM in 112 Harkness. Each class meeting is broken up into three modules. The average module will be 45 minutes with breaks in between.

The course outline may change depending on the amount of time devoted to each topic (e.g., some topics may take longer/shorter than anticipated).

Assignments/Exams

There are four components that will comprise students' grades.

1. *Research Paper*: Each student will write a paper that develops a plan for a survey. The topic can be whatever interests the student, as long as it involves using a novel survey for the collection of new data. There are seven parts: 1) the initial idea (one page) (September 10), 2) list of at least eight academic sources in bibliographic form (not just the links) (September 17), 3) an annotated bibliography with the eight academic papers (5 pages) (September 24), 4) a literature review (8 pages) (October 8), 5) a design plan that explains the sample, survey questions, analysis plan, and logistics (to be discussed in individual meetings) (October 29), 6) a design document with the aforementioned elements (5 pages) (November 19), and 7) a final paper that presents a complete project with a survey that would be ready to field (16 pages) (December 12). Parts of several classes will involve students presenting and/or discussing their projects.
2. *Exams*: There will be two exams (October 15, December 3). The first exam will cover any material presented/discussed in class as well as the readings from August 27 through October 8. The second exam will cover any material presented/discussed in class as well as the readings from October 15 through November 19. The exams will be no longer than one hour and be a mix of multiple choice and short answers. There is no final exam.

3. *Short Assignments.* There are various short assignments that will be conducted individually, in teams, or with the entire class. These are described in the course outline.
4. *Participation.* Students are expected to attend every class and actively participate. At a minimum this means being attentive (i.e., not using digital devices such as phones or computers for things unrelated to the class). It also means being prepared to discuss any assigned readings, and actively engaging in class conversations. That said, the quality rather than the quantity of participation is what matters most.

The below table summarizes due dates.

Assignment	Due Date
Initial research idea	September 10
List of sources	September 17
Annotated bibliography	September 24
Literature review	October 8
Exam 1	October 15
Design plan for meeting	October 29
Design plan document	November 19
Final paper	December 12
Exam 2	December 3

Grading

The course grade will be determined based the research paper (60% total), each exam (15% each), the short assignments (15%), and participation (10%). (For the research paper, the respective percentages for each the seven parts – that will overall aggregate to 60% of your grade – are 10%, 10%, 15%, 20%, 10%, 20%, and 15%.

If you would like to appeal a grade, you must do so within one week of receiving it. You must write an explanation of why you believe the grade should be changed and provide the professor with a hard copy of the appeal and a copy of the original assignment.

Teaching Assistant

The class has a Ph.D. student teaching assistant, Dot Sawler (dot.sawler@rochester.edu). Dot will grade some of the assignments/tests and also will help answer questions/provide advice on your projects. Her offices hours are Tuesdays from 10:00-11:30 in Harkness Hall 109a (in the Wallis Institute of Political Economy).

Course Policies

Attendance is absolutely mandatory. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss, in detail, *all of the assigned readings*. Students may be asked to present specific assigned readings without prior notice.

Late assignments will not be accepted. Exceptions will only be made for religious holidays, illness (verified by a note from a health care provider), serious family emergencies, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, and participation in group activities sponsored by the university. This means a late assignment, without a legitimate excuse, will not be read or

accepted (a score of 0 will be assigned). Do not request turning in an assignment late without a legitimate excuse.

All assignments will be submitted via Blackboard.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is mostly only relevant to the components of the research paper. Students are advised not to use it or use it with great caution (beyond as a proof-reading device). AI is not a reliable substitute for reading literature related to your project – it often hallucinates badly. Inaccurate depictions of literature will be given a very poor grade (and the professor and/or teaching assistant will likely be familiar with whatever literature you are writing about).

Readings

Most of the readings can be found at links via the syllabus or on Blackboard (all the Groves et al. book chapters are on Blackboard).

Some of the readings may be changed as the course progresses. Changes will be announced in class and/or via Blackboard.

