

Course Syllabus

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Miami University

Winter 2019

Dr. Rachel Blum

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the design, development, and execution of survey research. We will consider a variety of issues including; questionnaire construction, sampling, interviewing, data coding, and data analysis. We will also consider the ethical issues surrounding survey research, and the role of survey research in a democracy. Your final project will be to design and create and analyze the results of your own online survey using Qualtrics.

Course Objectives

- Understand the research questions public opinion survey analysis can and cannot answer.
- Identify potential weaknesses in survey instruments and offer workable solutions.
- Critically evaluate interpretations of public opinion surveys offered in journalism and research.
- Design and conduct your own research project and present the results using graphics and descriptive statistics in a clear and informative manner.

Department of Political Science Student Learning Objectives

1. Through readings and course materials, students will be able to define and explain concepts in survey analysis.
2. Through discussion boards and hands-on activities, students will hone evidence-based reasoning, including identifying appropriate questions, survey items, and methods of presentation for their surveys.
3. Through analysis of surveys and construction of their final survey projects, students will learn to identify the appropriate methodological approach to their research design, as well as understanding the ethical components of research choices.
4. Through discussion boards and analysis of existing surveys, students will practice applying political science knowledge to contemporary political issues.
5. Drawing from the analytical skills they learn, students will practice formulating and advocating for positive change in our society by becoming sophisticated and truthful consumers and producers of data.

Course Information

1. Online format. This course is conducted entirely online, which means you do not have to be on campus to complete any portion of it. You will participate in this course using Miami University's learning management system *Canvas* and other online resources. You will need access to a computer and an internet connection to complete this course. You are also responsible for turning in all assignments on time, unless you have received prior permission from me for turning assignments in at a different time.

2. How much time you'll spend on this course: If you've never taken an online course before, it can be a bit of a transition. A lot of people assume that an online class will be something you can just ignore and return to as you please, only to find that the course is over and they've failed to complete most of the requirements. I don't want that to happen to any of you, so before we start make sure you understand how much time to budget.

- Miami has instructional minute requirements for all courses, including online J-term courses. For this course, it is assumed that you will spend a *minimum* of 2,250 minutes (37.5 hours) on the course. So...
 - **24-day plan:** if you plan to work on this course every day, including weekends, then you need budget ~94 minutes a day, or about 1.5 hours, to complete the work successfully.
 - **17-day plan:** if you plan to work only on weekdays, then you need to budget even more time per day, ~132 minutes, or 2.2 hours.
 - Whatever you plan to do, I'd decide how many days you'll dedicate to the course, and give yourself a benchmark of how many hours you'll need to set aside.

3. Each week:

- We will have a graded discussion. I will post in these discussion with an overview of the readings and a few key points, like a mini lecture.
- At the beginning of the course, we will have lots of readings but very few assignments. At the end, it will flip to no readings and more assignments. This is because you need to gain the knowledge of how to do surveys first, and then implement this knowledge. Don't neglect these early readings! They will provide the information and background you need to complete the substantive assignments that come later.

4. Announcements and changes. Announcements may be posted in Canvas on a daily basis. Time sensitive announcements may also be sent via email. Please be sure to check the Canvas course site and your MU email daily, as they will contain important information about the class.

5. Grading turnaround and feedback. During the week (M-F) I will check email and monitor the Discussions several times a day while active. If you have a concern and send me an email, and you can expect a response within 12 hours on a weekday. I will make every effort to provide feedback and grades within 5 days of an assignment's due date.

Course Policies

1. Online course etiquette (e.g. "Netiquette"). We will use discussion boards and peer review throughout the course. Criticism should be presented in a constructive manner. This does not mean you always have to agree with one another (you shouldn't!), but you should be polite. The following are good guidelines to follow:

- Never post harassing, threatening, or embarrassing comments.
- Don't post anything you wouldn't say to someone's face.

- If you disagree with someone, respectfully respond to the subject, not the person.

2. Academic Integrity. The [Academic integrity policies](http://www.miamioh.edu/integrity/) (<http://www.miamioh.edu/integrity/>) that govern Miami's traditional classrooms are also in effect here.

