

PSC 207: SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESEARCH METHODS

Spring 2011 (CRN: 53438, 4 units)

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:10 – 4:00 pm, 145 Young Hall

Instructor

Prof. Gregory Herek

Email: gmherek@ucdavis.edu OR
psc207_11@herek.net

271 Young Hall (Phone: 752-8085)

Office Hours: Mondays, 1:10 - 2 pm and by
appointment

General Information

Course Goals

This course will introduce you to survey and questionnaire research methods with a special emphasis on how to ask questions. You'll learn about empirical research and theory on the cognitive, motivational, and social processes that influence how respondents answer questions. You'll gain a better understanding of the practical implications of these processes by designing your own survey instrument in stages throughout the term, and presenting successive versions of it to the class for feedback and discussion. You will also be introduced to ethical considerations in survey and questionnaire research as well as practical considerations in fielding survey studies. Through in-class and homework assignments, you'll learn how to use relevant Internet resources for survey and questionnaire research.

Prerequisites for Enrollment

You must have graduate student standing and you must have completed an undergraduate or graduate course on social or behavioral research methods.

Course E-mail

As needed, Prof. Herek will communicate with course participants between meetings via e-mail. Make sure that your correct e-mail address is on file with the campus Registrar. Prof. Herek will send a test message early in the term so you can check that you are receiving messages properly.

Course Web Site

Course handouts, assignments, announcements, and

updates will be posted on the course web site, along with recommended supplemental readings and links to other relevant sites. You should check the web site – especially the weekly update section – on a regular basis.

The course website is located at:

<http://psc207.opinionsproject.net>

A link to this website also appears on the Psychology Department server:

Evaluation and Grading

You will be evaluated on the following criteria, with your final grade weighted as indicated:

- Your satisfactory completion of assigned exercises and homework (20%)
- Your written and oral critiques of other students' questionnaire projects (20%)
- Your consistent attendance and active participation in class discussions and peer critiques (20%)
- Your class presentations of your questionnaire project (20%)
- Your final questionnaire project (20%)

Keeping Informed: Course Updates and Information

You're responsible for knowing about all announcements made in class, even if you are absent. You're also responsible for knowing about information posted to the web site and distributed via e-mail. *Therefore, in addition to attending class, you are strongly advised to check your e-mail and the web site regularly – at least once each week – for new postings.*

Texts

The course texts may be purchased at the campus bookstore and through on-line booksellers:

- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L.

M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley & Sons. [Cloth]

- Tourangeau, R., Rips, L. J., & Rasinski, K. A. (2000). *The psychology of survey response*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. [Paper]
- Bradburn, N. M., Sudman, S., & Wansink, B. (2004). *Asking questions: The definitive guide to questionnaire design (Rev. ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [Paper]

All texts are on reserve at Shields Library. Journal articles and other additional readings may also be assigned during the term.

Topics To Be Covered

This is a tentative list of topics we will discuss in the course. The order and content may be changed as the quarter progresses.

1. The psychology of survey and questionnaire response: Cognitive, motivational, and social processes.
2. Asking questions about behavior and knowledge.
3. Asking questions about attitudes and other subjective phenomena.
4. Closed vs. open-ended question formats.
5. Response formats.
6. Context effects: Item order, response order.
7. Visual presentation of questionnaire items: Layout and design.
8. Collecting questionnaire data via the Web.
9. Effects of different data collection modes.
10. Asking questions about sensitive topics.
11. Acquiescence and socially desirable responding.
12. Ethical issues in survey and questionnaire research.
13. Fielding the survey or questionnaire.
14. Embedding experiments in surveys.

15. Internet databases of public opinion items.

16. Accessing survey data sets on the web.

Other Information

Attendance

Attending all of the class meetings will be tremendously important for you to benefit from this course. Please don't miss any classes.

Copyright of Course Materials

All course materials are copyrighted by Professor Herek. All federal and state copyrights are reserved for all original material presented in this course through any medium, including lecture or print.

Principles of Community

Like all other courses and activities, this course follows the UCD Principles of Community. Please consult these principles on the web at: <http://www.ucdavis.edu/principles.html>

Ethical Practices and Misconduct

As in all courses at UCD, students in this course are expected to conduct themselves in an honest and ethical way. You can learn more about university policies in this regard by consulting the web:

<http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/uwnews/aospol/toc.html>

Problems, Suggestions, Criticisms, Concerns

When you have them, please communicate them to Professor Herek – the sooner the better. This will help to improve the quality of the course and avoid end-of-term crises.