Course Outline

August 27 Introduction

Assignment: In teams of two, explore the role of polls in an assigned election/time period. Write a two-page double spaced summary and prepare to present to the class. Election/time periods: 1824 presidential election; 1916-1932 Literary Digest polls; 1936 Literary Digest vs. Gallup; 1948 Dewey vs. Truman; 1980 Carter vs. Reagan; 2016 Brexit vote; 2016 Clinton vs. Trump; 2020 Biden vs. Trump.

September 3 History of Surveys, Research Design, and Validity

Module 1: History of Surveys

Herbest, Susan. 1993. *Numbered Voice: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3 (pages 43-68).

Groves, Robert M. 2011. "[Three Eras of Survey Research](#)." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75: 861-871.

Module 2: Presentations of Historic Polls.

Module 3: Research Design and Validity

Ogburn, William F. 1940. "[Social Trends](#)." *American Journal of Sociology* 45: 756-769.

Holland, Paul W. 1986. "[Statistics and Causal Inference](#)." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 81: 945-960.

Druckman, James N. 2022. *Experimental Thinking: A Primer on Social Science Experiments*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Pages 27-40, 61-70.

September 10 Ethics and Probability Sampling

Module 1: Ethics

Milgram, Stanley. 1963. "[Behavioral Study of Obedience](#)." *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67: 371-378. (*skim*)

Zimbardo, Phillip. "[A Pirandellian Prison](#)," *New York Times Magazine* April 8, 1973. (*skim*)

Groves et al. "Principles and Practices Related to Ethical Research." Chapter 11.

[American Association for Public Opinion Research \(AAPOR\) Code of Ethics](#)

[AAPOR Transparency Initiative Disclosure Elements](#)

[Go through the IRB Office's Social-Behavioral-Educational Template](#)

Module 2: Assignment: Find three recent polls/surveys. Assess whether they satisfy each of AAPOR's disclosure elements. Explain what is missing.

Module 3: Probability Sampling

Groves et al. "Target Populations, Sampling Frames, and Coverage Error." Chapter 3.

Bautista, René. 2022. "[Drawing Inferences from Public Opinion Surveys: Insights for Intelligence Reports](#)." In National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Measurement and Analysis of Public Opinion: An Analytic Framework*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Chapter 3a (pages 51-97).

[American National Election Studies](#)

[The General Social Survey](#)

September 17 Unit and Item Nonresponse / Non-probability Sampling

Module 1: Unit and Item Nonresponse

Groves et al. "Nonresponse in Sample Surveys." Chapter 6.

Cavari, Amnon, and Guy Freedman. 2023. "[Survey Nonresponse and Mass Polarization: The Consequences of Declining Contact and Cooperation Rates](#)." *American Political Science Review* 117: 332-339.

Module 2: Discussion of Research Project Proposals.

Module 3: Non-probability Samples

Cornesse, Carina, Annelies G. Blom, David Dutwin, Jon A. Krosnick, Edith D. De Leeuw, Stéphane Legleye, Josh Pasek, Darren Pennay, Benjamin Phillips, Joseph W. Sakshaug, Bella Struminskaya, and Alexander Wenz. 2020. "[A Review of Conceptual Approaches and Empirical Evidence on Probability and Nonprobability Sample Survey Research](#)." *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology* 8: 4-36.

Enns, Peter, and Jacob Rothschild. 2021. "[Revisiting the 'Gold Standard' of Polling: New Methods Outperformed Traditional Ones in 2020](#)." *Medium*, March, 18.

Mercer, Andrew, and Arnold Lau. 2023. "[Comparing Two Types of Online Survey Samples](#)." Pew Research Center.

September 24 Mode and Response Quality

Module 1: Mode

Gooch, Andrew, and Lynn Vavreck. 2019. "[How Face-to-Face Interviews and Cognitive Skill Affect Item Non-Response: A Randomized Experiment Assigning Mode of Interview](#)." *Political Science Research and Methods* 7: 143-162.

Endres, Kyle, D. Sunshine Hillygus, Matthew DeBell, and Shanto Iyengar. 2023. "[A Randomized Experiment Evaluating Survey Mode Effects for Video Interviewing](#)." *Political Science Research and Methods* 11: 144-159.

