



# Sociological Methods: Survey Research W2019

## Acknowledgement

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the *xwməθkwəyəm* (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

## About Sociological Methods: Survey Research<sup>1</sup>

Sociologists use a variety of research methods to investigate the social world. As sociology majors you have identified some of the main avenues of social inequality today by way of an engagement with traditional as well as contemporary sociological research on class, race, gender, and the intersections between these. In your Research Methods course (SOC 217), you gained an overview of how sociologists study various social phenomenon so that they can ground theories about society in data. In your social statistics course (SOC 328) you learned how quantitative analysis is an important tool that sociologists use to identify and substantiate patterns and relationships in society. Much of the data that we analyze using statistical methods originate from surveys. This class focuses on how those surveys are constructed, administered, and how the data once collected is made usable for statistical analysis. In this course you will develop the skills and understanding to conduct basic survey research. The focus of this class is on learning how to design “good” surveys – surveys that people want to take, that they know how to take, that they are comfortable taking and that give us the information, at the right level of specificity, that we need to test our hypotheses.

## Course Information

SOCI 380 101 (3 credits): Social Research Methods: Survey Research

Class Meeting: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30 – 14:00, Frederic Lasserre 104

Class Format: Lecture, discussion, in-class activities (occasionally working in pairs/small groups to master course material).

## Contacts

Instructor: Edward Haddon, PhD

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Office Hours: TBA

## Course Prerequisites

Students **must** have completed 3-credits of 100-level Sociology, SOC 217 *Research Methods*, and SOC 328 *Social Statistics I* prior to enrolling in SOC 380. This course satisfies the 3-credits of advanced research methods requirement for the Faculty of Arts.

## Learning Objectives<sup>2</sup>

The overall aim of this course is to develop student's ability to evaluate surveys, design surveys, and administer surveys. Specifically, this means:

1. Understanding the necessity of research for distinguishing between social facts and public perception;
2. Articulating the differences between inductive and deductive reasoning and how survey development follows from each;
3. Applying research ethics, with a specific focus on the specific ethical challenges of survey methods;
4. Developing strategies for addressing the limitations of survey research, particularly related to conceptualization, measurement, and sampling;
5. Identifying the kinds of research questions surveys are appropriate for answering;

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<sup>1</sup> Course description adapted from Dr. Kerry Greer, Department of Sociology, UBC.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from McKinney et al. 2004 and Schutt, Blalock, and Wagenaar 1984

6. Knowing the kinds of biases that are likely in surveys, and to know steps that help minimize these biases;
7. Developing questionnaires that conform with best practices in terms of question phrasing and ordering;
8. Being clear on the difference between causation and correlation and the methods required to make claims about either;
9. Understanding the importance of sampling strategies if the goal is to make generalizable claims; and
10. Developing the technical skills to construct and implement a survey in both a paper based and digital environment.

### **Course Materials**

UBC Bookstore

Guppy, Neil and Gray, George. 2008. *Successful Surveys Research Methods and Practice* 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Thompson Publishing.

Canvas

Additional course materials are available via our library and you can access them on Canvas. I also post grades on Canvas, send announcements to students via Canvas, and may use Canvas to hold virtual office hours.

### **Assessments of Learning with Descriptions**

*Exams (300 points or 30%)*

Regular attendance is essential for doing well on exams. Class time will be spent preparing students for exams through a variety of in-class exercises, formative assessments, discussions, and lectures. There will be two written, in-class examinations. Each exam will *focus* on the material that precedes it; but the second exam will include material from the entire course. Exams are a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and applied problem-solving questions.

*Survey Project (300 points or 30%)*

The survey project is the final project that you will complete in this class. It is the culmination of everything that you will be learning, and it is important to invest time early on in the term so that you produce a strong final project. The details for the Survey Project will be available via Canvas, and students will see that each assignment that we do (outlined below) is designed to support students in completing a strong survey project. The survey project is basically a proposal that you will create for a mock-call for a grant. The proposal must contain both a paper-based and online version of a survey that you will create over the course of the term.

