New York University
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

P11.4114 Surveys and Interviews Fall 2010
Wednesdays, October 6, 27, November 17 9:00am – 2:00pm

Location: PC Lab #2, (lower level of Bobst Library)

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Office Hours: After class or by appointment

COURSE PRE-REQUISITES: The completion of P11.1011 (Statistical Methods) is required prior to taking this course. A waiver may be granted in some cases.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This workshop will provide students with the skills they need to design, conduct and analyze mail, telephone, and internet surveys, focus groups and face-to-face interviews as well as critically evaluate those designed and implemented by others. These types of data collection instruments are designed for a variety of purposes and for different settings including public policy, urban planning, as well as for program implementation evaluation, cost-benefit analysis, and more.

To supplement the class discussions of the required readings in Don Dillman’s book Internet, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys, students will be examining a sample of mail, telephone, and internet surveys, focus groups and face-to-face interviews in a “Survey Clinic” that will be held each time the class meets. For example, on the first day of class students will examine instruments used a number of years ago for face-to-face interviews and focus groups to study the experience of welfare mothers with seeking child care services. In subsequent classes, students will closely examine several other instruments that were designed to evaluate the cost effectiveness of various programs and their impact. For example, students will examine an interview schedule designed for an evaluation of the implementation of the NYC Board of Education’s Performance Driven Budgeting (PDB), a form of school based budgeting. In another “Survey Clinic,” students will examine a web survey designed to study the uses of the internet by nonprofit organizations and also mail and internet surveys that were designed to study the nonprofit sector in New York City¹.

Students are encouraged to bring drafts of their own mail or internet surveys and interview schedules or focus groups instruments to each of the “Survey Clinics.”

¹ These are examples of well designed and executed surveys in which Prof. Naphtali was directly involved.
To summarize, the primary purpose of this workshop, and the “Survey Clinics,” is to enable students to use the knowledge and skills they acquired in this class in their Wagner Capstone projects, in their current work elsewhere, and in their future professional careers.

The three-day workshop will begin with a discussion of the ever changing nature of the survey research field and the impact of new technologies on it. Throughout this workshop, issues that are particular to internet surveys, telephone and face-to-face interviewing, focus groups, mail and other modes of data collection will be closely addressed. This workshop, like Dillman’s book and various articles, will be organized around the stages of the design of questionnaires, interview, internet surveys and other modes of data collection. It will also focus on issues of implementation, data management and statistical analysis, and on the reporting of results. A close examination of the sources of errors in surveys as well as what makes surveys work will be central to these discussions.

While examining a sample of surveys provided by Prof. Naphtali, the class will pay close attention to how they were designed, to issues related to question writing, the order of questions, the importance of the first question, of “don’t know”, etc. Sampling issues and statistical data analysis of survey results will also be addressed.

One central concern addressed in this workshop is how to decide when an internet or mail survey is appropriate and when to use other methods, or when to employ a combination of methods. Following Dillman’s advice, it will be argued that the mixed-mode strategy offers the best protection against common errors that affect accuracy in surveys and interviews. The sources of error are -- sampling, coverage, measurement and non-response errors.

To summarize, students will be learning about
- Conceptualization and design issues
- Internet and mail questionnaire design and implementation
- Practical sampling design strategies
- Interview and focus group schedule development and refinement
- Interviewer training and supervision
- Item editing and coding and data processing, data cleaning, and data analysis issues
- Statistical data analysis of survey results

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2 Students should read Chapter 1 in Don Dillman, et. al, Internet, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys before the first day of class. It is recommended that they also read Morgan M. Millar. Allison C. O'Neill and Don Dillman, “Are Mode Preferences Real?” This article is available as a Technical Report 09-003 on Dillman’s website at http://www.sesrc.wsu.edu/dillman/
After completing this workshop, students should be able to design and implement high quality surveys and interviews (and other types of data gathering instruments) as well as critically examine surveys designed by others. This workshop focuses on the practical side but does not lose sight of theoretical and methodological issues dealing with what makes various approaches work.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend all three classes (during the entire class from 9:00am-2:00pm). Students are expected complete all the required reading and take-home assignments before each class and come prepared for a class discussion. Notes on the reading and other assignments will be collected each class. It is recommended highly that students complete the supplementary readings as well. Finally, note that while I encourage students to work with classmates on class assignments, each student must submit individual write-ups of the reading, the review questions, final project paper, etc.

Completing all the assignments will provide students with excellent skills in preparing survey instruments, collecting the data with these instruments, preparing the data for analysis and analyzing the data statistically as well as writing research reports.

