SOC 597: Seminar in Survey Research  
Fall Semester 2003  
Course Instructor:  
David R. Johnson, Professor of Sociology and Human Development and Family Studies  
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email: drj10@psu.edu  
Web page with assignments:  
http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/d/r/drj10/  
Office Hours: TBA or by Appointment

Course Description and Objectives:  
This course will explore developments and issues in the methodology of survey research. Technological and societal changes have increased the challenge to collecting valid and representative data with survey research methods. The course will focus on general issues as well as on specific procedures for conducting surveys in this new environment. The course will generally be taught in a seminar type format. At the end of the semester the students should have a good understanding of the issues and challenges of conducting survey research in today’s environment.

Readings:  
There is no textbook. Rather there will be a number of readings assigned. Many of these readings will be available in full-text from the library web-page. Copies of the links for many of these readings can be found on my web page (see above). Paper copies of readings that are not available in electronic form will be available for you to use to make your own copies in the small seminar room next to the Sociology main office on the 2nd floor of Oswald.

Course requirements and policies:  
Assignments:  
The major assignment will be a research paper on a topic related to issues in survey research. At various points throughout the semester there will be assignments due related to this product. These will include a statement of the topic, outline of the research plan, etc. You will also be expected to make a presentation to the class on the paper and provide a copy of the paper to all students in the class. The final research paper will be due the last day of class (before finals week). In addition to the major paper, there will be assignments related to the assigned readings. Students will be expected to write short (1 to 2 page) summary and reflection papers on the issues raised in the readings. These short papers will normally be due the following class period and will be used as a basis for discussion of the issues raised.
Your major research paper will be one of two possible formats. The first format would be as a proposal for a research study related to a methodological issue in survey research. It should be structured to follow the specific format for proposals to a major funding agency (e.g., NIH, NSF). The second format is an actual empirical research paper in which you conduct and write up a data analysis related to a methodological issue/problem in survey research. For this paper you would do the analysis and present it in an article length paper in the format of an appropriate journal. Copies of papers prepared for my seminar last Fall semester are available in pdf files on my web page. Please look these over, if you wish, to give you some idea of the kinds of projects that are possible.

Grading:

The course grade will be based as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final research paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other written assignments</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class presentation and participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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The instructor reserved the right to reduce the score on any assignment by 15% per week for those not turned in on time. For example, on an assignment worth 10 points that is turned in two-weeks late you could receive a maximum of 7 points. I will assign points to assignments and weight them to equal the final grade distribution above. Percentage of total points will be translated into grades as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>89-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>79-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>69-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59-0</td>
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</tbody>
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Academic integrity:

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty of others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Violations of academic integrity will be reported to Judicial Affairs (count on it). The complete University policy regarding academic dishonesty is available in the University’s Policies and Rules: A Guide to Students or on the web at (http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html). A student who submits plagiarized work on any written assignment will receive a grade of F for the course. Students who are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism are encouraged to refer to the examples provided by the English Department at (http://www.psu.edu/dept/english/policy/plagiari.html).
Disability Access Statement

Penn State encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics no related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state and federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

The dates when the topics are covered in class may change a bit if we need more time to cover a topic, or class on that day needs to be cancelled for some reason.

September 3    Introduction to class and issues in survey research.
September 10  The State-of-the-Art of Survey Research today
September 17    Survey Nonresponse
(Response paper on Survey Nonresponse due)
September 24  Technology and Survey Methods
(Research paper topic, one page statement due)
Note: Class will meet at SRC facilities at Marion Place.
October 1    Survey Mode effects
(Response paper on Survey Mode effects due)
October 8    Improving validity of survey responses
(Research paper on improving validity of survey responses due)
October 15    Language and Culture
(Progress report on research paper due: outline, literature review)
(Research paper on Language and Culture due)
October 22  Ethics and human subjects
(Research paper on Ethics and Human Subjects due)
October 29    Sampling
(Research paper on Sampling due)
November 5    Weighting, missing data allocation, and related issues (representativeness)
(Research paper on Weighting, etc… due)
November 12    Longitudinal surveys
(Research paper on Longitudinal surveys due)
November 19    Student Presentations
November 26    No Class
December 3    Student Presentations
December 10  Student Presentations: Final Papers Due