Students will be assigned to groups of approximately 5 and will develop a project on a topic of mutual interest. Groups can, for instance, develop a survey which would be hypothetically administered to UBC students in order to acquire knowledge on undergraduate student experiences of international students. While topics are open, groups are required to have their survey topic approved by Week 5. Through a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation, groups will share your results with the class. A brief synopsis which addresses the presentation outline must be submitted to me prior to the presentation.

*Assignments X 4 (50 points each or 20% of total grade)*

Students will receive detailed descriptions of each assignment during class. Assignments are due by 12pm, uploaded to Canvas and paper copies must be turned in at the start of class. All assignments must be stapled, properly formatted, and have clear headings. Lateness is heavily penalized – late assignments are docked 5 points a day, 3 if they are turned in the same day they are due (which is a large percentage when the assignment is only worth 50 points!).

The intention of the assignments is to provide feedback to ensure that students are on track to develop a strong survey project. Assignments contain components of the final project. Because the goal is to provide formative feedback, these assignments are relatively low stakes and students often note that the amount of work they require is greater than the points attributed to them. This is true, but I expect students to understand that the intention is for the TA and myself to provide some very basic feedback because mistakes early in the process result in very poor final projects.

*Assignment #1 Research Question, Conceptualization, and Operationalization (Due February 25)*

Learning to pose a research question, and then conceptualizing and operationalizing key dependent and independent variables is a critical step in all research projects. Students will turn in:

- a) statement of study objectives and a statement of their research question (posed as “In this project I will...”);
- b) a table containing each variable, its name and description, its level of measurement, and whether it is a dependent or independent variable;
- c) another table that verifies the validity of your measures based on exercise 7.1 on pg 85 of Guppy and Gray;
- d) a series of hypotheses related to key independent variables that reflects causal direction;
- e) a series of explanations that show how each variable will be operationalized;
- f) construction of one scale/index to be included in your survey; and
- g) a paragraph that describes the research design including the defined population.

*Assignment #2 Drafting a Survey Instrument (Due March 10)*

Focusing on material in chapters 8 & 9, students will design a survey instrument that reflects the best practices outlined in the book AND that will allow them to answer their research question and meet their study objectives. Surveys will be evaluated based on their completion (sufficient questions to answer RQ), the structure of the questions, the quality of the response categories, and the flow and structure of the question ordering. Students will have support for two class periods to build their survey in Word, and are expected to be competent at formatting Word to achieve a strong presentation by the end of the course, although for this assignment layout is not important – question construction and flow matter most – we will be evaluating formatting for the final project so take the time to work on this! Every independent and dependent variable needs to be included on this survey, as do any control variables.

*Assignment #3 Study Design Description (Due March 24)*

Students will apply their knowledge about survey administration and sampling to outline their plan for (hypothetical) data collection. Students will use course material to prepare a technical description of how they will design and execute their survey project. The description should be no more than 2 pages (spacing and font at the student’s discretion) and should follow the chronological ordering which would be followed when actually administering a survey.

*Assignment #4 Survey Pilot Test (Due March 31)*

Each student will conduct two interviews with two people who are NOT IN THIS CLASS using 2 of the 3 techniques for pilot testing surveys (retrospective interview, think-aloud interview, and/or debrief and revise – see pg 161). For each pilot test, students will describe the pilot-test methodology, identify who they pilot tested their survey with, and articulate what they learned. Students should conclude by identifying concrete steps that they will take to improve their survey.

The four assignments are each worth 50 points, and will be marked the following way (minus any late penalties):

|      |        |   |
|------|--------|---|
| A+   | 45/50  | Flawless application of course materials – exceeds expectations                                       |
| A    | 43/50  | Outstanding application of course materials – exceeds expectations                                    |
| A-   | 40/50  | Excellent application of course materials -- exceeds expectations                                     |
| B+/B | 38/50  | Good application of course materials – neither faulty nor exceptional                                 |
| B-   | 36/50  | Acceptable application of course materials – would benefit from more time/effort, but not problematic |
| C    | 34/50  | Adequate, but potential problems, recommend they meet with the TA/Prof                                |
| D    | 30/50  | Meet with the TA/Prof   |
| F    | >25/50 | Problematic, off-track, insufficient quality for course   |

*In-Class Activities and Participation (20% or 200 points – throughout the term)*

Throughout the term students will do short activities during class meetings that are directed toward reinforcing course concepts, provide motivation for continued class attendance, and build specific skills that students need to become proficient survey methodologists. These activities are unannounced and are designed to provide an incentive to maintain your engagement and attention with the course material. For this reason, they may not be made up. Your lowest activity mark will be dropped. The same marking scheme described above will be used to assess performance on in-class activities.

