Overview of the Course

This course will cover major sources of survey measurement error from the perspective of the social sciences, particularly cognitive psychology. The first part of the course (weeks 1 – 9) will focus on reporting errors and how they arise: misunderstanding questions, forgetting relevant information, using imprecise estimation strategies, and question and response order effects. The second part of the course (weeks 10 – 12) will examine sources of measurement error outside the conventional interview situation: coding and classification error, interacting with computerized questionnaires including web surveys, and the use of verbal protocols in pretesting questionnaires.

Course Requirements

Grades for the course will be based on:

- Participation in class demonstrating understanding of the readings and in-class material (10% of grade);
- A mid-term in-class exam (40% of grade);
- A final in-class exam (50% of grade).

Course materials

Required reading other than chapters from the Sudman et al. and Tourangeau et al. texts will be on the Ctools site. In addition, lecture notes will be available on the course site before each class.
Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

University of Michigan

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; http://ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated that way.

University of Maryland

In order to receive services you must contact the Disability Support Services (DSS) office to register in person for services. Please call the office to set up an appointment to register with a DSS counselor. Contact the DSS office at 301.314.7682; http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/

Academic conduct

Clear definitions of the forms of academic misconduct, including cheating and plagiarism, as well as information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct at the University of Michigan may be found at the Rackham web site http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_policies/section10/ and at the University of Maryland at the Graduate School web site http://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/policies/misconduct.html

Knowledge of these rules is the responsibility of the student and ignorance of them does not excuse misconduct. The student is expected to be familiar with these guidelines before submitting any written work or taking any exams in this course. Lack of familiarity with these rules in no way constitutes an excuse for acts of misconduct. Charges of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be dealt with very seriously and may result in oral or written reprimands, a lower or failing grade on the assignment, a lower or failing grade for the course, suspension, and/or, in some cases, expulsion from the university.

Attending Class

Students are expected to attend class unless extenuating circumstances prevent this. In that case it is the student’s responsibility to alert the instructor and make an alternative arrangement. In general, it will be possible to view recorded lectures at http://jpsmclsses.umd.edu within a few hours after class. The username for this course is surv632fall14. The password is foundation.

This term we will be piloting live, virtual attendance via desktop video using Blue Jeans (http://bluejeans.com). You will receive a link (via a CTools announcement) to a recurring Bluejeans meeting to which you can connect, enabling you to see and hear the lecture and
class materials, as well as students in the classrooms and online, and be seen and heard by the other participants. If this will make it easier for you to attend class we encourage you to participate in our Bluejeans pilot but caution you that, because it is a pilot, there is no guarantee the approach will always be free of technical problems. This is a risk you assume when you attend class virtually. You will need a headset to participate and a wired connection is strongly encouraged. If you need assistance connecting to or testing Blue Jeans please contact Jodi Holbrook (hjodi@umich.edu).

Schedule and Reading Assignments

September 3 (week 1): Cognitive views of error and implications for survey response

Either


Recommended reading

For background or a refresher in cognitive psychology, see chapters 1, 6, 7 and 12 (and others) in:


For background or a refresher in social cognition, see chapters 1, 2, 3, 7, 9 and 11 in:


For more background on the material covered in class, see:


\(^1\)Henceforth referred to as “SB&S (1996).”

\(^2\)Henceforth referred to as “TR&R (2000).”


September 10: Understanding Questions: Basic Processes


Recommended Reading


September 24 (week 3): Understanding Questions: Interviewer-Respondent Interaction


**Recommended Reading**


**October 1 (week 4): Memory, Forgetting and Measurement Error**


**Recommended Reading**


**October 8 (week 5): Placing Events in Time**


Chapter 8 in SB&S (1996)

**Recommended Reading**


October 15 (week 6): Judgment and Estimation Processes


Recommended Reading


October 22 (week 7): Midterm Exam

October 29 (week 8): Reporting Quantities


Recommended Reading


November 5 (week 9): Context Effects in Attitude Measurement


Recommended Reading


November 12 (week 10): Mapping and Reporting in Surveys


**Recommended Reading**


**November 19 (week 11): Classification and coding**


**Recommended Reading**


**November 26 (week 12): Interacting with Computer Assisted Data Collection Tools**


**Recommended Reading**


December 3: No Class

**December 10 (week 13): Verbal protocols in survey research**


**Recommended Reading**


December 17: Final Exam