

# Course Syllabus

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## GOV 1010: Survey Research Methods

Harvard College/GSAS: 119479

Fall 2017

**Meeting Time:** Tuesday, Thursday 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm

**Meeting Location:** TBD

### Instructor and Teaching Fellow Contact Information

**Instructor:**

**Chase H. Harrison**

Senior Preceptor in Survey Research,

Department of Government, FAS

Associate Director, Program on Survey Research, IQSS

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Office: CGIS, S-221 (1730 Cambridge St.)

**Office hours: Thursdays, 3:00 - 5:00 pm and by appointment**

### Course Description

Surveys and polls provide much of the data we use to understand the world around us. They are fundamental to the study of public opinion and behavior, and are used a diverse variety of fields, including those related to business, economics, education, public health, international development, and others.

This course is designed to teach students the skills necessary to implement, use, and interpret survey data. By the end of the course, students should be able to critically assess the quality of survey data, as well as the ability to design and conduct an original survey.

This course does not assume any prior knowledge of statistical methods.

This course incorporates both reading material and hands-on practice in survey design. The course format will include lectures, discussions, hands-on workshops, and student presentations. For the survey project, students will develop, implement, and analyze a survey on a topic of their own choosing.

### Readings

\*The following books have been ordered for your purchase in the Harvard Coop.

**Required:**

Dillman, Don A. Jolene Smyth and Leah Melani Christian Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed Mode Surveys; The Tailored Design Method 4th Edition (Wiley 2014).

Weisberg, Herbert F. The Total Survey Error Approach; A Guide to the New Science of Survey Research. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2005).

Blair, Edward and Johnny Blair. Applied Survey Sampling. Los Angeles: Sage (2015)

\*Most other readings will be available through the course web page or on reserve in Lamont library.

**Supplementary Reading:**

There are many other books about survey design that may be useful to you as you design and implement your research project. The most essential of these have been placed on reserve in the Lamont Library. Many of these are also available in the Program on Survey Research library, which makes selected survey research references, texts, and guides available in the Harvard-MIT Data Center public computer labs. The lab is located in CGIS Knafel (North) building at 1737 Cambridge Street in Cambridge Massachusetts. The primary computer lab is located on the Concourse level in K024. Works may be borrowed for same day in-building use by any person with a valid HMDC lab account (Harvard ID required).

**Books of particular interest may include:**

Couper, Mick P. Designing Effective Web Surveys. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (2008). *This is a handbook for designing web surveys that many students find helpful.*

Fowler, Floyd J. Jr., Improving Survey Questions; Design and Evaluation. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (1995) *This is a handbook for writing survey questions that many students find helpful.*

Groves, Robert M. et. al. Survey Methodology, Hoboken, NJ.: Wiley (2006). *This is a comprehensive and advanced text.*

**Course Structure**

Survey research is a collaborative process. The best survey research almost always happens when people work together, sharing some tasks and delegating others. Survey research done by soloists usually falls flat. In that spirit, students will work in groups to design and conduct surveys for the course.

In addition to attending classroom meetings, students will be expected to meet regularly to design and implement their group project.

Each group assignment will ask students to list the group participants and the work each contributed to the assignment. At the end of the semester, students will be asked to independently write a short assessment of the roles each student played in the group, which will be handed in along with the final paper. The final paper for the class will be based on your group project. Although students are encouraged to share ideas during the survey process, each student must write their final paper individually.

**Grades**

Grades will be calculated as follows:

<b>Requirement:</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Description:</b>
Class and Group Participation	15%	Students are expected to attend lectures, group meetings, and participate as appropriate. Students will be expected to be able to report on their group projects during each class.
Class Assignments	30%	<p>Assignment 1: Preliminary Research Question (5%)</p> <p>Assignment 2: Group Research Proposal (10%)</p> <p>Assignment 3: Questionnaire (Group) (5%)</p> <p>Assignment 4: Pre-Test report (Group) (10%)</p>
Survey Critique	10%	<p>You will get more out of this course, and enjoy it more, if you are actively searching for and critiquing actual survey results. Each student will be responsible for writing two short (2 – 4 page) critiques of a survey, survey question, poll, or interpretation of a survey. The critique should focus on one particular aspect or issue of the report and should be some aspect of survey methodology covered in the course. You should provide a copy of (or link to) the relevant survey report or release you discuss, although any relevant parts for your discussion should be presented in your paper.</p> <p>The first critique must be received by the start of class October 17, and the second is due by the start of class November 28. Critiques handed in after these deadlines will be penalized ½ letter grade (5 / 100 points) for each day or portion thereof ( 1 – 24 hours) it is late. Students who complete two critiques by November 15 will have the option of writing a third critique by December 7. In this case, the critique with the lowest grade will be dropped.</p>
In-Class Examination	10%	November 16, 2017
Survey Research Project/Paper	35%	<p><b>DUE: Friday, December 15, at 12:00 PM</b></p> <p>For the survey project, students will develop, implement, and analyze their own survey on any topic of their choosing. The final paper (12-15 pages,</p>

		double-spaced, 12-point, 1-inch margins) is due Friday, December 15, at 12:00pm.  Class assignments will be geared toward the final project, and preliminary versions will be presented during class sessions at the end of the term.
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>100%</b>	
*Note: Failure to complete any course requirement may result in failure of the entire course.		