### Summary Table with Deadlines

|                                       |                 |                  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Exams (x 2)                           | Feb 6, March 19 | 300 points (30%) |
| Survey Project                        | See below       | 300 points (30%) |
| In-Class Activities and Participation | Unannounced     | 200 points (20%) |
| Assignments                           | See below       | 200 points (20%) |

### Assessment Policies

Final grades will be assigned in the following way (this is standard for UBC):

|          |    |         |    |         |    |         |   |
|----------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|---|
| 900-1000 | A+ | 760-799 | B+ | 640-679 | C+ | 500-549 | D |
| 850-899  | A  | 720-759 | B  | 600-639 | C  | 0-499   | F |
| 800-849  | A- | 680-719 | B- | 550-599 | C- |         |   |

Note that students have to earn the minimum number of points for each letter grade. I do not round up a letter grade.

According to the UBC Guidelines:

An A grade is “Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.”

A “B” grade is “Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.”

A “D to C” grade is “Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.”

**Posting of Grades.** Graded assignments and activities will be returned to students at the end of class. Students can expect marks to be posted to Canvas and should monitor their marks there to ensure that they are correctly entered. If a mistake is suspected, students need to notify the instructor immediately and submit their original graded work with the TA/Instructors comments and grade. Students should initiate this process via email and submit work to be corrected at the next class meeting.

**Exam Grades.** Students will receive two grades for each exam—one for the multiple-choice questions and another for the short answer/fill-in-the-blank/applied learning section. The grades for each are in a separate column on Canvas and should help students identify their strengths in terms of exam preparation. I do not return exams to students, but instead invite students to come to my office hours to review their exam. Students who do poorly on the first exam are expected to schedule a 1:1 meeting to review their exam with the Instructor.

**Exam Days.** During exams, bags are placed in the front of the room, and students are assigned seats. Students are allowed to bring 1 pen and 2 pencils, an eraser, and a white out device to their seats. Students are not allowed to leave the room during the exam, and if finished early, are only allowed to leave at a predetermined break point. Students are expected to conform to expectations spelled out in the UBC Calendar regarding behaviour during exams:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,41,90,0>

**Requests to Re-Mark Assignments.** Students who feel that their papers are unfairly assessed should arrange to have their work re-assessed by the Instructor with the understanding that their grade may increase OR decrease. The process for re-submitting work to be re-marked is to submit the exact same work, with comments/grades with a paragraph explaining why you think your mark should be increased.

**Late Assignments.** If you need to miss an assignment deadline due to illness or any other unforeseen reason, you must notify me as soon as possible *prior* to the due date and apply for academic accommodation via your academic advisor. Without accommodation, points (specified below) will be deducted per day that the assignment is late. Please note: I am not obligated to accept late assignments and do so solely at my own discretion.

**Missed In-Class Activities.** Except under extraordinary circumstances, in-class activities cannot be made up.

**Missed Exams.** Students should make every effort to make it to the exams. If you are sick or have an emergency arise, please contact me as soon as possible. In some cases I will allow students to make up the exam, but I reserve this option for exceptional circumstances and may require the student to submit documentation to Arts Advising.

### **Additional Policies and Support**

**UBC's Statement on Accessibility and Support.** UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available [here](https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success). (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>)

**Early Alert Program.** I participate in the Early Alert Program which helps me support students who are facing difficulties that are interfering with school. **If you are feeling stressed, please notify the TA or me** and indicate that you would like assistance. While we are not trained to help with personal problems, we can get you help from people who can assist you. Any information that they receive from you or us is strictly confidential and is in the interest of your academic success and wellbeing. For more information, please visit [earlyalert.ubc.ca](http://earlyalert.ubc.ca).

**Mental Health.** UBC has contracted with Empower Me, which is a 24/7 phone service that provides immediate access to a trained mental health professional over the phone. The therapist will then provide help, assess your situation, and if you want, make an appointment with a local therapist for a follow up appointment. Each UBC student is entitled to up to seven counseling sessions through this program as part of their student fees. 1-848-741-6389.

