

Fall 2008  
Edward P. Freeland

Wednesday 1pm-4pm  
Robertson Hall 014

This is a half semester seminar aimed at improving students' abilities to understand and critically evaluate surveys and public opinion polls, particularly those related to public policy. The course begins with an overview of contrasting perspectives on the role of public opinion in democratic government. From here we look at the evolution of public opinion polling in the U.S. and other countries. We also examine procedures used for designing representative samples and conducting surveys by telephone, mail and the Internet. The class will also visit a major polling operation during the presidential election season to get a firsthand look at how they actually work.

#### Requirements:

Students will be graded on the basis of their class participation (50%) and an in-class presentation on some aspect of survey research (e.g., the impact of cell phones, measuring race and ethnicity, etc.) or on the results of a survey which they themselves design and conduct (50%).

#### Readings:

Readings and audio-visual materials will be on reserve at the Donald Stokes Library and available on the Internet through Blackboard. Note that all back issues of Public Opinion Quarterly from 1937-2002 are available at [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org).

#### Schedule:

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

#### 1. The Emergence of Survey Research as a Science

##### Readings:

Rubenstein, Sondra Miller. 1995. *Surveying Public Opinion*. Belmont CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 49-107.

#### 2. Public Opinion and Democracy

Contrasting views on the role of public opinion in shaping public policy

##### Readings:

- 1) Weissberg, Robert. "Why Policymakers Should Ignore Public Opinion Polls." *Policy Analysis* No. 402. May 29, 2001. <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa402.pdf>
- 2) Newport, Frank. 2004. *Polling Matters*. New York: Warner Books. Pp. ix-xvi, 1-10.
- 3) Moyers, Bill and Kathleen Hughes. "Buying the War" 2007 on DVD. Available on Blackboard.

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

#### 3. Conducting Surveys in Other Countries

##### Readings:

- 1) Basañez, Miguel. 2002. "Public Opinion Research in Mexico."
- 2) Pew Center for the People and the Press. "The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other." June 22, 2006.

#### 4. Pre-election Polls

##### Readings:

- 1) Weiner, Marc. "Pre-election Polls." *The Encyclopedia of Social Measurement, Vol. 1*: Kimberly Kempf-Leonard, ed., San Diego: Academic Press, 2005, pp. 781-786.
- 2) Lavrakas, Paul J. and Michael Traugott. 2000. "The Voter's Guide to Election Polls" Pp. 10-25, Pp. 29-38.
- 3) Lavrakas, Paul J. 2007 "Why Our Democracy Needs Accurate National Exit Polls". *Public Opinion Pros* <http://www.publicopinionpros.com/features/2007/jan/lavrakas.asp>.
- 4) Frankovic, Kathleen A. 2003. "News Organizations' Responses To The Mistakes Of Election 2000: Why They Will Continue To Project Elections." *Public Opinion Quarterly* Vol. 67:19-31.

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

#### 5. Understanding and Measuring Opinions

Response inconsistency; ideology and identity; the don't know option; measuring intensity

*Readings:*

- 1) Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origin of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 6-52.
- 2) Moore, David W. 1997. "Split Sample Experiments: Affirmative Action vs. Special Preferences." *The Gallup Poll Monthly*, December 1997, pp. 25-27.

#### 6. Introduction to Sampling

Probability sampling; dangers of non-probability sampling; obtaining and building sample frames; determining sample size; simple random samples

*Readings:*

- 1) Salant, Priscilla and Don A. Dillman. *How To Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. 1994. Pp. 53-74.

Wednesday, October 7, 2008

#### 7. Complex Sampling and Weighting

Stratified sampling; multi-stage samples; cluster samples; design effects; weighting.

*Readings:*

- Henry, Gary T. 1990. *Practical Sampling*. Pp. 60-83.  
Current Population Survey, Basic Monthly Survey: Sampling (<http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/bsampdes.htm>)

#### 8. Telephone Surveys

*Readings:*

- 1) Lavrakas, Paul J. 1993. *Telephone Survey Methods*. Newbury Park: Sage. Pp. 98-123.
- 2) Keeter, Scott, et al. 2007. "What's Missing from National Landline RDD Surveys? The Impact of the Growing Cell-Only Population." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71:772-792.
- 3) Tucker, Clyde, J. Michael Brick and Brian Meekins. 2007. "Household Telephone and Usage Patterns in the United States in 2004: Implications for Telephone Samples." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71(1): 3-22.

Wednesday, October 15, 2008

#### 9. Mail and Internet Surveys

*Readings:*

- 1) Dillman, Don A. 2000. *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Total Design Method*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. Pp. 3-31.
- 2) Brennan M. and J. Hoek. 1992. "The Behavior of Respondents, Nonrespondents, and Refusers across Mail Surveys." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 56:4:530-5.
- 3) Couper. Mick, Michael Traugott, and Mark Lamias. 2001. "Web Survey Design and Administration". *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65:230-253.

#### 10. In person Interviewing

*Readings:*

- 1) Stein, Meyer L and Susan Paterno. 2001. *Talk Straight, Listen Carefully: The Art of Interviewing*. Des Moines, IA: Iowa State University Press. Pp. 3-46, 64-108.
- 2) Aquilino W.S. 1993. "Effects of Spouse Presence during the Interview on Survey Responses Concerning Marriage" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 57(3):358-76.
- 3) Villarroel, Maria A. et al. 2006. "Same-Gender Sex in the United States: Impact of T-ACASI on Prevalence Estimates." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70(2):166-196.

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

### 11. Research Ethics

Protecting respondent confidentiality; disclosure; institutional oversight.

*Readings:*

- 1) Seiber, Joel. 1992. *Planning Ethically Responsible Research. A Guide for Student and Internal Review Boards*. Newbury Park: Sage. Pp. 1-63.
- 2) American Association for Public Opinion Research. "Best Practices for Survey and Public Opinion Research."  
([http://www.aapor.org/default.asp?page=survey\\_methods/standards\\_and\\_best\\_practices/best\\_practices\\_for\\_survey\\_and\\_public\\_opinion\\_research](http://www.aapor.org/default.asp?page=survey_methods/standards_and_best_practices/best_practices_for_survey_and_public_opinion_research)).
- 3) Stein, Meyer L and Susan Paterno. 2001. *Talk Straight, Listen Carefully: The Art of Interviewing*. Des Moines, IA: Iowa State University Press. Pp. 146-175.

### 12. The Politics of Census-taking

*Readings:*

- 1) Anderson, Margo J. 1990. *The American Census: A Social History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Pp. 1-31, 213-240.
- 2) Skerry, Peter. 2000. *Counting on the Census?: Race, Group Identity, and the Evasion of Politics*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press. Pp. 121-177.