Grading

Come prepared for a class discussion each time the class meets. All requirements must be completed by the dates specified below or they will not be counted towards final grade. The notes on the readings and the review questions will be collected each class and commented on.

Topics and Assignments

(1) CLASS #1  Introduction to Survey Methodology  (Wednesday, October 6)
   (1) Looking Back and Forward  (2) Are Mode Preferences Real?

First assignment  

Due in class #1, Wednesday, Oct. 6

The assignment involves pre-class reading listed below.

Your typed notes (1-2 pages) on the reading will be collected in class (Required)

Required Reading:

1.1 Don Dillman, Internet, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys, Ch. 1 on “Turbulent Times for Internet Surveys.” To be read before the first class.  (Take Notes)

Supplementary Highly Recommended Reading:

1.2 Morgan M. Millar, Allison C. O’Neill and Don Dillman, “Are Mode Preferences Real?”  Note that this article is available as a Technical Report # 09-003 on Dillman’s website at http://www.sesrc.wsu.edu/dillman/papers.htm

1.3 Priscilla Salant and Don. A. Dillman, How to Conduct Your Own Survey, (Wiley, 1994) [Available at the NYU Professional Bookstore and Bobst]. Please read any two chapters of your choice.

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(2) CLASS #2  On Crafting the Questionnaire     Wednesday, October 27

Students are required to read (before this class) and take notes (2 pages) on the following

2.a. Don Dillman, et. al., Internet, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys, Chapters 2, 4, 5
Ch. 2 “The Tailored Design Method”, pp.15-40
Ch. 4 “The Basics of Crafting Good Questions”, pp. 65-106
Ch. 5 “Constructing Open- and Close-ended Questions”, pp. 107-150

2.b Begin reading selected chapters from the list of books on reserve. See the last page of this syllabus on supplementary readings. Take notes on your readings.

2.c. Students are expected to prepare written notes on Review Questions #1 (10% of final course grade). Typed notes (2-3 pages) on the reading and the Review Questions will be collected in class.

(3) CLASS #3  Mixed-Mode and Internet Surveys     Wednesday, November 17

3.a 30% of final course grade “How America Responds” -- Due in class #3, Wednesday, Nov. 17. The assignment involves an examination and a critique of a Telephone Survey on “How America Responds.” Students are asked to write a reaction letter/critique to the designers of this survey at the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan suggesting improvements. [4 or more pages, See details on pp. 9-10 of this syllabus].

3.b Dillman, et. al., Internet, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys;
Students are required to read Ch. 3 and Ch. 8, and one chapter of their choice.
    Ch. 3, “Coverage and Sampling, pp. 41-64
    Ch. 6, “From Questions to a Questionnaire”, pp. 151-233
    Ch. 7, “Implementation Procedures”, pp. 234-299
    Ch. 8, “When More Than One Survey is Needed”
    Ch. 9, “Longitudinal and Internet Panel Surveys”, pp. 331-352
    Ch. 13 “Coping With Uncertainty”. pp. 440-457

3.c Students are also expected to read, take notes. Read 2- 3 pages and come prepared to discuss one chapter or two from the recommended books on reserve (see list on pages 7-8 of this syllabus), OR on any article from Dillman’s website, or from the publication Public Opinion Quarterly, or an article on Blackboard.

3.d Students are expected to prepare and submit written notes on Review Questions #2.

Please take careful notes on all assigned readings and come prepared for a class discussion. They will be collected but not graded.
NOTE: The Final Project Paper is due one week after this course ends. On November 17, the last day of class, students should come prepared to discuss their progress on their Final Project Papers in class and be prepared to share the data collection instruments they are designing.

For their Final Project Paper students are required to design TWO data collection instruments on any topic they choose using the mixed-mode approach recommended by Don Dillman (see details on page 11 below).

ALL ASSIGNMENTS SHOULD BE TYPED. ALSO PLEASE SAVE ALL YOUR ASSIGNMENTS ON A CD WHICH YOU WILL SUBMIT WITH YOUR FINAL PROJECT PAPER ON NOVEMBER 24.

REQUIRED READING (a summary)

(1) Dillman, et. al., Internet, Mail and Mixed Mode Surveys; read 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13
A chapter or two from the books on reserve and an article from Dillman’s website, from Public Opinion Quarterly, or articles I placed on on Blackboard.

RECOMMENDED -- READ BEFORE THE FIRST CLASS.

(2) Morgan M. Millar. Allison C. O’Neill and Don Dillman, “Are Mode Preferences Real?” This article is available as a Technical Report 09-003 on Dillman’s website. Please go to http://www.sesrc.wsu.edu/dillman/papers.htm;

A HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BOOK

(3) Priscilla Salant and Don. A. Dillman, How to Conduct Your Own Survey, (Wiley, 1994) [Available at the NYU Professional Bookstore].

