

GOVT/COMM 3189

Taking America's Pulse: Creating and Conducting a National Opinion Poll

Spring Semester 2015

Tuesday and Thursday 11:40am - 12:55pm (Rockefeller 230)

Instructors

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Teaching Assistants

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Overview

This is a University Course. University Courses (<http://universitycourses.cornell.edu/>) at Cornell are designed to teach students to think from the perspectives of multiple disciplines, across departments and among diverse fields of study. University Courses foster intellectual discovery, promote debate, and address complex issues. Students taking University Courses enroll alongside students from across the university and examine engaging subjects through new and different lenses.

This course aims to meet these goals by having students create, conduct, and analyze a national public opinion poll. Students will determine the questions asked on the survey, they will help conduct the telephone interviews, and they will analyze the data. The survey is a collaborative endeavor that depends on the entire class working together. Details on last year's survey are available here: <http://blogs.cornell.edu/americaspulse2014/>. There are no prerequisites for this course. Relying on methods and perspectives from Political Science and Communication, we will teach you everything you need to know to analyze the data.

In addition to generous support from University Courses, this course is also made possible through the support of Cornell's Survey Research Institute (<https://www.sri.cornell.edu/sri/>). SRI provides survey research, data collection, and analysis services to the Cornell

community as well as to other academic, non-profit, governmental, and corporate clientele.

Objectives:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- write clear, valid, and reliable survey questions.
- evaluate conclusions drawn from survey data.
- analyze public opinion data and present results.

Texts and Software

- *Creating and Conducting Survey Research*. 2014. Rea, Louis M. and Richard A. Parker. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Stata (<http://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/>). *Note:* Small Stata for 6 months (\$35.00) will be sufficient for in-class activities. Stata/IC 13 for 6 months (\$69.00) will allow you to open almost any size dataset. Annual or Perpetual licenses are also an option.
- We will also iclicker to take attendance and during class. (We are trying to arrange it so you can use a smart phone or lap top.)

Evaluation

Your performance in this class will be assessed as follows:

Complete 5 Survey Interviews	20%
Class & Section Participation	15%
Assignments	20%
Op-Ed	15%
Research Poster	30%

All work you turn in should include your TA's name and all written work should be double spaced.

Complete 5 Survey Interviews (20%)

Conducting survey interviews is an integral component of this course, both in terms of learning about surveys and in terms of collecting necessary data. Grading of the surveys will be as follows. Less than 4 completions=0%. 4 completions=80%. 5 completions=100%. Every

additional completion (up to a total of 10) corresponds to 5 additional percentage points. After that, each additional completion (up to a total of 15) corresponds to 3 additional percentage points. (i.e., 15 completions=140%).

Class & Section Participation (15%)

This grade will be based on your *attendance* in class and section, *participation* in class and section, and scores on *pop quizzes*.

Assignments (20%)

There will be several assignments related to your survey question and several assignments to help you learn data analysis. We may add additional assignments throughout the semester. *Note: Not all assignments are weighted the same.*

Op-Ed (15%)

You will be graded on a draft and the final version of your op-ed.

Research Poster (30%)

The Research Poster will be a group project. The instructors will assign groups of 3-4 people. We will provide specific details in the coming weeks.

Free Lunch

Starting February 3, (most) every Tuesday Professor Enns and Schuldt will walk to the Ivy Room for lunch in Willard Straight. We invite students to join us and we will pay for your lunch!

Readings and Assignments

We have listed the assigned readings below. *Complete the day's reading before coming to class.* All readings that are not from the assigned text will be available through Blackboard. We may assign additional readings throughout the course. We may also revise portions of the syllabus as appropriate.

- Week 1 (No Sections)
 - Th. 1/22: Class Introduction

- Week 2 (**Section:** Come with 3 research questions/ideas. In Section you will discuss these research interests, ways to collaborate, possible survey questions, etc.)

- Tues. 1/27: Survey Questionnaires
 - * Rea & Parker: Chapters 1 & 2
 - * Gallup Survey 1937
 - * ANES 2012 Survey
- Th. 1/29: Question Wording
 - * Rea & Parker: Chapters 3 & 4
- Week 3 (**Section:** Assignment 1: Bring 3 survey questions (including response options) that you wrote (turn these in during section). You must also bring a laptop to section. In section, you will learn how to find survey questions and data on the Roper Center Website. Assignment 2: Use the Roper Center website to find at least two questions that are similar to the question(s) you proposed. Copy and paste the questions (including response options) and full citation information. Upload Assignment 2 to Blackboard by Friday at 5pm.
 - Tues. 2/3: Survey Experiments
 - * Druckman & Lupia “Experimenting with Politics”
 - * Mutz *Population-Based Survey Experiments*, Chapter 1
 - Th. 2/5: Remembering the Big Picture
 - * Assignment 3: Find an op-ed that uses survey data in some way. The op-ed *cannot* be from a national news paper. Read the op-ed, print a copy, bring it to class to turn in.
 - * Schechter, Max. 2014. “Conservatives and Liberals Want to Vote With Their Feet.” *The Cornell Daily Sun*. (*Taking America’s Pulse 2014*)
 - * McCulley, Zachary. 2014. “Churches have trouble retaining youths.” *Ithaca Journal*. (*Taking America’s Pulse 2014*)
 - * Pitts. 2014. “Wake up People and See the Danger We’re In.” *Baltimore Sun*
 - * Mettler and Sides. 2012. “We are the 96 Percent.” *New York Times*
 - * Blow. 2013. “Border Surge Meets Bluster Surge.” *New York Times*
- Week 4 (**Section:** Assignment 4: Bring 10 demographic and control variable questions including response categories. (Look at codebooks from Roper Center surveys to get ideas for questions and question wording.) Each section will nominate 10 demographic questions for the survey.
 - Tues. 2/10: Demographic Questions
 - * Assignment 5: Draft Question Proposal (Due **Monday** 2:00pm – Upload to Blackboard)
 - * Asher *Polling and the Public*, Chapter 2: The Problem of Non-Attitudes (BB)