Module 2: Assignment: *Develop class survey to be administered via zoom / on-line.*

Module 3: Response Quality

Kennedy, Courtney, Nicholas Hatley, Arnold Lau, Andrew Mercer, Scott Keeter, Joshua Ferno, and Dorene Asare-Marfo. 2021. "[Strategies for Detecting Insincere Respondents in Online Polling](#)." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 85: 1050-1075.

Berinsky, Adam J., Alejandro Frydman, Michele F. Margolis, Michael W. Sances, and Diana Camilla Valerio. 2024. "[Measuring Attentiveness in Self-Administered Surveys](#)" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 88: 214-241.

October 1 Opt-in on-line samples and Hard to Survey Populations

Module 1: Opt-in on-line samples

Bohannon, John. 2016. "[Mechanical Turk Upends Social Sciences](#)." *Science* 352: 1263-1264.

Zhang, Chan, Christopher Antoun, H. Yanna Yan, and Fredrick G. Conrad. 2019. "[Professional Respondents in Opt-in Online Panels: What Do We Really Know?](#)" *Social Science Computer Review* 38: 703-719.

Kennedy, Courtney, Dana Popky, and Scott Keeter. 2023. "[How Public Polling Has Changed in the 21st Century](#)." Pew Research Center.

Module 2: Assignment: *Write a survey on the assigned constructs to be implemented.*

Module 3: Hard to Survey Populations

Tourangeau, Roger. 2014. "[Defining Hard-to-Survey Populations](#)." In Roger Tourangeau, Brad Edwards, Timothy P. Johnson, Kirk M. Wolter, and Nancy Bates, eds., *Hard-to-Survey Populations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Barreto, Matt A., Lorrie Frasure-Yokley, Edward D. Vargas, and Janelle Wong. 2018. "[Best Practices in Collecting Online Data with Asian, Black, Latino, and White Respondents: Evidence from the 2016 Collaborative Multiracial Post-Election Survey](#)." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6:171-180.

October 8 Psychology of Survey Response and Writing Questions

Module 1: Psychology of Survey Response

Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "[A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences](#)." *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 579-616.

Module 2: Guest Speaker (via zoom at 3:00). Greg Bovitz, Founder and Executive Chairman of [Bovitz, Inc.](#)

Module 3: Writing Questions

Groves et al. "Questions and Answers in Surveys." Chapter 7.

Groves et al. "Evaluating Survey Questions." Chapter 8.

October 15 Exam 1

Module 1: Exam 1

Module 2: Assignment: As a class, we will identify up to five "sensitive" survey questions. Each student will write questions for each question and then collect data to present in the next class.

Module 3: Catch-up (if needed)

October 22 Sensitive Questions and Survey experiments

Module 1: Sensitive Questions

Blair, Graeme, Alexander Coppock, and Margaret Moor. 2020. "[When to Worry about Sensitivity Bias: A Social Reference Theory and Evidence from 30 Years of List Experiments](#)." *American Political Science Review* 114: 1297-1315.

Yan, Ting. 2021. "[Consequences of Asking Sensitive Questions in Surveys](#)." *Annual Review of Statistics and Its Application* 8: 109-127.

Module 2: Present results from survey with sensitive items.

Module 3: Survey Experiments

Bansak, Kirk, Jens Hainmueller, Daniel J. Hopkins, and Teppei Yamamoto. 2021. “[Conjoint Survey Experiments](#).” In James N. Druckman and Donald P. Green, eds., *Advances in Experimental Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Schachter, Ariela, and Katherine Weisshaar. 2025. “[Survey Experiments In Sociology](#).” *Annual Review of Sociology* 51: 149-169.

See: <http://tessexperiments.org/> (Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences)

October 29 Project Meetings

November 5 Analysis and Reporting of Survey Data, and Election Polls

Module 1: Analysis of Survey Data

Groves et al. “Postcollection Processing of Survey Data.” Chapter 10.

Module 2: Reporting of Survey Data

Sharma, Akash, et al. 2021. “[A Consensus-Based Checklist for Reporting of Survey Studies \(CROSS\)](#).” *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 36: 3179-3187.

