Analyzing Public Opinion

Course Number	:	POLI 209-002
Meeting Time	:	Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:05-9:55am
Classroom	:	Davie Hall Rm 0301
Term	:	Fall 2021
Instructor	:	Nicolás de la Cerda Coya
		ndelacerda@unc.edu
Office Hours	:	Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10:00-11:00am
		calendly.com/ndelacerda.
Poll Everywhere	:	pollev.com/ndelacerda.

Course Description

This course introduces students to central topics and methods in contemporary public opinion research. It emphasizes landmark, canonical work and introductory level statistical and programming techniques used to analyze and collect public opinion data. It is designed to develop the basic skills necessary to design survey instruments, collect data and analyze public opinion surveys. As such, it has a strong empirical emphasis.

Objectives

The goal of this class is to introduce students to the central topics in public opinion research and basic statistical and programming techniques.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Recall and describe central topics in public opinion research.

2. Design survey instruments for public opinion research.

3. Be familiar with basic programming tools in the R statistical language.

4. Conduct basic analysis with public opinion data.

Course Format

This class will be offered in person. This means that we will meet on campus and that the meetings will not be recorded. Our meetings will follow three different formats:

Lectures: these classes will introduce students to theoretical and empirical aspects of public opinion research. For these classes, students are expected to come prepared and actively participate in discussions. The course schedule details which reading students must do before each class.

Labs: during lab sessions, students will work in R and Qualtrics. These sessions will introduce students to programming and familiarize them with some of the statistical concepts

reviewed in class. After each lab, students will have to submit a short lab assignment. Due dates for these assignments are available below.

Workshops: during workshop meetings we will discuss and work on the final projects. Students are expected to come prepared for the workshops. I will provide some guidelines on how to prepare for each one of these sessions.

Requirements and Evaluations

Assignment	Percent
Quizzes	7.5 %
Labs	7.5 %
Data Assignments	25 %
Group Project	40 %
Final Exam	20 %

Quizzes

Students are expected to come prepared to class. To make sure that is the case, whenever a reading is assigned, students must answer a short three questions quiz before the class starts.**I will not accept late submissions or absentee excuses for the quizzes**.

Labs

A couple of days after each lab session, students will be required to submit the completed notebook for that session to Sakai as proof of attendance. Students are required to attend all lab sessions. If a student misses a lab session, they will get no credit for the associated lab.

Data Assignments

There will be five data assignments over the course of the semester. These assignments are designed to familiarize students with the concepts and data analysis tools covered in class. Each assignment will be worth five points. Data Assignments will be done in groups of three students. The groups will be decided by the instructor of the class. Students cannot change groups during the course of the semester.

Group Project

The group project will be the primary focus of this course and, as such, makes up the largest portion of your course grade. This project will allow students to apply the main concepts learned in class, theorize about a topic of their interest, design an instrument, gather data, and finally analyze survey data. The group project will be done in groups of five students. The groups will be decided by the instructor of the class. Students cannot change groups during the course of the semester.

This project consists of 5 assignments:

Assignment	Points	Due Dates
Research Proposal	5	September 24
Conceptualization and Operationalization	5	October 8
Survey Questions and Instrument Design	5	October 15
Preliminary Data Analysis	5	November 15
Paper	20	December 1

Research proposal: Each group must turn in a brief 2-page, 1.5-spaced paper proposal by September 24. The proposal should outline a brief description of the research question, theory, and hypotheses. It should address why the topic is interesting or worth studying. This is a crucial step of your group project. I expect groups to come to office hours to discuss their project before the deadline.

Conceptualization and Operationalization: Before October 8, each group must turn in a complete conceptualization and operationalization of the main variables they will study in their projects. Because a good conceptualization and operationalizations assumes a well-defined research questions, theory, and hypotheses, students must turn in a revised version of the research proposal for this assignment.

