Data Collection Methods

Summer Institute in Survey Research Techniques

June 2012

Course Numbers and Class Time
University of Michigan: SURVMETH 623
University of Maryland: SURV 623
Daily, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Instructors:
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Overview and Goals of Course
This course will present research conducted to increase our understanding of data collection decisions affect survey errors. This is not a “how-to-do-it” course on data collection, but instead reviews the literature on survey design decisions and data quality in order to sensitize students to alternative design decisions and their impact on the data obtained from surveys.

The course will review alternative modes and methods of data collection used in surveys. It concentrates on the impact modes of data collection have on the quality of survey data, including measurement error properties, levels of nonresponse and coverage error. Methods of data collection will focus on advances in computer assisted methodology and comparisons among various methods (e.g. telephone versus face to face, paper versus web versus computer-assisted interviews, interviewer administered versus self-administered). The statistical and social science literature on interviewer effects will also be examined, including literature related to the training and evaluation of interviewers. With respect to nonresponse, we will review the literature on the reduction of nonresponse and the impact of nonresponse on estimation.

Office Hours and Access to Instructors
This course will be taught using compressed video technology, allowing two-way interaction between College Park and Ann Arbor. The instructors are based in Ann Arbor, but may travel to College Park for some classes. Office hours are available by appointment; students are encouraged to communicate by e-mail and telephone as needed.

Readings
Required readings for each week are listed below. The readings will be available online for downloading and printing by students. The URL will be provided in class.
Evaluation
Grading will be based on:

• Participation in class discussion and submission of daily questions via e-mail demonstrating understanding of the required readings (10% of grade).
• Four short exercises (3-5 pages each) reviewing specific aspects of the material covered (60% of grade). Exercise 1 will be worth twice as much as the remaining exercises in the assignment total.
• A final in-class exam (30% of grade)

Dates of when exercises will be handed out and when they are due are indicated in the syllabus. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangement with the instructors.

Course Outline and Readings

June 4: Overview of course; introduction to errors in surveys; methods of data collection (Conrad)

Readings:

Recommended:

Module A: Modes of Data Collection

June 5: Major modes of data collection (Brenner)

Readings:

Recommended:


June 6: Mode choice; Other data collection modes; Mixed mode studies (Brenner)

Readings:

Recommended:

June 7: Mode comparisons (Brenner)

- Exercise 1 Handed Out

Readings:

Recommended:

June 8: Mode comparisons continued, Mode and collecting sensitive information (Brenner)

Readings:

Module B: Interviewers

June 11: The role of the interviewer in survey data collection; Respondent selection (Conrad)

Readings:

Recommended:


June 12: Interviewer effects (Conrad)

Readings:

Recommended:


June 13: Interviewing style (Conrad)

- Exercise 1 Due
- Exercise 2 Handed Out

Readings:

Recommended:

June 14: Interviewer training and evaluation (Conrad)

Readings

Recommended:

Module C: Computer Assisted Data Collection

June 15: Computer assisted interviewing: Major distinctions, impact on data quality (Brenner)

- Exercise 2 Due

Readings:

Recommended:


June 18: Computer Assisted Data Collection: Implementation and Design Issues (Conrad)

- Exercise 3 Handed Out

Readings:
June 19: CAI Cost issues; Web Surveys and Error (Brenner)

Readings:


Recommended:

Module D: Nonresponse error

June 20: Nonresponse error; response rates (Conrad)

Readings:

Recommended:


June 21: Nonresponse error; nonresponse reduction (Conrad)

- Exercise 3 Due
- Exercise 4 Handed Out

Readings:

Recommended:


Module E: Variations on a theme

June 25: Longitudinal surveys (Brenner)

Readings:

Recommended:


June 26: Study day

• Exercise 4 Due

June 27: Final Exam