**SRAM/SOCI/PSYC 947: Questionnaire Design**

Spring 2016 CBA 206, T 9:30am-12:30pm

Instructor: Alian Kasabian, PhD Email: aliank@unl.edu

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Office: 934 Oldfather Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-4:30pm (in OLD) or by appointment

Prerequisite: Graduate student standing

## Overview:

This course focuses on theoretical and practical tools for developing and writing survey questions and constructing questionnaires. The major emphasis is on how to construct individual survey questions and then put them together into a questionnaire. Topics include sources of survey error, response theories, visual design, open-ended questions, nominal and ordinal closed-ended questions, mode issues, pretesting, and implementation. The course will consist of lectures, readings, discussion, and in-class activities. Throughout the course, students will apply what they are learning to the development and/or improvement of several questionnaires and implementation materials.

## Objectives:

The primary objective of this course is for each student to obtain and be able to demonstrate a full working knowledge of the science (concepts, theory, and empirical research) of questionnaire design and the practical application of that science.

## Required Texts:

Dillman, Don A., Jolene D. Smyth, & Leah Melani Christian. 2014. *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Fowler, Floyd J. Jr. 1995. *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schwarz, Norbert. 1996. Cognition and Communication: Judgmental Biases, Research Methods, and the Logic of Conversation. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrance Erlbaum Associates.

Articles as assigned throughout the course. Those that are unavailable through the UNL Libraries will be put on electronic reserve on the course Blackboard site (http://blackboard.unl.edu).

## Recommended Texts:

Couper, Mick P. 2008. *Designing Effective Web Surveys.* Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Tourangeau, R., Frederick G. Conrad, & Mick P. Couper. 2013. *The Science of Web Surveys.* New York: Oxford.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus and course schedule (including reading assignments) as deemed appropriate for educational purposes. All such changes will be announced in class.

**Assignments, Grading, and Attendance:**

*40% Course project assignments and presentations:* Students will work in groups to create and/or revise several surveys during the semester. Each group will be responsible for presenting their final product to the class. Each student will be required to present for the group at least once during the semester. The final product and the presentation will be graded by the instructor.

Grading Scale

A+ 98 – 100%

A 94 – 97%

A- 90 – 93%

B+ 87 – 89%

B 83 – 86%

B- 80 – 82%

*35% Final course project:* For the final course project, students will work independently to create a survey and implementation materials on a topic of the instructor’s choosing. The final products of this effort will be a survey, implementation materials, and a report detailing the major decisions that were made in the construction of the materials and justifying them with appropriate literature. More details about this project will be forthcoming.

*15% Weekly reading reports:* Submit to the Blackboard Discussion board a brief report each week prior to the start of class that summarizes the most important point you took away from each of the assigned readings for that week. You should be able to do this in three sentences or less per reading (i.e., you should not be writing a full and comprehensive summary). I will use these reports as a check that you are completing the readings and absorbing the most important content in them. Once you have posted your own report, you will be able to read what others have written to get a sense of what they took from the readings.

*10% Attendance, Participation, and other activities/homework:* Attendance is mandatory. Only under extenuating circumstances will students be excused for absences. You can earn the participation portion by participating in class discussions and group work with constructive questions and comments.

*Late Assignments:* Late assignments will be penalized 10 percentage points per day (counting weekend days and holidays) except in cases where arrangements have been made with the instructor at least one week in advance or in cases of reasonable unforeseen events (i.e., family emergency, illness, etc.).

**Policies:**

* **Disabilities:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to me for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.
* **Academic Honesty/Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating or plagiarizing will result in failing the course and referral to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. Students should immediately become familiar with UNL’s policies regarding academic integrity and plagiarism. See the following website for helpful information: <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/integrity#about>

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| **Date** | **Topic/Due Date** |  | **Reading** |
| Jan 12 | Surveys, samples, and responses |  | Dillman et al. Ch 1-3 |
| Jan 19 | Writing questions |  | Dillman et al. 4 |
|  |  |  | Schwarz 1-3 |
|  |  |  | Fowler 1 |
| Jan 26 | Question types |  | Dillman et al. 5 |
|  |  |  | Schwarz 4-5 |
|  |  |  | Fowler 2-5 |
| Feb 2 | Designing questions |  | Dillman et al. 6-7 |
|  |  |  | Schwarz 6 |
|  |  |  | Fowler 6-7 |
| Feb 9 | Differences by mode |  | Dillman et al. 8-9 |
| Feb 16 | Differences by mode (con’t) |  | Dillman et al. 10-11 |
| **The course will meet at its regularly scheduled time throughout the remainder of the semester. This time will be spent workshopping questionnaire design challenges. Weekly readings will be assigned as we go along. The readings will be chosen to either (1) broaden students’ knowledge of questionnaire design literature or (2) address issues of difficulty or reinforce needed information for the survey design work students are undertaking.** | | | |
| March 22 | SPRING BREAK: No Class |  |  |
| April 26 | Final Due April 28th by Midnight |  |  |