PSC 203: Survey Research Methods

Spring 2009
Lecture: 2:00-3:15, Monday and Wednesday, Harkness 114
Course website: http://mail.rochester.edu/~mperess/srm2009.html

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Overview: This course offers an introduction to the understanding of politics through data analysis, with particular emphasis on surveys of the mass public. The first part of the course will cover basic data analysis as well as designing, analyzing, and interpreting surveys. The second part of the course will consist of a number of case studies. In particular, we will consider the accuracy of pre-election polls, the accuracy of the exit polls, misreporting of voting behavior in the American National Election studies, forecasting the outcome of a Presidential election, measuring political ideology, and determining the usefulness of internet surveys.

Recommended Books:

The following books will be on reserve in the library.

[1]   Agresti, Alan, and Barbara Finlay (1997). *Statistical Methods for the Social Sciences*.

[2]   Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Touramgeau (2004). *Survey Methodology*.

[3]   Pollock, Phillip H., III (2005). *An SPSS Companion to Political Analysis*.

[4]   Weisberg, Herbert F., Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen (1989). *An Introduction to Survey Research and Data Analysis*.

Lecture Notes: To supplement the readings, I will post lecture notes for some of the topics that we cover (mostly for the data analysis portion of the course).

Readings: Course readings can be found on the course web page. I reserve the right to update the readings on the syllabus, but I will indicate on the course website which readings will be assigned at least one week in advance.

Software: We will be using Excel and SPSS in this class. You may use SPSS in the computer lab, or purchase a student copy for ~$40.

Final Project: The final project will require you to design, implement, and analyze a survey, using the different techniques we will cover in class. I will provide the exact details later in the course. The final project will be due on the last day of class. The final two classes of the semester will involve short student presentations of the final projects.

Data Analysis Assignments: I will assign 7-8 data analysis assignments throughout the class, which will require you to use SPSS.

Class Participation: You are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussion. In addition, you should present at least once during the semester. Presentations may be based on a reading I have assigned or one of the data analysis projects. I you like however, you may present more than once in order to build up extra class participation credit.

Exam: There will be one exam about midway through the class which will cover basic data analysis and survey analysis.

Grading: Grades will be based on the exam (25%), the data analysis assignments (30%), the final project (20%), and class participation (25%).