**Crisis Support.** If you or a friend are in need of immediate help and don't know who to turn to, please call this 24/7 service. 1-800-784-2433.

**Academic Integrity.** Sociologists have a code of professional ethics that they abide by, and these are reflected in our expectations of our students in Sociology. What this means in the context of any particular course may differ in terms of what ethical actions are being emphasized, but one area of that is common to all sociological work and is standard for all students at UBC is our commitment to academic integrity. Students who fail to uphold the standards of academic integrity, can be charged with academic misconduct, which can be severely punishable (i.e. expulsion). Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism, and falsifying information. If you are unfamiliar with the range of behaviours that are included in UBC's definition of academic misconduct, please read through the description available on UBC's calendar (<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,0,0>)

**Academic Resources.** If you are citing papers and need a quick guide, the Harvard ASA style guide is helpful (<https://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/asastyleguide.pdf>). The Purdue Owl Writing Lab also has fantastic resources for helping students: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html). The UBC Library has an entire section devoted to helping students succeed in Sociology courses: <http://guides.library.ubc.ca/sociology>. If you want help with your writing, please check out the UBC Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communications (<https://learningcommons.ubc.ca/improve-your-writing/>). And finally, if you are making a poster for a presentation, here is a great UBC template to get you started <https://it.ubc.ca/services/desktop-print-services/printing-services/poster-templates>.

**Attendance and Lateness.** Attendance for the entire class period is required. Repeated absences in any of these areas will negatively impact your final grade. You are requested to arrive on time. Repeated tardiness will be penalized. I will not excuse absences, so please do NOT email me to tell me you will not be in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from a classmate, and if you need clarification, to come to office hours. While I sympathize with ill students, I do not wish to see doctor notes—I consider this to be your business. Arts Students must contact Arts

Advising as soon as you are aware you may need an [in-term concession](#). Please review [their website](#) for concession criteria as well as process to follow. Students in other Faculties should contact their Faculty advising office for direction.

**I will not be distributing my lecture notes**, nor will I give permission to students to photograph or record any part of the lecture. I am MORE THAN HAPPY to slow down or to return to a slide/point. Please do not hesitate to ask!

**Peer Contact.** It will be helpful for you to have the contact information of a classmate. Please take a moment to introduce yourself to your neighbor, and share your contact information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ email/phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Advising.** In addition to office hours and peers in this class, students should be aware that there are multiple other sources for support in Sociology.

- 1) Our Undergraduate Student Office has advisors who are available to help students with questions about their sociology degree and whether they have met requirements. Both May Chan and Cecilia Federizon are in ANSO 2108, and students can drop in when they have a question.
- 2) Your professor, Dr. Kerry Greer is the Undergraduate Chair, and students are invited to come talk to her regarding the undergraduate program and its different opportunities, their plans for post-graduation, or other issues that arise. You can send her an email at [kerry.greer@ubc.ca](mailto:kerry.greer@ubc.ca).
- 3) The Department supports two Peer Advisors who are available during weekly Office Hours to answer provide support with study skills, share their experiences with different courses, and otherwise help students make the most of their experience as a sociology major. Their contact information will be shared in class, and can be found on the Unofficial Guide to Sociology blogsite: <https://blogs.ubc.ca/sociology/>
- 4) UBC supports Arts Peer Academic Coaches (APAC) who can help students with fundamental skills like study strategies and time management. They have drop-in hours 11-3 Tues/Wed/Thurs in Buch D140. You can also book appointments online: <https://students.arts.ubc.ca/student-support/arts-peer-academic-coaches/>

