

PPHA 41850
Modern Survey Research Techniques and Methodologies
Harris School of Public Policy
University of Chicago
SPRING 2024

Instructor:

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Background and Goals

Survey research in various forms provides a key element of information necessary to make policy decisions and to advocate for policy outcomes. That being said, the field of survey research has transformed dramatically over the last 20 years, sometimes for the better and sometimes not. Different survey modes such as online, mobile phones, text and visual representation stand alongside more traditional modes in terms of data collection. There are new sample sources available for use, many of which violate the core principles taught in a traditional survey sampling course. There are new ways of asking respondents questions that elicit more meaningful responses to difficult or sensitive concepts. This course will explore modern survey research techniques and methodologies in their entirety, comparing them to more traditional techniques and methodologies, while exploring the good, the bad and the ugly.

Coming out of this course students should be able to do the following:

1. Understand their options in conducting survey research as they currently stand.
2. Be able to compare different ways of doing survey research and have a model for deciding which mode and sample source to use for any given use case.
3. Be able to identify issues with survey research data collected in a variety of manners.
4. Be able to defend the survey research they conduct.

It is my intention that after this course, each student that successfully completes the work is well qualified for a job in the survey research industry at the research analyst level should they choose to go that route.

Class: Thursdays 9:30-12:20 (CDT). This is a hybrid course. I will be on campus half the time and the class will be held via Zoom half the time. When on campus the class will be held in KELL 2112. A tentative schedule of when it will be in person and when it will be on Zoom is

included in this syllabus but I will send a note out prior to each week's class reminding everyone how class will be conducted for that week.

I will not require you to be in the classroom for those classes that I am teaching over Zoom but the room will be made available and at least one of the TAs will be in attendance. I would ask that even if you are in the classroom on the weeks that I am remote that each student log on individually into Zoom.

A Zoom stream will be made available for those weeks I am teaching in person but I will not be able to respond to questions on Zoom in real time. I would ask that you make every attempt to make it to class on those weeks I am in person but I understand that things happen.

I would ask that when on Zoom, you keep your camera on. One of the great things about Zoom is the interactivity it provides and it is greatly lessened when you are not on camera.

Class will be split into two sections with a 10 minute break in between. The first section, from 9:30 to 10:50, will generally be set aside for the introduction of new material. The second section from 11:00 to 12:20 will be used to apply the new material we have learned to the real world or for a special guest I will bring in to illuminate how the material applies to the real world production of survey research.

A note on my attendance policy. You are adults and as such you are responsible for the material I cover in this course. How you choose to learn this material is up to you. I will not take attendance and attendance will not be a part of your grade. That being said, whereas we will have readings that cover the various topics in this course, a lot more nuanced takes on the material will be presented in class. I would find it difficult to successfully complete the course without coming to class but that is how I learn, not you.

Office Hours: Office hours will be held via Zoom. I will officially hold office hours from 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm (CDT) on Tuesday. I will also provide one-on-one meetings by request and dependent on my schedule. I will use an open link that I will send to each of you and post in CANVAS. Each TA will also hold an office hour and those times will be posted at the beginning of the quarter.

CANVAS: We will use CANVAS for class assignments as well as discussions. I am new to CANVAS as we did not have it when I was a student here so I will ask for a bit of grace if I get something wrong but will endeavor to use all the resources I have available to create an effective online environment.

Course Teaching Assistants:

Rohit Kandala – rohitk@uchicago.edu
Jorge Zavala – jzavalad@uchicago.edu

Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites for the course. It would be useful for you to have some experience with survey research but not necessary.

AI Usage

AI and its variants have many benefits and uses. There is wide debate about whether it should be allowed in an academic setting due to its potential ability to supplant actual learning by the student. My philosophy is that AI is just a tool and we allow tools in all areas of your education. I only ask that the particular AI tools used be cited in what ever you are turning in. Also be warned, gen AI is still not perfect and at times produces work that sounds good but is completely wrong. You are responsible for whatever you turn in.

One particularly good use of gen AI is as a translator. If English is not your first language, you may want to try writing your material in your native language and having gen AI translate it. You will want to review what it outputs but it could be useful.

