
Semester: Fall 2003

Instructor: Allyson L. Holbrook

Office Hours: By appointment. Phone: (312)996-0471; E-mail: allyson@uic.edu

Course Credits: 2 hours

Course Overview and Objectives: This course introduces students to one approach to survey methodology – the examination of the psychological processes through which survey respondents answer questions. Evidence about these processes from cognitive and social psychology, sociology, and linguistics is applied to survey research, particularly questionnaire construction and administration.

Required Texts:


Assignments: There are two assignments due during the course. You will also be asked to write discussion question for three classes and to write a final paper. These assignments are designed for you to (1) demonstrate your understanding and mastery of the concepts discussed in class; (2) apply these concepts; and (3) prompt your discussion and questions. (Note: Due dates for assignments are listed in the course schedule.)

Assignment #1: An article will be distributed for discussion. Students will be asked to write a 2-3 pages summary and critique of the article. The primary findings of the article or chapter should be briefly summarized and their implications discussed (1-2 paragraphs). In addition, you should discuss an issue or problem regarding the major findings of the article. For example, the conclusions drawn by the author might not be warranted given the evidence they reviewed, or there might be additional factors the authors did not consider that might be relevant to the question at hand. Finally, you should briefly discuss additional research that could address the problem or issue you described. This article (and assignment #1) will the basis for class discussion.

Assignment #2: Two readings about the use of response latencies to measuring cognitive processes will be distributed. Students will be asked to write2-3 pages answering the following questions: 1) What cognitive aspects of question answering might influence response latencies? 2) What are the challenges to using response latencies as an indicator of cognitive processes in surveys? 3) Briefly describe the methodology and expected results of a study using response latencies in a novel way to assess the cognitive process of answering survey questions.

Discussion Questions: Students are asked to write discussion questions for 3 of the 7 classes. These weeks, please write 2-3 discussion questions about the readings for that week and send them to me at allyson@uic.edu by noon on the day of class. You will be graded on the promptness and completeness of the questions as well as the quality of the questions themselves.

Final Paper: A final paper is due on the Tuesday of finals week (May 3) by 5:00 p.m. The paper has two components. First, you should review the literature regarding one aspect of the psychological processes of answering survey questions and how it relates to survey methodology
more broadly. Second, you should outline a proposal for research that builds on the literature review in Part I. The research you propose should add to our understanding of the psychological processes of answering survey questions and be tied directly into the aspect of these processes that you review in Part I of this paper (Each part of the paper should be approximately 10 pages so the paper should be 20 pages).

Course Policies:

Deadlines: All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Students will lose 10% credit for each day that an assignment is late. In addition, do the assigned readings before they are discussed in class.

Extensions for assignments: Extensions for assignments are at the discretion of the instructors and should be requested before the deadline. Emergencies will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If you have a question about an extension, please talk to the instructor.

Plagiarism or cheating: Don’t do it. It’s not worth it. Guidelines regarding academic integrity at UIC are available online <http://www.uic.edu/depts/sja/integrit.htm>, and sanctions for academic dishonesty are also available <http://www.uic.edu/depts/sja/chpt3.htm#3>. Please don’t put me in a position where I need to learn more about these policies.

Attendance: Fifteen points will be assigned based on attendance and participation. If you must miss a class, please let the instructors know in advance. Class attendance is strongly encouraged. Active involvement in class is also expected. If your final grade is on the border, a subjective assessment of your class participation may be used to make final adjustments.

Grades

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percent of Total Grade</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
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Outline:

March 8 (Week 1)

Part I: Cognitive Models of the Response Process
Part II: Pre-testing and measuring cognitive processes
Part III: Cognitive interview exercise and discussion
March 15 (Week 2):

Part I: Comprehension and Interpretation of Survey Questions
Part II: Autobiographical Memory
Part III: Discussion Questions (set 1)
Distribute Assignment #1

March 22: NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

March 29 (Week 3):

Part I: Context Effects in Surveys
Part II: Cognitive Processes and Response Effects (Satisficing)
Part III: Assignment #1 (critique and discussion of article)
Assignment #1 due

April 5 (Week 4)

Part I: Memory Errors in Surveys
Part II: Temporal Judgments
Part III: Discussion Questions (set 2)

April 12 (Week 5)

Part I: Estimation Processes
Part II: Probability Judgments
Part III: Discussion Questions (set 3)

April 19 (Week 6)

Part I: Attitudes
Part II: Persuasion, Social Influence, and Nonresponse
Part III: Mapping, Social Norms and Social Desirability
Distribute Assignment #2

April 26 (Week 7)

Part I: Interviewers: Rapport and Social Distance
Part II: Implications and Summing up
Part III: Assignment #2 Discussion
Assignment #2 due

May 3: Final paper due by 5:00 p.m.

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Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1

Part I: Cognitive Models of the Response Process

Readings:


Part II: Pre-testing

Readings: To be distributed

Week 2:

Part I: Comprehension and Interpretation of Survey Questions

Readings:

Chapter 2 of Tourangeau et al. (2000)


Part II: Autobiographical Memory

Readings

Chapter 3 of Tourangeau et al. (2000)


Part III: Discussion Questions (set 1)
Week 3:

Part I: Context Effects in Surveys

Readings

*Chapter 7 of Tourangeau et al.*


Part II: Cognitive Processes and Response Effects

Readings


Part III: Assignment #1 (critique and discussion of article)

Week 4

Part I: Memory Errors in Surveys

Readings


Part II: Temporal Judgments

Readings

Required

* Chapters 4 and 5 in Tourangeau, et al. (2000) *

Part III: Discussion Questions (set 2)
Week 5

Part I: Estimation Processes

Readings

Required


Part II: Probability Judgments

Readings


Week 6:

Part II: Attitudes

Readings

Chapter 6 of Tourangeau et al. (2000)


Part II: Persuasion, Social Influence, and Nonresponse

Readings

Required

Part III: Mapping, Social Norms and Social Desirability

Readings

Required


Week 7:

Part I: Interviewers: Rapport and Social Distance

Readings

Required

Chapter 10 of Tourangeau et al. (2000)


Part II: Implications and Summing up

Reading (required)

Chapter 11 of Tourangeau et al. (2000).

Part III: Assignment #2 Discussion
Optional readings:

Cognitive Models of the Response Process


Comprehension and Interpretation of Survey Questions


Context Effects in Surveys


Cognitive Processes and Response Effects


Autobiographical Memory


Temporal Judgments


Estimation Processes


Memory Errors in Surveys


Probability Judgments


Attitudes


Persuasion, Social Influence, and Nonresponse


Mapping, Social Norms and Social Desirability


Interviewers: Rapport and Social Distance