## Course Schedule

| Term 2             | Topic   | Notes/Due        | Assigned Text  |
|--------------------|---|------------------|--|
| Week 1             |   |                  |  |
| Tues 1/7           | Course introduction   |                  |  |
| Thrs 1/9           | Introduction to Survey Methods  |                  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 1 (pg 1-9)  |
| Week 2             | <b>The Purpose of Surveys</b>   |                  |  |
| Tues 1/14          | What is the history of survey research?   |                  | Schuman "Sense and Nonsense About Surveys"   |
| Thrs 1/16          | What is survey research and why does good design matter?                                      |                  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 2 (pg 10-17)  |
| Week 3             | <b>Ethical Issues in Survey Research</b>  |                  |  |
| Tues 1/21          | What are the ethical issues related to survey research?                                       |                  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 3 (pg 18-30)  |
| Thrs 1/23          | How can academics work well with communities?   |                  | Listen to "Polling is Ubiquitous, But is it Bad for Democracy" on Fresh Air                          |
| Week 4             | <b>Developing Research Questions</b>  |                  |  |
| Tues 1/28          | How do you know what you want to learn?   |                  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 4 (pg 31-47)  |
| Thrs 1/30          | What is a dependent and independent variable? What is causation?                              |                  | Wheelan, Ch. 4 of <i>Naked Statistics</i> , "Correlation: How does Netflix know what movies I like?" |
| Week 5             | <b>Designing a survey research project and Exam #1</b>  |                  |  |
| Tues 2/4           | What are the different kinds of surveys and when do you use them?                             |                  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 5 (pg 48-59)  |
| Thrs 2/6           | <b>EXAM #1</b>  |                  |  |
| Week 6             | <b>Measurement: Indexes and Scales</b>  |                  |  |
| Tues 2/11          | What are units of measurement and why do they matter? And why is measuring attitudes so hard? |                  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 6 (pg 60-75); Milfont "The Environmental Attitudes Inventory"                       |
| Thrs 2/13          | How do you use scales and indexes?  |                  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 7 (pg 76-86);   |
| Week 7 Feb 18 - 21 | Mid-term break  |                  |  |
| Week 8             | <b>Asking the right questions and Questionnaire Organization</b>                              |                  |  |
| Tues 2/25          | How do I write good survey questions?   | Assignment 1 Due | Guppy & Grey Ch. 8 (pg 87-101); <i>Sex in America</i> (pg 1-41)                                      |
| Thrs 2/27          | Why does question order matter?   |                  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 9 (pg 102-126)  |
| Week 9             | <b>Organizing and Formatting the Questionnaire</b>  |                  |  |

|                  |  |  |   |
|------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Tues 3/3</b>  | How should my survey look when printed?  | Meet in the computer lab                 | Buchanan B101 (20 seats)  |
| <b>Thrs 3/5</b>  | What kind of survey should I use and how should I administer it?                 | Meet in the computer lab                 | Guppy & Grey Ch. 10 (pg 127-150)<br>Buchanan B101 (20 seats)  |
| <b>Week 10</b>   | <b>Sampling and Populations</b>  |  |   |
| <b>Tues 3/10</b> | Who should take my survey?   | Assignment 2<br>Due                      |   |
| <b>Thrs 3/12</b> | How do I make sure my survey results are generalizable?                          |  | Guppy & Grey Ch. 11 (pg 151-165)  |
| <b>Week 11</b>   | <b>Exam</b>  |  |   |
| <b>Tues 3/17</b> | How do you actually sample?  |  | Guppy & Grey Ch.12 (pg 166-179)   |
| <b>Thrs 3/19</b> | <b>Exam #2</b>   |  |   |
| <b>Week 12</b>   | <b>Digital Surveys and Codebooks</b>   |  |   |
| <b>Tues 3/24</b> | What do I do with the data I collect from my survey?                             | Assignment 3<br>Due                      | Guppy & Grey Ch. 13 (pg 180-201)  |
| <b>Thrs 3/26</b> | How do I codify my survey?   | Meet in the computer lab                 | Buchanan B101 (20 seats)<br>Litwin "Creating and Using a Codebook".   |
| <b>Week 13</b>   | <b>Processing and Reporting Data</b>   |  |   |
| <b>Tues 3/31</b> | How do I summarize the results from my survey?                                   | Assignment 4<br>Due<br><br>Presentations |   |
| <b>Thrs 4/2</b>  | How do I describe these results for an academic and for a non-academic audience? | Presentations                            |   |
| <b>Week 14</b>   |  |  |   |
| <b>Tues 4/7</b>  |  | Last Day of Class<br><br>Presentations   | Final Survey Project Due in PRINTED FORMAT and digitally uploaded to Canvas, additionally a link to your online survey must be uploaded to Canvas – all do by NOON. |