3. Accessibility. Miami's Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) assists students with determining eligibility for services and accommodation planning. Students who are entitled to disability-related academic adjustments, auxiliary aids, etc., must register with SDS to receive accommodations in university courses. Please understand that formal communication from SDS must be presented prior to the coordination of accommodations for this course. For more information, contact SDS at [\(513\) 529-1541](tel:5135291541) or via email at sds@miamioh.edu (<mailto:sds@miamioh.edu>).

4. Grading and grading disputes. I make every effort to grade using clear rubrics. If you wish to dispute a grade, please use the following criteria.

- If you are disputing a simple and honest mistake: email me as soon as you identify the mistake and I will fix it.
- If you are confident that your work deserves a higher grade according to the assignment rubric, please email me a memo within 48 hours of receiving the grade, explaining how you believe the grade is unfair according to the assignment and rubric, why it deserves a different grade, and what you think that grade will be. I will then complete a de novo review of your assignment (i.e. as if I have never seen it before), which could result in a higher OR lower grade.

5. Turning in assignments/course deadlines: due to the consolidated nature of this course, each day is worth ~1 week of normal semester time. This means that an assignment that is a "day" late is actually more like a week late, which means that I am not able to give much credit for late assignments. I highly encourage you to stay on top of your assignments, because getting behind by even one day can have a snowball effect on your performance in the course.

- If you have an extenuating circumstance that justifies an extension (catastrophic health issue, death in family, natural disaster): email me as soon as you can and we will work something out.
- If you need an extension for some other reason: please email me and explain, and I'll try to work with you in a way that will be fair to the rest of the class as well.
- Note that all Canvas assignment portals close at a set time for the whole class.

6. Course readings. Please complete the readings by the posted date. Readings will be examples/discussion of survey research. They are all free, online, and linked to in modules.

Graded Assignments

- **Quizzes: 5%**
 - 2 quizzes, 2.5 points each.
- **Discussions: 30%**
 - 6 discussions, 5 points each.
 - Note: 3 discussions will revolve around prompts I give you, and 3 will be peer reviews of one another's assignments.
- **Hands-on data analysis: 10%**
 - A peer review discussion will accompany this.
- **Pew Research Center critique: 15%**
 - A peer review discussion will accompany this.

- **Final Survey Project: 35%**
 - 5% for question draft
 - A peer review discussion will accompany this.
 - 30% for final survey + write-up.
- **Extra credit: you will have multiple extra credit opportunities throughout the course.**

Course Summary:

Date	Details	
Sat Jan 4, 2020	 Discussion: Introduce yourself!	due by 11:59
	 Pre-knowledge Assessment	due by 11:59
	 Pass/fail: Login to Qualtrics	due by 11:59
	 Pass/fail: Upload a Canvas Profile Picture	due by 11:59
Sun Jan 5, 2020	 Discussion: what are surveys & when do we use them?	due by 11:59
Tue Jan 7, 2020	 Discussion: developing research questions	due by 11:59
	 Assignment: Developing Research Questions	due by 11:59
Wed Jan 8, 2020	 Assignment: Survey nuts & bolts reading comprehension quiz	due by 11:59
Fri Jan 10, 2020	 Assignment: Pew Research Critique	due by 11:59
Mon Jan 13, 2020	 Discussion: Pew Research peer review	due by 11:59
Wed Jan 15, 2020	 Hands-on Data Analysis Assignment	due by 11:59
Thu Jan 16, 2020	 Discussion: hands-on-data peer review	due by 11:59
Fri Jan 17, 2020	 Assignment: submit survey draft	due by 11:59
Mon Jan 20, 2020	 Discussion: survey draft peer review	due by 11:59
Tue Jan 21, 2020	 Assignment: final draft of survey due	due by 11:59

Date	Details
Wed Jan 22, 2020	 Assignment: complete IRB training due by 11:59 (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/108691/assignments/1206840)
	 Discussion: post-assessment due by 11:59 (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/108691/assignments/1206835)
Fri Jan 24, 2020	 Final Assignment: Survey Write-Up due by 11:59 (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/108691/assignments/1206846)
	 Post-knowledge Assessment due by 11:59 (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/108691/assignments/1206832)
	 Don't forget the course eval! due by 11:59 (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/108691/assignments/1206845)