Student assignments and grading

Your grade for this course will be determined by four essay based assignments, a group project and a final exam.

Each essay assignment is a checkup to understand how well you are comprehending the material in class and each assignment is worth 5% of your total grade.

The group assignment is the construction of a survey research project on a topic of interest to the group. There are four elements to the project with each element being worth 10% of your course grade.

- The project plan, including mode of execution, sample size, sample source, and a big picture view of how the data collected will be used to accomplish your task. You will need to defend your choices here.
- A questionnaire
- An analysis plan, including specifics on how the data collected will be used to achieve the goals of the effort.
- The “issue” – No project runs exactly how you think it will. During week 8 of classes, I or one of the TAs will contact your group with an issue that has occurred during data collection. You will need to propose a solution to the problem.

I have run this project with young researchers in industry for decades and it is a good way of learning how to run a quality project. I may refer to it as “Golden Goose” from time to time as this is what I have called it in the past.

The final exam will be held Thursday May 23rd from 11:00 am to 12:20 pm in KELL 2112. It will be worth 40% of your final grade and will be comprehensive in terms of material throughout the course.

Your final grade will therefore be comprised as follows:

Essay Assignments	20%
Group Assignment	40%
Final Exam	40%

We only have 9 weeks together, ignoring week 10 due to it just being exam week, so it is important that you keep up with the course. Late assignments will be accepted but will be penalized 10% per day late. If more than a week late, the most you can get is 50% of its original value and only if approved by me. Note that I understand things come up, I will make exceptions when warranted, please talk to me as soon as you know of an issue.

Course Materials:

There are two required books for this course and one optional book.

The required books:

Groves, R.M, Fowler Jr., F.J., Couper M.P., Lepkowski J.M., Singer E., and Tourangeau, R. 2009. *Survey Methodology* (2nd Edition)

Note: If you have taken 41600, this is the same book that was used in that course and serves as a great background for survey concepts.

Fielding, N. (ed), Lee, R. (ed), Blank, G. (ed). 2016. *The Sage Handbook of Online Research Methods*. (2nd Edition).

Note: This book is really a series of articles on topics that we will be discussing. Some of these articles I agree with their approach and some I do not. Makes for a fun debate.

Optional Book:

Kish, L. 1995. *Survey Sampling (Wiley Classics Library)*.

Note: I will not assign any readings from this book, it is somewhat technical, and it is somewhat expensive. I include this here because it is the classic book in the world of survey sampling. If you choose to go into this area professionally, you need to be familiar with this work.

Other readings will be articles from professional and academic journals as well as presentations that practitioners in this space have completed. I will make sure to review what needs to be read for the coming week at the end of the prior week's class and will post in CANVAS.

Weekly Topics

Class Date	Topic	Class Location
3/21/24	Introduction Mode Versus Sample Source Survey Sampling	Zoom
3/28/24	Concepts of Bias	KELL 2112

	Total Survey Error Probability Samples Versus Model Based Samples Survey Non-Response The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly	
4/4/24	Measurement Different Forms of Data Collection Fit for Purpose Ethical Issues in Data Collection Special Guest	KELL 2112
4/11/24	Survey Design Principles Special Guest	Zoom
4/18/24	Survey Design Principles (Part II)	Zoom
4/25/24	Representativeness Weighting Variability	KELL 2112
5/2/24	Do We Even Need Surveys (AI) Synthetic Data Missing Data Special Guest	Zoom
5/9/24	Analysis of Survey Data Advanced Analysis Tools Group Presentations	Zoom
5/16/24	Class Wrap up and Review The Great Debate – Traditional Versus Modern Survey Research Methods	KELL 2112
5/23/24	Final Exam (11:00am – 12:20pm)	KELL 2112

General Resources Available to Students

It is vitally important that students get all of the support necessary for a good, learning environment to take place. Here is a list of resources. Any other issues, please feel free to contact me.

- [Harris Academic Support Programs and Handbook](#)
- [Student Wellness](#)
- [University Learning Resources](#)

Harris School and University of Chicago Policies

- [Harris School Policies](#)
- [University General Policies](#)
- [University Academic Policies](#)
- Policies on audio and video [recordings](#) and [deletion](#).