Jamieson, Kathleen Hall, Arthur Lupia, Ashley Amaya, Henry E. Brady, René Bautista, Joshua D. Clinton, Jill A. Dever, David Dutwin, Daniel L. Goroff, D. Sunshine Hillygus, Courtney Kennedy, Gary Langer, John S. Lapinski, Michael Link, Tasha Philpot, Ken Prewitt, Doug Rivers, Lynn Vavreck, David C. Wilson, and Marcia K. McNutt 2023. “[Protecting the Integrity of Survey Research](#).” *PNAS Nexus* 2: pgad049.

Module 3: Election Polls

Hillygus, D. Sunshine. 2011. “[The Evolution of Election Polling in the United States](#).” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75: 962-981.

Kennedy, Courtney, et al. 2018. “[An Evaluation of the 2016 Election Polls in the United States](#).” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 82: 1-33.

[American Association for Public Opinion Research Task Force on 2020 Pre-Election Polling, Executive Summary.](#)”

November 12 COVID-19 Surveys and Artificial Intelligence

Module 1: COVID-19 Surveys

Santillana Mauricio, et al. 2024. "[Tracking COVID-19 Infections Using Survey Data on Rapid At-Home Tests](#)." *JAMA Network Open* 7: e2435442.

[CHIP50 Project](#).

Module 2: Guest Speaker (via zoom at 3:00). Dan Merkle, Executive Director of Polling, Elections, and Data Analytics at [ABC News](#).

Module 3: Artificial Intelligence

Dillon, Danica, Niket Tandon, Yuling Gu, and Kurt Gray. 2023. "[Can AI Language Models Replace Human Participants?](#)" *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 27: 597-600.

Westwood, Sean J. 2025. "The Potential Existential Threat of Large Language Models to Online Survey Research." Unpublished Paper, Dartmouth College.

[National AI Opinion Monitor](#).

November 19 Politics of Surveys and the Census

Module 1: Politics of Surveys

Opsahl, Robin. 2024. "[Trump Sues Des Moines Register, Pollster Over Preelection Iowa Poll](#)," *Missouri Independent*, December 17.

"[AAPOR Statement on Trump v. Seltzer...](#)" December 17, 2024

Steinbaugh, Adam, and Conor Fitzpatrick. 2025. "[FIRE's Defense of Pollster J. Ann Selzer...](#)" *Fire*, January 7.

Richards, Zoe, and Gary Grumbach. 2025. "[Trump Drops Federal Lawsuit Against Iowa Pollster Ann Selzer, Refiles in State Court](#)," *NBC News*, June 30.

Casselmann, Ben. 2025. "[Trump Fired America's Economic Data Collector. History Shows the Perils](#)." *The New York Times*, August 3.

"[Bureau of Labor Statistics Tells the U.S. What's Up with the Economy](#)." *The Conversation*, August 8, 2025.

"[AAPOR Statement on the Removal of BLS Commissioner McEntarfer](#)" August 2, 2025

Module 2: Guest Speaker (3:00). Antje Kirchner, Independent Researcher.

Module 3: The Census

Neidert, Lisa, Reynods Farley, and Jeffrey Morenoff. 2025. "[How Census Undercount Became a Civil Rights Issue and Why It Is Increasingly Important](#)." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 11: 26-43.

Wang, Hansi Lo. 2024. "[Republicans in Congress Are Trying to Reshape Election Maps By Excluding Noncitizens](#)." *NPR*, May 1.

Wang, Hansi Lo. 2025. "[Trump Wants a New U.S. Census To Exclude People Here Illegally. It'd Be Unprecedented](#)." *NPR*, August 7.

Brown, J. David., and Misty L. Heggeness. 2025. "[Citizenship Question Effects on Household Survey Response](#)." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. March.

November 26 No Class (Thanksgiving)

December 3 Exam 2

Module 1: Exam 2

Modules 2, 3: Catch-up (if needed)

December 8 Trending Topics and Class Summary

Module 1: Trending Topics

Miller, Peter V. 2017. "[Is There a Future for Surveys?](#)" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 81: 205-212.

Gaylin, Dan. 2024. "[Are Surveys Dead?: Long Live Surveys](#)." NORC. July.

"[Trends in Survey and Data Science](#)." University of Michigan.

Modules 2: Catch-up (if needed)

Modules 3: Class Summary