## Course Practices and Policies

### Policy on Collaboration: Collaboration is Required

Participation in group projects is required as part of this course unless a specific exception is granted by the instructor. Each group assignment will ask students to list the group participants and the work each contributed to the assignment. At the end of the semester, students will be asked to independently write a short assessment of the roles each student played in the group, which will be handed in along with the final paper.

The final paper for the class will be based on your group project. Although students are encouraged to share ideas during the survey process, each student must write their final paper individually. The final paper should reflect your own presentation and interpretation of the group project. Final papers should properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have contributed to the work. Any outside help with the paper should be fully acknowledged.

The single classroom exam (10% of grade) is to be completed by the student alone, without any assistance, and without access to any outside materials.

**Accessibility, Services, and Support.** Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to present their letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with me by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to do so may result in my inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although AEO may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation. For more information, please contact me or AEO at 617-496-8707 (V), 617-496-3720 (V/TTY), 617-495-0815 (fax), [aeo@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:aeo@fas.harvard.edu) or [www.aeo.fas.harvard.edu](http://www.aeo.fas.harvard.edu) (<http://www.aeo.fas.harvard.edu>).

**Late Assignments.** Students should take careful note of the dates requirements are due. All assignments are due on the designated day. Late assignments will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor, and will be marked down a full letter grade for each class meeting late. For the final paper assignment, late papers will NOT be accepted.

**Absences.** If any student must miss a class or due date owing to a religious observance, please inform me during the first weeks of class so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Availability.** I will make every effort to be available to students outside of class. My regular office hours are listed on the first page of the syllabus. If you wish to come at a different time, please don't hesitate to contact me.

## Tentative Schedule

Note: In order to best accommodate student projects, scheduling -- including due-dates of assignments -- is subject to change. (Group assignments will not be due earlier than dates listed on this syllabus).

Week	Dates	Topic & Readings
Week 1	August 31	<p><b>Course Introduction on Survey Research and Survey Errors</b></p> <p><i>Readings: Readings can be found in "Files" tab</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weisberg: Chapters 1 – 2</li> <li>• Dillman: pp 2 – 10</li> <li>• Newport, Frank. <i>Polling Matters: Why Leaders Must Listen to the Wisdom of the People</i>. New York: Time Warner (2004). Chapter 1 and Chapter 7.</li> </ul>
Week 2	September 5; September 7	<p><b>Surveys and the Research Process</b></p> <p>*Assignment 1: Preliminary Research Question, Due September 7</p> <p><i>Readings: Readings can be found in "Files" tab</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fowler: Chapter 11</li> <li>• Weisberg: Chapter 14</li> <li>• Oppenheim, A. N. <i>Question Design, Interviewing, and Attitude Measurement</i>. London: Pinter (1992). Pp. 7-18; 21-29.</li> <li>• Groves, et. al: pp 39 – 48</li> </ul>
Week 3	September 12; September 14	<p><b>Modes of Data Collection</b></p> <p><i>Readings: Readings can be found in "Files" tab</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weisberg: Chapter 3 - 4</li> <li>• Dillman: pp 10 – 17; Chapter 2; pp 258-264 ; p298 ; pp 301-306 ; pp 351-353 ; pp 398-403; Chapter 12</li> </ul>
Week 4	September 19; September 21	<p><b>Sampling and Populations</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blair and Blair: Chapters 1 - 3 (pp 3 - 88); Chapter 8 (pp 179-219)</li> <li>• Weisberg Chapter 9</li> <li>• Dillman, Smith, Christian Chapter 3, pp 56-75</li> </ul> <p>For Reference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baker, Reg.,et. al. (2010)AAPOR Report on Online Panels Report Prepared for the AAPOR Executive Council by a Task Force operating under the auspices of the AAPOR Standards Committee. POQ: (2010) 74 (4): 711-781.</li> </ul>
Week	September	<b>Designing Sampling Protocols</b>