Survey Questions and Instrument Design: By October 15, each group must have their block programmed in our shared Qualtrics survey. When constructing the survey, students are expected to apply concepts from lectures, discussions, and readings about how to strategically word and order questions to create a good survey. As important is that the instrument allows you to accurately measure and test the hypotheses. I expect students to incorporate the feedback received from the previous assignments. Once the survey is finished, each group will be responsible for the collection of 50 responses (10 for each group member). Groups that do not meet their quota, will receive a 2-points penalty on this assignment. The data collection will end on November 4 at 11:59 pm.

Preliminary Data Analysis: In an effort to help all students use proper statistical methods, each group should submit preliminary data analysis, which includes the key statistics used to test their hypotheses, by November 15. This assignment requires a brief explanation of the statistical methods used and of the relevant statistical output. An in-depth description of all the analysis is not required at this point.

Paper: by December 1, each group must submit their final version of their project. This document must include the following parts:

- Introduction: research question, relevance, and outline of the project (1 page).

- Theory and hypotheses: a brief description of the main theoretical expectations (1 page).

- Data and methods: description of the key measures and methods that will be used in the analysis (2 pages).

- Findings: summary of the main findings. In this section, students are expected to present well-crafted tables and figures that accurately summarize the statistical analysis (3 to 5 pages).

- Conclusion: brief summary of the main findings and questions for further research (1 page).

- References.

Final Exam

There will be one exam in this course. The exam will take place on December 7. The exams will test your ability to analyze public opinion data using the R statistical software and interpret those results in light of the theories learned throughout the semester. It will be open-book.

Grading Scale

Points	Final Grade
≥ 94	A
90 - 93.9	A-
87 - 89.9	B+
84 - 86.9	B
80 - 83.9	B-
77 - 79.9	C+
73 - 76.9	C
70 - 72.9	C-
67 - 69.9	D+
60 - 66.9	D
< 60	F

Office Hours

Instructor Office Hours: I will be holding office hours every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10 to 11am. Students can schedule an appointment using the following link. I strongly encourage students to come to office hours.

Graduate Research Consultant Office Hours: In this research-exposure course, you will be working with a Graduate Research Consultant, Jacob Gunderson, who will assist you in the research project. The GRC program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research (our.unc.edu). I encourage you to visit this website to see other ways that you might engage in research, scholarship and creative performance while you are at Carolina.

Jacob Gunderson, will be holding office hours Wednesdays 10:30-11:30 and Thursdays 10-12 during the following weeks: 4-7, 9, 11-15. You can come to our GRC office hours

whenever you want with questions regarding Qualtrics, R, and your group projects. I strongly encourage you to make good use of Jacob's office hours.

You can schedule an appointment with Jacob using the following link.

Class Policies

Attendance

Students will not be graded directly on attendance to the class lecture. However, I strongly suggest students expecting to receive an A in this course to attend all lectures.

There are two instances in which missing a class can directly affect a student's grade:

- If a student misses a lab session, they will automatically get no points for the lab homework.

- If a student misses a workshop session, 2 points will be reduced from their final grade in the project.

Late work

Late work will not be accepted without prior (i.e. before the assignment is distributed) permission. No incompletes will be given for assignments or the course. Exceptions will be granted only under truly extraordinary circumstances. Prior arrangements should be made with the instructional team at **least two weeks** in advance.

Technology in the classroom

You will frequently make use of computers in this course, during some lecture periods and during software training. Please be respectful to your instructor and your peers by using your computers only for class-related purposes. Put your phone away before class starts and do not bring it out. Please inform me at the beginning of the semester if you do not have a laptop computer you can bring to class for software training.

Academic Honesty

While data assignments and group projects are designed to be collaborative, cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. This includes (but is not limited to) requesting or sharing work across assigned groups, as well as using someone else's code to conduct the analysis required for the homework or final. More generally, I strongly encourage you to review the University's policies regarding academic honesty, which you can learn about here. If you have any question regarding this issue, please feel free to ask any member of the instructional team.