OTHER REQUIRED READING.

(4) One or two chapters from one of the books on reserve at the BOBST library (see the long list of books on reserve on pages 7-8).

ASSIGNMENTS, GRADES AND DUE DATES

Assignments are DUE on October 6 and 27 and November 17, 2010. Come prepared to present your work in class

FOUR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

DUE on the second and third days of class.
“HOW AMERICA RESPONDS?”

Students will be asked to review and evaluate a major telephone survey on “How Americans Responded” to the September 11, 2001 attack. This mail survey was designed and conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan within a few days after the attack. The assignment is to examine the survey closely and discuss its design, the sampling strategy used, and the questions (for example, question order, and more) and make suggestions of how this survey might be improved. Details on pp. 10-11.

FINAL PROJECT PAPER

The Final Project paper (at least 6 double-spaced pages) will involve a review the literature on the subject of your survey, a discussion of the methodology of designing the two data collection instruments used, a discussion of the research design, and why a particular data collection method was chosen. In their papers students should include a discussion of the library research they conducted on topic chosen, a description of the search for appropriate questions or full questionnaires (in books, the internet, etc.). See Details on pp.11.

LIST OF REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

The books are available at the NYU Professional Bookstore and also on Reserve at Bobst Library.

REQUIRED READING

(1) Don Dillman, Internet, Mail and Mixed-Mode Surveys, (Wiley, 2009);
    Chapter 1 on “Turbulent Times for Survey Methodology” should be read prior to the first class.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTARY READING

(2) Morgan M. Millar, Allison C. O’Neill and Don Dillman, “Are Mode Preferences Real?”
    This article is available as a Technical Report 09-003 on Dillman’s website. Please go to http://www.sesrc.wsu.edu/dillman/papers.htm;
(3) Selected chapters from Priscilla Salant and Don. A. Dillman, How to Conduct Your Own Survey, (Wiley, 1994) [Available at the NYU Professional Bookstore].
In addition, students should select **ONE** of the following from the list of recommended books available for this class on RESERVE. Read a chapter or two from a book of your choice.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON RESERVE AT BOBST LIBRARY**


**AND MORE**


**SOME OLDER BOOKS OF INTEREST.**


*Deutscher’s book is my favorite*

(22) Irwin Deutscher, et. al., *Sentiments and Acts* (Walter de Gruyter, NY, 1993)  
– now available as an e-Book

More books

ON DATA ANALYSIS

(23) Jelke Bethlehem, *Applied Survey Methods* (Wiley 2009);

INTERNATIONAL


FOUR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

20% of your grade in this course

(1.1) Which one of the four sources of error -- measurement, nonresponse, coverage and sampling – do you consider the most difficult to overcome, and why? Please give three or more EXAMPLES! Due October 27

(1.2) Which survey format is better -- the agree/disagree OR open-ended questions that allow respondents to come up with their own answers? In your discussion consider several of the survey modes. Give three or more examples. Due October 27

(2.1) Briefer Discussion. The use of WEB surveys introduces new challenges and opportunities. Humphrey Taylor, the Chairman of The Harris Poll, for example, identified the following features of web surveys. (a) Harris Polls has a list of several million respondents who volunteer to answer them on the web. (b) He says that the web-based survey “is a visual medium and is more effective in addressing sensitive issues”. Please discuss the sampling issues raised by this and other web-based surveys, and the opportunities introduced by the visual medium and ability to ask sensitive questions. Compare to other survey modes. Give examples. Due November 17

(2.2) Dillman discusses the importance of the ordering of questions in mail surveys and says that a questionnaire is like a conversation. He recommends grouping topics and questions. Discuss whether and how Dillman’s recommendations hold when designing other types of data collection instruments (telephone, focus groups, face-to-face interview and web surveys). Give examples. Due November 17

NOTE: Please type up your answers to these questions. Bring your notes to class. Come prepared for a discussion. I will collect your notes.
Practice Exercise

THE “HOW AMERICA RESPONDS” TELEPHONE SURVEY

A Letter to the Institute for Social Research
At the University of Michigan

This assignment is due on November 17, 2010
Length: Three or more double spaced pages

30% of your grade

The web page for a description of this survey is:
http://www.isr.umich.edu/cps/har/

The web page for the questionnaire is:
www.isr.umich.edu/cps/har/combined_topline.pdf

On the afternoon of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, a group of concerned social scientists at the Institute for Social Research (ISR) gathered to consider how their talents might be used to help the country in the wake of the shocking events of that morning.