5	26; September 28	<p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blair and Blair: Chapters 4 - 6 (pp 91=154)</li> <li>• Weisberg Chapter 10</li> <li>• Dillman, Smith, Christian: Chapter 3, pp 75-93</li> </ul> <p><i>For Reference:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brick, J. Michael (2011) "The Future of Survey Sampling" POQ: 75 (5): 872-888</li> <li>• Yeager, David S., et. al. (2011) Comparing the Accuracy of RDD Telephone Surveys and Internet Surveys Conducted with Probability and Non-Probability Samples POQ: 75 (4): 709- 747</li> <li>• Iannacchione, Vincent G. (2011) The Changing Role of Address-Based Sampling in Survey Research POQ: 75 (3): 556-575</li> </ul>
Week 6	October 3; October 5	<p><b>Conceptualizing Ideas and Operationalizing Questions</b></p> <p>*Assignment 2: Group Research Design, Due October 5</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dillman, Smith and Christian: Chapters 4 - 5</i></li> <li>• <i>King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba. Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research. pp 55-63.</i></li> <li>• <i>Oppenheim, A. N. Question Design, Interviewing, and Attitude Measurement. London: Pinter (1992). pp. 150-162</i></li> <li>• <i>Hox, Joop J. 1997. "From Theoretical Concept to Survey Question." Pp. 47-70 in Survey Measurement and Process Quality, edited by L. Lyberg et al. New York: Wiley.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <p><i>Fowler, Floyd J. Jr., Improving Survey Questions; Design and Evaluation. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (1995)</i></p>
Week 7	October 10; October 12	<p><b>Thinking About Answers &amp; Questions</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dillman, Smith and Christian: Chapters 6 - 7</i></li> <li>• <i>Weisberg: Chapter 6</i></li> <li>• <i>Schuman: Chapter 4</i></li> <li>• <i>Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Jennifer Dykema (2011) Questions for Surveys: Current Trends and Future Directions . POQ: 75 (5): 909-961</i></li> <li>• <i>Krosnick, Jon A. and Leandre R. Fabrigar. 1997. "Designing Rating Scales for Effective Measurement in Surveys." pp. 141-164 in Survey Measurement and Process Quality, edited by L. Lyberg et al. New York: Wiley.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Optional Readings:</i></p> <p><i>Students designing surveys to be implemented by interviewers might refer to the following as a reference:</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Weisberg Chapter 4</i></li> <li>• <i>Fowler, Floyd J. 2014. Survey Research Methods, Fifth Edition. (Los Angeles: Sage. Chapter 8;</i></li> </ul>
Week 8	October 17; October 19	<p><b>Pre-Testing Questions</b></p> <p>*First survey critique due October 17</p> <p>*Assignment 3: Group Questionnaire, Due October 19</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fowler, Floyd J. 2014. Survey Research Methods, Fifth Edition. (Los Angeles: Sage. Chapter 7</i></li> <li>• <i>Presser et. al (2004) "Methods for Testing and Evaluating Survey Questions" POQ 68: 109-130</i></li> <li>• <i>Willis, Gordon B. 1999. Cognitive Interviewing: A "How To" Guide."</i></li> <li>• <i>Beatty, Paul C. and Gordon B. Willis. 2007. "Research Synthesis: The Practice of Cognitive Interviewing." Public Opinion Quarterly 71(2): 287-311.</i></li> </ul>
Week 9	October 24; October 26	<p><b>The Impact of Nonresponse</b></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Weisberg Chapters 7 – 8</i></li> <li>• <i>Wagner, James. (2012) A Comparison of Alternative Indicators for the Risk of Nonresponse Bias POQ: (2012) 76 (3): 555-575</i></li> </ul>
Week 10	October 31; November 2	<p><b>Interpreting Survey Findings</b></p> <p>*Assignment 4: Final Questionnaire &amp; Pre-test Report (Group) Due October 31</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Weisberg Chapter 13; Chapter 15</i></li> <li>• <i>Schuman Chapter 5</i></li> <li>• <i>Groves, Robert M. and Lars Lyberg (2010) Total Survey Error: Past, Present, and Future . POQ: 74 (5): 849-879</i></li> </ul>
Week 11	November 7; November 9	Special Topics: Pre-election polling
Week	November	*Second survey critique due if interested in submitting 3 and dropping 1







12	15	Course review and exam prep
	November 17	* In-Class Examination
Week 13	November 21	<b>Special Topics</b>
	November 23	<b>NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Recess)</b>
Week 14	November 28; November 30	<b>*Second Survey Critique due November 28</b> <b>Course Wrap-Up</b> <b>Final Presentations &amp; Preliminary Results</b>
	December 5; December 7	<b>Reading Period</b>
	December 15	<b>Final Paper, Due at 12:00PM</b> *Extended office hours & tutorials available

Please contact Instructor or TF with any additional questions.

## Course Summary:

Date	Details	
Tue Sep 12, 2017	 <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158913">Assignment 1: Preliminary Research Question &amp; Hypotheses</a> ( <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158913">https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158913</a> )	due by 1pm
Thu Oct 5, 2017	 <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158914">Assignment 2: Group Research Proposal</a> ( <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158914">https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158914</a> )	due by 1pm



Date	Details
Thu Oct 19, 2017	 <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158915">Assignment 3: Questionnaire (Group)</a> <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158915">https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158915</a> due by 1pm
Tue Oct 24, 2017	 <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158918">First Survey Critique</a> <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158918">https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158918</a> due by 1pm
Tue Oct 31, 2017	 <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158916">Assignment 4: Final Questionnaire &amp; Pre-Test Report (Group)</a> <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158916">https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158916</a> due by 1pm
Thu Nov 16, 2017	 <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158919">In-Class Examination</a> <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158919">https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158919</a> due by 11:59pm
Tue Nov 28, 2017	 <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158920">Second Survey Critique</a> <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158920">https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158920</a> due by 1pm
Fri Dec 15, 2017	 <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158917">Final Paper: Due December 15</a> <a href="https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158917">https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/30530/assignments/158917</a> due by 12pm