Data Collection Methods

Course Numbers
University of Michigan: SURVMETH 623
University of Maryland: SURV 623

Overview and Goals of Course

This course will present research work which attempts to understand the effect of data collection decisions on survey errors. This is not a “how-to-do-it” course on data collection, but instead presents material that reviews effects of survey design decisions on data quality. It is designed 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 computer-assisted, 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. We will also briefly examine data collection issues specific to establishment and longitudinal surveys.

Office Hours and Access to Instructor

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 will travel to College Park on designated days. 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 weekly questions via e-mail demonstrating understanding of the required readings (10% of grade).
- Four exercises (3-6 pages each) reviewing specific aspects of the material covered (60% of grade). Exercise 1 will be worth 24% and the remaining exercises 12% each.
- 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 instructor.

Course Outline and Readings

September 3: No class (Labor Day)

September 10: Overview of course; introduction to errors in surveys; methods of data collection (Conrad)

Readings:


September 17: Major modes of data collection (Couper)

Readings:


September 24: Other data collection modes; mode comparisons (Couper)
Exercise 1 Handed Out

Readings:


October 1: Mode of data collection and survey errors (Couper)

Readings:


October 8: Computer assisted interviewing (Couper)
Exercise 1 Due

Readings:


**October 15:** No class (Fall break)

**October 22:** Computer assisted interviewing (continued) (Couper)

**Exercise 2 Handed Out**

Readings:

**October 29:** Nonresponse error; response rates (Couper)

Readings:

**November 5:** Nonresponse error; nonresponse reduction (Couper)

**Exercise 2 due**

**Exercise 3 handed out**

Readings:

**November 12: Respondent selection; the role of the interviewer in survey data collection (Conrad)**

Readings:

**November 19: Interviewer effects; interviewer training (Conrad)**

Exercise 3 due

Readings:

**November 26: Interviewer evaluation; interviewing style (Conrad)**

Exercise 4 handed out

Readings:

**December 3: Establishment surveys (Couper)**

Readings:


**December 10: Longitudinal surveys (Couper)**

**Exercise 4 due**

Readings:


**December 17: Final exam (in class)**