Internet Surveys  
PA 584 Syllabus  
Spring 2006  
(version 01-10-06)

Class Meeting: Tuesdays, 3-5:50pm (January 10-February 28)  
Room 221 DH

Instructor: Timothy P. Johnson, Ph.D.  
Survey Research Laboratory  
Room 629  
CUPPA Hall (East Campus)  
412 S. Peoria Street  
Office: 312-996-5310  
Residence: 630-469-8649 (between 8-9pm please)  
E-mail: timj@uic.edu

Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Credits: 2 hours

Course Overview and Objectives:

In this seminar we will examine current advances and knowledge in survey research methodology and practice relevant to web-based survey data collection systems. Primary objectives will include the following:

1. Understanding major sources of survey error associated with web-based data collection and current approaches to addressing these problems;
2. Understanding current best practices for the conduct of web-based survey research, including the basic principles of web survey questionnaire design; and
3. Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of web surveys, relative to other survey data collection modes.

Required Texts:

There will be no required text. Rather, there will be a series of weekly article reading assignments. Most of these papers will be available on the course Blackboard site.
Class Schedule

January 17 – Overview

January 24 – Designing web surveys

January 31 – Designing web questionnaires

February 7 – Sampling & coverage error

February 14 – no class

February 21 – Nonresponse error

February 28 – Mode comparisons

General Requirements and Grading:

• Because this will be a seminar, class attendance and participation are essential.
• Students will be expected to have read and be prepared to discuss each week’s required background readings in class.
• All assignments must be typed with grammar and spelling checked. Students should retain copies of materials submitted.
• Final grades will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #1:</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #2:</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #3:</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #4:</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper:</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class Assignments:

1. Enroll as a participant in the Harris Interactive Poll at: [http://www.harrisinteractive.com/](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/) and complete any surveys that you are sent while a student in this class (once the class is over you can, if you wish, remove yourself from their web survey panel). You will be asked to report on your experiences during class discussion. (Assignment should be started during the first week of class).

2. Locate a published article within your substantive field of interest that reports findings from a web-based (in whole or in part) survey and prepare a 1-page summary for presentation in class (and bring copies for everyone). (due the week of January 17)
3. Select four different web survey software vendors and prepare a 2-3 page comparison of their products. (due the week of January 24)

4. Select one of the software vendors examined in Assignment #3 and, using free versions of their software, prepare a 15-20 item survey questionnaire. (due the week of February 21)

5. Do one of the following as a final project (due the week of April 1):
   a. Conduct a web survey using an instructor-approved version of the instrument developed in Assignment #4. Prepare a final report of the survey that provides details of the study’s research questions, methodology, and findings.
   b. Prepare a 20-page paper on some aspect of web-survey research. The topic and paper outline should be approved by the instructor in advance.
   c. Conduct an analysis of data from an available web survey. Use of data that would permit a mode comparison of web surveys with another survey data collection method would be strongly encouraged. The data and paper outline should be approved by the instructor in advance.
   d. Prepare a 15-page, single-spaced research grant application designed to explore one or more elements of web-based survey research methodology. The application should include all elements of a proposal that would be necessary to submit it to a federal agency such as the National Science Foundation or the National Institutes of Health. The proposal’s topic should be approved by the instructor in advance.

**Reading Assignments**

**Overview (for January 17)**


**Designing Web Surveys (for January 24)**


Schonlau, Asch & Du (2003) Web surveys as part of a mixed-mode strategy for populations that cannot be contacted by e-mail. Social Science Computer Review 21: 218-222.

**Designing Web Questionnaires (for January 31)**


Sampling & Coverage Error (for February 7)


Fallows (2005) Women are catching up to men in most measures of online life. Men like the internet for the experiences it offers, while women like it for the human connections it promotes. Pew Internet & American Life Project (http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Women_and_Men_online.pdf).

Fox (2005) Digital divisions: There are clear differences among those with broadband connections, dial-up connections, and no connections at all to the internet. Pew Internet &


Pineau & Slotwiner (2003) Probability samples vs. volunteer respondents in internet research: Defining potential effects on data and decision-making in marketing applications. Knowledge Networks.


Nonresponse Error (for February 21)


Mode Comparisons (for February 28)

Akl, Maroun, Klocke, Montori & Schunemann (2005) Electronic mail was not better than postal mail for surveying residents and faculty. Journal of Clinical Epidemiology 58: 425-429.


Other Resources

Web Survey Methodology: http://www.websm.org/
Knowledge Networks: http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/index2.html
Harris Interactive: http://www.harrisinteractive.com/
Pew Internet & American Life Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/