A. Overview of the Course

The second term of Total Survey Error gives you practice in planning and conducting methodological research. Each of you will carry out a research project investigating some form of survey error and write up the results in a final paper. (The project should not focus on random sampling or estimation error, but can focus on any of the other major error sources.) The research might examine the causes of the error, the relative magnitudes of different sources of error for a given estimate, alternative methods for estimating the magnitude of the errors, or different methods for reducing the errors.

The first semester of Total Survey Error reviewed existing research on survey error. In the second term, you will attempt to make your own contribution to the methodological literature. Although we do not expect you to produce research at the same level of quality as the research described in the first semester, we do expect you to follow the same standards for conducting research and the same conventions for reporting results. For example, when presenting empirical results, papers should use appropriate statistical models, report standard errors or significance tests, and cite relevant literature (using the standard professional conventions). The goal is to produce a research report like the ones published in Public Opinion Quarterly, the Journal of Official Statistics, or Survey Methodology.

The course grades will be based on your research paper (80%) and to the feedback that you provide to the other students (20%). Each student will be paired with another student and will be responsible for providing constructive feedback on several of the assignments as noted below. We will ask each student to evaluate the input he or she received over the course of the semester.

We will assign each individual student to one of the two instructors. The default is for Michigan students to get feedback from and meet with the Michigan instructor (Lee), and Maryland students to get feedback from and meet with the Maryland instructor (Kreuter, Eckman). However, some topics might merit a diversion from this default, which will be decided as soon as all topics are finalized.
B. Schedule of Classes and Assignments

There will be a series of assignments culminating in the final version of the paper. The schedule for the class meetings and the assignments is given below. Only the final version of the paper will be graded. There are a few reading assignments which will be available via C-Tools.

We will provide feedback on progress on the research paper throughout the term.

Assignment 1 due: January 14 (this is the Tuesday following the first class). Submit one-paragraph summaries of two or three possible research ideas in a WORD file via email to the instructors. Some of you did this already at the end of the last semester. Refine what you wrote there. Please bring your suggestions in a preference order. Be very specific. What is the research question? What format will the paper have? If you already know the data you want to use great. Tell us all about it.

Assignment 2 due: January 23. Based on feedback from the instructors on the topics in Assignment 1, select a final topic and identify relevant data sets. Submit a short (2 pages or less) description of the proposed project to the instructors and your student partner. You will receive feedback from both by January 30.

Assignment 3 due: February 6. Submit a preliminary list of relevant research articles (identified through computer searches, etc.). Receive feedback from the instructors and your student partner by February 11.

Assignment 4 due: February 13. First drafts of the Introduction and Data/Methods sections of the paper are due (covering motivation, literature, hypotheses, and design/data). Receive feedback from the instructors and your student partner.

Assignment 5 due: February 20. Submit an analysis plan (3 to 5 pages). Receive feedback from the instructors and your student partner.

Assignment 6 due: March 6. Submit a preliminary Results section (3 to 5 pages). Receive feedback from the instructors and your student partner.

Assignment 7 due: April 3. The first draft of the whole paper is due. Comments will be provided by the instructors and your student partner.

Final Paper: April 17; The Final draft of the whole paper is due.
C. Course Dates and Topics

January 9: Organizational Meeting – Discussion of Assignments; Formulating the Problem, Reviewing Literature

January 16: Presenting Results, Documenting Sources

Readings: take a look at the structure of these papers, we will discuss the format


**January 23:** During this week (at the latest), meet with an instructor to talk about your data and analysis plan.

**February 13:** During this week, meet with an instructor to talk about your statistical methods.

**March 6:** During this week, meet with the instructor about your results if needed (optional).

**April 3:** Presentations of papers

**April 10:** Presentations of papers