

ESM 269: Survey Design & Env. Public Opinion

Syllabus updated 3/20/2025

Spring 2025 Instructor: Heather Hodges

Lectures: W 5-6:15 1424 Bren Hall

Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Primary Objective: To learn best practices in survey DESIGN (not analysis), which will overlap with best practices in research design and therefore apply to group project work, academic research, and future jobs.

- Applied Survey Research: You will all be expected to workshop your survey in this course, solo or with a group.
- Survey Research Literacy: Through a deep dive into the survey design of your work and that of your peers you will learn best practices for all survey research, including ethical considerations, question wording, planning, and methodology.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize when surveys or polls are an appropriate tool for data collection – surveys are not always the best or most appropriate way to gather data on a population
- Distinguish the good (survey data and procedures) from the bad – you'll hear yourself thinking, 'These statistics are based on shady data' or 'Who did they poll?'
- Understand the use of different types of questions and scales in survey research – some questions serve to create a scale/measure, others are more explorative, and the options you give respondents matter
- Know the step-wise process for developing a questionnaire & appropriate analysis planning - from literature review to question development, pre-testing, expert review, recruitment, and analysis prep.
- This is not a course on how to use R scripts to analyze your survey results, there are hundreds of great resources online that can cover that on your own time, and is more helpful once you have data in hand.

MATERIALS

- Canvas: I will post all additional readings, assignments, resources, and links to our course page. Please check here for all your questions.

COURSE PLAN & ASSESSMENT

This is a *proposed* plan for what to expect (subject to change).

- o Before the lecture complete the week's readings/activities on Canvas, these may include:
 - o Watching a mini-lecture about the main concepts from the course text
 - o Reading news articles or watching a video
 - o Finding an article to share
 - o Submitting a reflection & skimming peers' reflections
- o During lecture:
 - We will discuss prompts/activities assignments by the instructor in small breakout groups (I will on occasion cut lecture time to allow in-person workshoping of existing surveys that may or may not require the group's attention).

Assessment	Details	Where / format	Course %
Assignment #1	Survey brief or outline	Canvas	20
Assignment #2	Instrument V1	Canvas	20
Assignment #3	Instrument V2	Canvas	20
Participation	Attendance & Participation	In Class	40

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Note: We will discuss and adjust your individual plan for the quarter in Week 1, which will be tracked in a google sheet. For example, your instrument may be for an interview or focus group and/or you may work with your GP or Eco E group to develop multiple instruments before EOY.

Assignment #1 – Survey brief or outline: write a one-page brief justifying the use of a survey to answer your research question. Include the research question, a description of the problem statement, why a survey is the best way to answer this research question, and a FAQ on other approaches considered. For the outline, use the matrix format shared in class to craft the structure of your instrument.

Assignment #2 – develop your V1 survey instrument, focusing on key themes for your survey as well as possible questions for each theme.. This may include reliable & validated pre-existing questions as well as those you have developed yourself. These should stem from the literature and form the outline for what your final questionnaire may look like. This process will be discussed in more detail in class.

Assignment #3 – Now it's time to refine those questions and test them on innocent bystanders! (Well, you're friends, housemates, strangers on the sidewalk, etc.) This will consist of multiple iterations to lend opportunities for improvement. Examples from your work will be used in class for live editing sessions throughout the quarter.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

If you'd like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the [Disabled Students Program](#).

Plagiarism: If you use an idea or a fact without attribution, you are plagiarizing someone else's work. Plagiarism and cheating are violations of academic integrity. As specified by UCSB's academic conduct policy, such violations will result in disciplinary actions, including referral to judicial affairs. Plagiarism is submitting a piece of work which in part or in whole is not entirely the student's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source. For examples of plagiarism and how to avoid it, see this [flyer](#). For more information on UCSB's policies, go [here](#).