Course Syllabus

Questionnaire Design (STAT 6233)

Fall Semester 2011

Class time: Wednesdays, 6 PM to 8:30 PM

Classroom: #218

Office Hours:
   In person: Wednesdays, 5 to 6 PM by appointment
   Wednesdays, after class
   Virtual on Blackboard: By appointment

Instructor:
Michael D. Silver, PhD
U.S. Government Accountability Office
E-mail: mdsilver@gwu.edu, michaeldsilver@hotmail.com

Guest Lecturers (if possible):
   - Safaa Amer, PhD
     NORC at the University of Chicago
   - Ali Mushtaq
     NORC at the University of Chicago
   - Terry Richardson, PhD
     U.S. Government Accountability Office
   - Gordon Willis, PhD
     National Cancer Institute

Course Description:
From University Bulletin: This course covers questionnaire development from the perspective of modern cognitive techniques. Included are a range of questionnaire issues from choosing the mode of data collection (mail, telephone, or in-person) to selecting the respondent, to the differences between asking attitude and factual questions – even how to pretest the instrument chosen.
Required Texts:


Note: Texts are available at the George Washington University Bookstore located in the Marvin Center at 800 21st Street NW, Washington, DC or via internet at http://www.efollett.com/

Recommended Text:

Blackboard Information and GWU Email:
This class will operate as a paperless class to the point possible. The web site for the class is https://blackboard.gwu.edu/webapps/login

Course ID: 201103_Questionnaire Design_STAT_6233_SD

The syllabus, outline of class sessions, and supplemental readings will be posted on this web site. All homework and projects, listed within this syllabus, must be submitted electronically by the respective due date. E-mail messages are time-stamped – assignments submitted late will result in a letter grade reduction for each hour the assignment is past due. Hard copies will not be accepted. Feedback on assignments will be returned electronically as well.

Please check your GWU email account as frequently as necessary to ensure that you are aware of all official announcements and other communications from your instructor or GWU staff.

Teaching Style:
Using a seminar-style approach, the primary goal in teaching this course is to provide opportunities to acquire content knowledge and an environment conducive for learning and building critical thinking skills that facilitates dialogue among seminar participants with open discussion about particular interests and concerns. Through discussion and exercises, participants are challenged to explore possibilities and opportunities for personal growth and development. Specifically, this seminar style will help to improve each participant’s ability to communicate clearly and effectively in oral and written forms. It is not possible to disseminate all the knowledge necessary to develop a competent professional in this ever-changing field, but rather to elevate expectations for a challenging and rewarding professional career.

Feedback:
I welcome any comments you may have on the course, and I would like to hear about any difficulties you experience. The sooner I hear from you the sooner I can act. Please speak to me directly, or send an email.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.
Learning Objectives:

At the end of this course, the student will be able to:

- Compare characteristics and uses of closed-ended versus open-ended questions
- Design and format survey instruments
- Design appropriately worded, meaningful and valid questions while avoiding biased words, negative phrasing, and socially desirable language
- Design questions to describe and evaluate people, places, and things
- Design standardized survey questions and response categories
- Determine a feasible number of questions with respect to respondent burden
- Develop mutually exclusive and exhaustive response categories
- Develop questions to gather factual data as well as those that measure subjective states
- Distinguish between the different types of survey instruments and methods of data collection.
- Employ presurvey evaluation techniques such as pretests, cognitive interviewing and interviewer debriefing.
- Enlist criteria for evaluating survey questions
- Identify ways to gather sensitive information
- Measure frequency, feelings, knowledge, priorities, quantity, and satisfaction
- Research survey literature for studies that advance or develop new or more comprehensive scientific knowledge in the area of survey research methods
- Understand cognitive processes related to answering questions
- Understand the issue of order effects within categorical response categories as well as within the survey instrument itself.
- Write advance and cover letters as well as introductory statements to surveys
- Write screening questions to identify specific survey respondents

Exercises:

You will complete several exercises during the semester. Due dates for each assignment, as well as dates they will be available on Blackboard, are listed in this syllabus. The primary focus of each assignment is listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Develop a survey research proposal and develop demographic questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Questions for critical review (see description below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Revise the research proposal and demographic questions from Exercise 1 and develop a final draft questionnaire including substantive and screening questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Technical review/critique of external survey questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Expert technical review of a fellow student’s questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Cognitive interviews/pretesting of questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>Oral presentation describing the transformation of your survey instrument based on expert reviews and individual cognitive pretests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.
**Exercise 2: Questions for Critical Review:**

To improve critical analysis and review of survey questions and promote discussion among seminar participants, each student will identify one or two questions from a survey he/she has worked on or reviewed. Questions and/or responses options should have one or more types of measurement issues (e.g. biased question stem or response options in one or multiple directions, biased or slanted introduction, biased tone of the question, categories that may not be mutually exclusive or exhaustive, questions that mix beliefs with attitudes, questions that require too much precision or unnecessary respondent burden, questions that may be too sensitive or objectionable, questions that promote socially desirable responses, vaguely worded questions or response options, etc).

Email the question(s) to the professor by the date indicated in the course outline, along with a brief description of what the measurement problems were.

**Quiz:**

There will be one “pop” quiz at some point near the end of the course to test how well students understand the course material and the required readings. The date is not revealed beforehand so that students are encouraged to keep up on reading rather than cram for a quiz just before it occurs.

**Student Led Discussion of Article:**

To increase awareness and promote an appreciation of survey research literature, each student will select an article published in Public Opinion Quarterly, the Journal of the American Association of Public Opinion Research, for in-class discussion. A list of articles from which you may select are listed in this syllabus.

These articles are methodological studies, for the most part, that either advance or apply survey research practices. Based on readings and in-class discussion, students will critically review the study for methodological flaws, questionnaire design issues, and other factors, as well as any ways in which the research contributes, if at all, to the field of survey research.

Students will be given 20 minutes of class time for review and discussion of the study. Insightful discussion, as opposed to merely summarizing the article, is expected. Peer reviews and an assessment by the professor will be completed. See Assessment sheets in this syllabus.

Articles will be assigned based on each student’s ranked priority in the order in which preferences are e-mailed to mdsilver@gwu.edu. Presentations will be scheduled throughout the semester based on subject matter of the article. You can begin e-mailing your top two preferences following the first class session but no later than September 14th. Please send the full reference when you indicate your top two preferences.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.
Class Policies:

Class attendance is mandatory. Promptness to class, out of respect for everyone (not just the professor), is expected. Because graduate courses meet for only 14 sessions per semester, participants are expected to attend all sessions. Anyone who must miss a session must obtain prior approval from the professor and arrange to turn in any assignments prior to the seminar session. Each unexcused absence will constitute a deduction of 5 points from the overall grade. Any student who foresees missing more than 2 sessions is advised to take the course at a later date. In addition to physical attendance, seminar participants must read all assigned materials before coming to class and have any homework completed. It is expected that everyone will be prepared for each session and participate in seminar discussions accordingly.

Note: University Policy on Religious Holidays requires that students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.

Grading Criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise #1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise #2</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise #3</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise #4</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise #5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise #6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise #7 (Final presentation)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz (sometime during course)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student led discussion</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading Scale

- **A** = 90 to 100
- **B** = 80 to 89
- **C** = 70 to 79
- **F** = Below 70

Academic Integrity

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the entire code, see: [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html)

Security

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

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Support for Students Outside The Classroom

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

Outline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session # &amp; Seminar Date</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Required Readings (Read BEFORE the class)</th>
<th>Important Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Aug 31</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Overview of the Course</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>No readings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Sep 7                 | Introduction to the Tailored Design Method & Mode of Survey Administration | Silver | Dillman Chapter 2: The Tailored Design Method
Dillman Chapter 8: When More than One Survey Mode is Needed | |
| 3. Sep 14                | Writing Questions | Silver | Dillman Chapter 4: The Basics of Crafting Good Questions
Dillman Chapter 5: Constructing Open- and Closed-Ended Questions
Willis Chapter 2: First Principles of Questionnaire Design | Deadline for submission of article selection |
| 4. Sep 21                | Writing Questions (continued) | TBD | Optional: Fowler Chapter 6: Designing Questions to be Good Measures | |

