

## **PSC 207: SURVEY AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESEARCH METHODS**

Fall 2009 (CRN: 39639, 4 units)

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:10 – 4:00 pm, 166 Young Hall

### ***Instructor***

Prof. Gregory Herek  
Email: gmherek@ucdavis.edu  
271 Young Hall (Phone: 752-8085)  
Office Hours: Mon. 1:10 - 2 pm and by  
appointment

### ***General Information***

#### ***Course Goals***

This course will introduce you to survey and questionnaire research methods with a special emphasis on how to ask questions. You will learn about empirical research and theory on the cognitive, motivational, and social processes that influence how respondents answer questions. You will gain a better understanding of the practical implications of these processes by designing your own survey instrument in stages throughout the term, and presenting successive versions of it to the class for feedback and discussion. You will also be introduced to ethical considerations in survey and questionnaire research as well as practical considerations in fielding survey studies. Through in-class and homework assignments, you will learn how to use relevant Internet resources for survey and questionnaire research.

#### ***Prerequisites for Enrollment***

You must have graduate student standing and you must have completed an undergraduate or graduate course on social or behavioral research methods.

#### ***Course E-mail***

As needed, Prof. Herek will communicate with course participants between meetings via e-mail. Make sure that your correct e-mail address is on file with the campus Registrar. Prof. Herek will send a test message early in the term so you can check that you are receiving messages properly.

#### ***Course Web Site***

Course handouts, assignments, announcements, and updates will be posted on the course web site, along with recommended supplemental readings and links

to other relevant sites. You should check the web site – especially the weekly update section – on a regular basis.

A link to the website will appear on your MyUCDavis page (<http://my.ucdavis.edu>). You can also find the course website by clicking on the “Search for Course Webpages” link in the “My Course Webpages” section of your *My UC Davis* page (<http://my.ucdavis.edu>).

From there, you can follow the link to the weekly updates section of the website.

Or use the following URL to go directly to the weekly updates section of the course web site:

<http://psc207.opinionsproject.net>

### ***Evaluation and Grading***

You will be evaluated on the following criteria, with your final grade weighted as indicated:

- Your satisfactory completion of assigned exercises and homework (20%)
- Your written and oral critiques of other students' questionnaire projects (20%)
- Your consistent attendance and active participation in class discussions and peer critiques (20%)
- Your class presentations of your questionnaire project (20%)
- Your final questionnaire project (20%)

### ***Keeping Informed: Course Updates and Information***

You are responsible for knowing about all announcements made in class, even if you are absent. You are also responsible for knowing about information posted to the web site and distributed via e-mail. *Therefore, in addition to attending class, you are strongly advised to check your e-mail and the web site regularly – at least once each week – for new postings.*

### ***Texts***

The course texts may be purchased at the campus bookstore and through on-line booksellers:

- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley & Sons. [note: This is a new edition of this book] [Cloth]
- Tourangeau, R., Rips, L. J., & Rasinski, K. A. (2000). *The psychology of survey response*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. [Paper]
- Bradburn, N. M., Sudman, S., & Wansink, B. (2004). *Asking questions: The definitive guide to questionnaire design (Rev. ed.)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [Paper]

All texts are on reserve at Shields Library. Journal articles and other additional readings may also be assigned during the term.

### ***Topics To Be Covered***

This is a tentative list of topics we will discuss in the course. The order and content may be changed as the quarter progresses.

1. The psychology of survey and questionnaire response: Cognitive, motivational, and social processes.
2. Asking questions about behavior and knowledge.
3. Asking questions about attitudes and other subjective phenomena.
4. Closed vs. open-ended question formats.
5. Response formats.
6. Context effects: Item order, response order.
7. Visual presentation of questionnaire items: Layout and design.
8. Collecting questionnaire data via the Web.
9. Effects of different data collection modes.
10. Asking questions about sensitive topics.
11. Acquiescence and socially desirable responding.
12. Ethical issues in survey and questionnaire research.

13. Fielding the survey or questionnaire.
14. Embedding experiments in surveys.
15. Internet databases of public opinion items.
16. Accessing survey data sets on the web.

### ***Other Information***

#### ***Attendance***

Attending all of the class meetings will be tremendously important for you to benefit from this course. Please don't miss any classes.

#### ***Copyright of Course Materials***

All course materials are copyrighted by Professor Herek. All federal and state copyrights are reserved for all original material presented in this course through any medium, including lecture or print.

#### ***Principles of Community***

Like all other courses and activities, this course follows the UCD Principles of Community. Please consult these principles on the web at: <<http://www.ucdavis.edu/principles.html>>

#### ***Ethical Practices and Misconduct***

As in all courses at UCD, students in this course are expected to conduct themselves in an honest and ethical way. You can learn more about university policies in this regard by consulting the web:

<<http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/uwnews/aospol/toc.html>>

#### ***Problems, Suggestions, Criticisms, Concerns***

When you have them, please communicate them to Professor Herek – the sooner the better. This will help to improve the quality of the course and avoid end-of-term crises.