They decided that tracking the impact of these events on Americans’ psychological well-being, as well as their political beliefs and behavioral intentions regarding economic activity, would offer the country critical information in the months ahead.

The surveys were designed by a multidisciplinary group of researchers at ISR with an emphasis on using items from past surveys to produce longitudinal trend data. In order to facilitate comparisons, the sources included major national data collections like the American National Elections Studies and the General Social Survey as well as surveys conducted after other critical events such as the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City, the invasion of Iraq, and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. New questions directly relevant to the events of September 11, 2001 were added to the survey.

The surveys were conducted by telephone, using a list-assisted sample drawn for a national sample of telephone households. Interviews were conducted with a randomly selected adult 18 years of age or older in each household. A CATI application was designed to facilitate

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3 The assignment was inspired by one on Don Dillman’s website:
rapid data collection and analysis, as well as to provide for appropriate branching and randomization patterns for questions. The response rate was 59% for the Wave 1 study and 46% for the wave 2 study.

You will find the Questionnaire and Results document at [www.isr.umich.edu/cps/har/combined_topline.pdf](http://www.isr.umich.edu/cps/har/combined_topline.pdf). The results for any question in a particular survey are identified as “T1” for Wave 1, “T2” for Wave 2, and “P” for the panel respondents. If the question was asked in both waves of the study, all three sets of results are presented. If the question was asked only in Wave 1 or Wave 2, only those results are given. If the question order in Wave 1 was different from Wave 2, the question number in Wave 1 is indicated in parentheses at the start of the question.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment is to examine this survey closely and write a reaction paper in a form of letter to the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. In your letter discuss how this survey might be improved. For example, what could the survey designers at Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan have done to increase the response rate to the survey? Also discuss your thoughts about the research design, and the questions, the first question, and more.

In writing your recommendations, you should draw on all we have discussed in this course and all you have read in the assigned and recommended readings. For example, according to Dillman, the 59% response rate for Wave 1 and the 46% response rate for Wave 2 are considered rather low. Can the validity of this survey be questioned based on standards requiring an at least a 70% response rate? Remember that Dillman taught us that Nonresponse Error occurs when a significant number of people in the survey sample do not respond to a telephone interview and are different from those who do in a way that is important to the study. Discuss these and other issues.

When writing your recommendations please remember to consider such issues as “choosing the first question carefully”, question order, as well as the structure of questionnaires. Was good use made of the four types of questions (that include attitudes, beliefs, behavior, and attributes, etc.)? You can also discuss other ways in which the survey can be improved, drawing on all you learned from class discussions and the readings about writing questions.

I will be collecting your “HOW AMERICA RESPONDS” paper in class on November 17, 2010
The Final Project

DESIGNING YOUR OWN DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS: A MIXED-MODE APPROACH

This assignment is due no later than November 24, 2010. Proposals are due on October 27 (the 2nd day of class).

Length: at least 6 double spaced pages plus two data collection instruments. Each one should be at least 3 pages long and 10 questions. 30% of your grade

One of the first steps in preparing the survey (mail or internet) or interview schedule or focus group for your final project is to review the literature on the topic to see what has been already done -- mostly in search of questions from previous surveys.

The next step is to write up a brief research design describing the topic, summarize briefly the state of research in the area, decide on the intended focus of the survey and write a set of questions that will direct you in gathering the data. Each student is required to construct two data collection instruments (each one should be at least 3 pages long or have a least 10 questions), which will include the key questions necessary for researching the topic. Time permitting, students can go ahead and complete the data collection, analyze the data and write a final report.

For this Final Project assignment, you are required to design two instruments. They can be a mail and web questionnaire, or an interview schedule or focus groups, etc. In other words, you can choose from any of the available methods to conduct your survey. For example, you can design a fax survey and telephone survey for the second instrument or prepare an interview schedule with which to conduct an in-person interview and a mail or email survey for the second instrument, or face-to-face interview and drop-off survey, etc.

Preparing a web survey is recommended using Survey Monkey or Qualtrics www.surveymonkey.com or http://www.qualtrics.com/ NYU has a license for both. Information will be given in class.

Students are also asked to prepare and conceptualize a research strategy for their topic in consultation with Prof. Naphtali. The assignment does not require that you collect the data. However, you should draft an outline of the Final Report and attach to your paper.

IF YOU BORROW QUESTIONS FROM OTHER SURVEYS, IT IS REQUIRED THAT YOU CITE THE SOURCE OF THE QUESTIONS.

SAMPLE PROJECTS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION IN CLASS AND ON BLACKBOARD.