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<thead>
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<th>Required Readings (Read BEFORE the class)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Dillman Chapter 3: Coverage and Sampling.  
*Optional*: Instant Survey User Manual | Exercise #1 Due  
*Class in lab!* |
|                          | Survey Implementation Issues               |            |                                                                                                          |                                   |
| 6. Oct 5                 | Survey Implementation Issues (Continued)   | Silver     | Dillman Chapter 6: From Questions to a Questionnaire                                                  | Exercise #2: Questions for critical review due |
|                          |                                            |            |                                                                                                          |                                   |
| 7. Oct 12                | Introduction to Pretesting Questionnaires  | Silver     | Willis Chapter 1: Introduction to Cognitive Interviewing  
Willis Chapter 14: Beyond Cognitive Testing: Affiliated Pretesting Methods  
*Optional*: Fowler Chapter 7: Evaluating Survey Questions and Instruments | Exercise #3 Due |
|                          |                                            |            |                                                                                                          |                                   |
| 8. Oct 19                | Psychology of respondent and Cognitive Interviewing  
The Intricacies of Verbal Probing | Silver     | Willis Chapter 4: Cognitive Interviewing in Practice: Think-Aloud, Verbal Probing, and Other Techniques  
Willis Chapter 5: Developing Standard Cognitive Probes  
Willis Chapter 6: Beyond the Standard Model of Verbal Probing  
Willis Chapter 8: Avoiding Probing Pitfalls | Exercise #4 Due |
|                          |                                            |            |                                                                                                          |                                   |
Willis Chapter 10: Planning and Conducting Cognitive Interviews  
Willis Chapter 11: Analyzing and Documenting Cognitive Interview Results | Exercise #5 Due |

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willis Chapter 13: Evaluation of Cognitive Interviewing Techniques</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Nov 9</td>
<td>Other Issues continued</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Willis Chapter 15: Recommendations and Future Directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Nov 16</td>
<td>Tailoring to the Survey Situation</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>Dillman Chapter 10: Customer Feedback Surveys and Alternative Delivery Technologies</td>
<td>Exercise # 6 Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dillman Chapter 12 Surveying Businesses and Other Establishments</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dillman Chapter 11: Effect of Sponsorship and the Data Collection Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 23</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Tentative)</td>
<td>(Guest</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lecture)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Tentative)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Dec 7</td>
<td>Final Presentations</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Exercise # 7 Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Dec 14</td>
<td>Final Exam Week Presentations (if necessary)</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good Luck!**

*NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.*
Acceptable Articles from POQ for Student Led Discussions
(Available through your AAPOR Account at www.aapor.org)

# Article
1. Cong Ye, Jenna Fulton, and Roger Tourangeau
   More positive or More Extreme? A Meta-Analysis of Mode Differences in Response Choice

2. David Scott Yeager, Samuel B. Larson, Jon A. Krosnick, and Trevor Tompson
   Measuring Americans' Issue Priorities: A New Version of the Most Important Problem Question
   Reveals More Concern About Global Warming and the Environment

3. Jonathon P. Schuldt, Sara H. Konrath, and Norbert Schwarz
   “Global warming” or “climate change”?: Whether the planet is warming depends on question wording

4. Vera Toepoel and Mick P. Couper
   Can Verbal Instructions Counteract Visual Context Effects in Web Surveys?

5. Eleanor Singer, Mick P. Couper, Trivellore E. Raghunathan, Toni C. Antonucci, Margit Burmeister, and John Van Hoewyk
   The Effect of Question Framing and Response Options on the Relationship between Racial Attitudes and Beliefs about Genes as Causes of Behavior
   Public Opinion Quarterly 2010 74(3): 460-476; doi:10.1093/poq/nfq009 [PDF]