- Th. 2/12: What can (and can't) surveys tell us?
 - * Glynn et. al. *Public Opinion*, Chapter 3: Methods of Measuring Public Opinion (BB)
 - * Assignment 6: Question Proposal (Due Friday 5:00pm – *Upload to Blackboard*)

- Week 5
 - Tues. 2/17: No Class (February Break)
 - Th. 2/19: Review **Final Survey** in Class

- Week 6 (No Sections: Mandatory Training *at SRI*—You must sign up for a training time.)
 - Tues. 2/24: In Class Survey Training
 - * The Belmont Report
 - * James H. Jones. 1981. *Bad Blood*. Chapters 1 & 11.
 - * Assignment 7: Open Stata. Print the screen.
 - Th. 2/26: No Class—You must complete Online IRB Training (<http://www.irb.cornell.edu/training/citi/>)

- Week 7 (No Sections: Conduct Survey Interviews at SRI)
 - Tues. 3/3: Descriptive Statistics
 - * Rea & Parker: Ch. 5
 - Thurs. 3/5: Survey Sampling
 - * Rea & Parker: Ch. 6

- Week 8 (No Sections: Conduct Survey Interviews at SRI)
 - Tues. 3/10: Confidence Intervals and Hypothesis Testing
 - * Rea & Parker: Ch.7
 - Th. 3/12: Margin of Error
 - * Rea & Parker: Ch. 8

- Week 9: Week 3 of Survey
 - Tues. 3/17: Total Survey Error

- * Biemer, Paul P. 2010. "Total Survey Error: Design, Implementation, and Evaluation." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 74(5): 817-848 [read to pg.825] (<http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/74/5/817.full.pdf+html>)
- Th. 3/19: Writing about Survey Results
 - * Gelman "More on Those Happy Conservatives"
 - * AAPOR "Questions to Ask" (BB)
- Week 10: **Final Week of Survey**
 - Tues. 3/24: Survey Weights
 - * Rea & Parker: Ch. 9
 - Th. 3/26: Cross Tabs
 - * Op-Ed Pre-Write Due (This should include 3 paragraphs. 1.) A draft of the introduction (the hook); 2.) What results do you expect to find and why are they important; 3.) What will you do if the data look different?)
 - * Rea & Parker: Ch. 10
- SPRING BREAK
- Week 11: Survey Data Delivered
 - Tues. 4/7: Difference of Means
 - * Rea & Parker: Ch. 11
 - Th. 4/9: Analyzing Experiments
 - * Berger, Meredith, & Wheeler. 2008. "Contextual priming: Where people vote affects how they vote"
 - * Druckman et al. 2006. "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science"
- Week 12
 - Tues. 4/14: Measures of Association
 - * Weisberg, Krosnick, and Bowen. *An Introduction to Survey Research*, Chapter 12
 - Th. 4/16: Measures of Association
 - * Op-Ed Due (Including replication .do file.)
- Week 13

- Tues. 4/21: Correlation
 - * Rea & Parker: Ch. 12
- Th. 4/23: Correlation & Regression
 - * Oxley, et. al. 2008. “Political Attitudes Vary with Psychological Traits”
- Week 14
 - Tues. 4/28: Presenting Results
 - * Shah & Hoeffner. 2002. “Review of Graph Comprehension Research: Implications for Instruction”
 - * United Nations. “Making Data Meaningful”, p.7–29
 - * Evergreen. 2013. “How to Present Data Effectively”
 - Th. 4/30: Poster Workshop
 - * Kastellec & Leoni. 2007. “Using Graphs Instead of Tables in Political Science”
- Week 15
 - Tues. 5/5: Final Thoughts
 - * Confirmation of op-ed submission due
 - * Reading TBD
- Poster Session - During Final Exam Period

Students with Disabilities

Please give me your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that I have adequate time to arrange your approved academic modifications. Meeting with me in my office hours will help ensure confidentiality. If you need an immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me and/or SDS at sds_cu@cornell.edu. If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS.

Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity (<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work.

Turnitin Policy

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.