6. Andy Peytchev, Emilia Peytcheva, and Robert M. Groves
   Measurement Error, Unit Nonresponse, and Self-Reports of Abortion Experiences
   Public Opinion Quarterly 2010 74: 319-327; doi:10.1093/poq/nfq002 [PDF]

7. David C. Wilson
   Perceptions about the Amount of Interracial Prejudice Depend on Racial Group Membership and Question Order

8. Allyson L. Holbrook and Jon A. Krosnick
   Social desirability bias in voter turnout reports: Tests using the item count technique

9. Harlan Sayles, Robert F. Belli, and Emilio Serrano
   Interviewer Variance Between Event History Calendar and Conventional Questionnaire Interviews

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.
10. Linchiat Chang and Jon A. Krosnick  
**Comparing Oral Interviewing with Self-Administered Computerized Questionnaires: An Experiment**  
Public Opinion Quarterly 2010 74: 154-167; doi:10.1093/poq/nfp090  [PDF]

11. Peter Neijens and Claes de Vreese  
**Helping Citizens Decide in Referendums: The Moderating Effect of Political Sophistication on the Use of the Information and Choice Questionnaire as a Decision Aid**  

12. Thomas Harmon, Charles F. Turner, Susan M. Rogers, Elizabeth Eggleston, Anthony M. Roman, Maria A. Villarroel, James R. Chromy, Laxminarayana Ganapathi, and Sheping Li  
**Impact of T-ACASI on Survey Measurements of Subjective Phenomena**  

13. Adeline Delavande and Susann Rohwedder  
**Eliciting Subjective Probabilities in Internet Surveys**  

14. Mirta Galesic, Roger Tourangeau, Mick P. Couper, and Frederick G. Conrad  
**Eye-Tracking Data: New Insights on Response Order Effects and Other Cognitive Shortcuts in Survey Responding**  

15. Melissa K. Miller and Shannon K. Orr  
**Experimenting with a "Third Way" in Political Knowledge Estimation**  
Public Opinion Quarterly 2008 72: 768-780; doi:10.1093/poq/nfn057  [PDF]

16. Eldad Davidov, Peter Schmidt, and Shalom H. Schwartz  
**Bringing Values Back In: The Adequacy of the European Social Survey to Measure Values in 20 Countries**  

17. Patrick Sturgis, Nick Allum, and Patten Smith  
**An Experiment on the Measurement of Political Knowledge in Surveys**  

**Does "Yes or No" on the Telephone Mean the Same as "Check-All-That-Apply" on the Web?**  
Public Opinion Quarterly 2008 72: 103-113; doi:10.1093/poq/nfn005  [PDF]

19. Allyson L. Holbrook, Jon A. Krosnick, David Moore, and Roger Tourangeau  
**Response Order Effects in Dichotomous Categorical Questions Presented Orally: The Impact of Question and Respondent Attributes**  

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.
## Professor Assessment: Student-Led Discussion of Article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Points Awarded</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical analysis and presentation of material</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of preparation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of critical discussion of ways in which article advanced/applied survey research methods</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.
Peer Review/Feedback - Student-Led Discussion of Article

1. Overall, how would you rate the student's presentation?
   - Excellent
   - Good
   - Fair
   - Poor

2. How would you rate the student’s level of preparation?
   - Very Prepared
   - Somewhat Prepared
   - Somewhat Unprepared
   - Very Unprepared

3. How would you rate the student's ability to promote critical discussion of the article?
   - Excellent
   - Good
   - Fair
   - Poor

4. How would you rate the flow of the presentation and discussion (e.g., proceeded in a logical manner, concepts and issues discussed tied together, etc)?
   - Excellent
   - Good
   - Fair
   - Poor

5. What areas of the review and presentation, if any, needed improvement?

6. Do you have any additional comments?