Required Texts and Software

Required Texts:

All the readings required for this class can be accessed through the UNC Library website at no cost.

Required Software:

We will use computers fairly often in this course, particularly when covering data analysis and survey programming. If you do not have a personal computer that you can bring to class, please let me know as soon as possible. Over the course of the semester, you will learn to use at least two programs: Qualtrics Research Suite and R Statistical Software. Qualtrics is a powerful online survey tool that you can use to build surveys and gather data for various research questions. R is a software environment that you can use to run statistical analyses and create graphics from raw data. These programs are cutting edge. R is at the center of innovations in statistics, so familiarity with these tools should give you a leg up on the job market. Also, both of these programs are free! Qualtrics is available for use by all faculty and students at UNC, and R is available as free software to anyone. RStudio is a popular text editor that allows you to open, edit, and save R text files, making it much easier to work with R. I will use this program to demonstrate R.

- R statistical software
- RStudio
- Qualtrics (Look for "Create an account" button)

<h1 align="center">Course Schedule, Readings, and Assignments</h1>

Week 1

Session 1 (Wednesday, August 18):

- Topic: Introduction to the class and logistics.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Session 2 (Friday, August 20):

- Topic: Introduction to Qualtrics.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Week 2

Session 1 (Monday, August 23):

- Topic: Public Opinion and Democracy.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Session 2 (Wednesday, August 25):

- Topic: The Logic of Quantitative Scientific Research.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments:-.

Session 3 (Friday, August 27):

- Topic: Lab 1. Introduction to Qualtrics.
- Reading:-.
- Assignments:-.

Week 3

Session 1 (Monday, August 30):

- Topic: Political Knowledge. How much do we know about politics?
- Reading: Visser, Holbrook and Krosnick. 2012. Knowledge and Attitudes. In *The SAGE Handbook of Public Opinion Research* edited by Donsback and Traugott. London: SAGE Publications. pp. 127-140.
- Assignments: Quiz 1.

Session 2 (Wednesday, September 1):

- Topic: Research Questions.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Lab 1. Introduction to Qualtrics.

Session 3 (Friday, September 3):

- Topic: Lab 2. Introduction to R.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Week 4

Session 1 (Monday, September 6):

- NO CLASS (Labor Day).

Session 2 (Wednesday, September 8):

- Topic: Theory Building and Hypotheses Formation.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Lab 2. Introduction to R.

Session 3 (Friday, September 10):

- Topic: Group Project Workshop 1. Topic Choice.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Data Assignment 1. Qualtrics.

Week 5

Session 1 (Monday, September 13):

- Topic: Political Knowledge II. Heuristics.
- Reading: James Stimson. *Tides of Consent.* 2015. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, pp 1-19.
- Assignments: Quiz 2.

Session 2 (Wednesday, September 15):

- Topic: Research Design Exercise.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Session 3 (Friday, September 17):

- Topic: Group Project Workshop 2. Theory and Hypotheses.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Week 6

Session 1 (Monday, September 20):

- Topic: Rationality and Representation.
- Reading: James Stimson. *Tides of Consent.* 2015. Chapter 3, pp 52-84.
- Assignments: Quiz 3.

Session 2 (Wednesday, September 22):

- Topic: Operationalization and Variable Types.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Session 3 (Friday, September 24):

- Topic: Lab 3. Data Management I.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Group Project. Research Proposal.

Week 7

Session 1 (Monday, September 27):

- Topic: What is an Opinion.
- Reading: James Stimson. *Tides of Consent*. 2015. Chapter 2, pp 20-51.
- Assignments: Quiz 4.

Session 2 (Wednesday, September 29):

- Topic: Measurement Levels.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Lab 3. Data Management I.

Session 3 (Friday, October 1):

- Topic: Lab 4. Data Management II.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Week 8

Session 1 (Monday, October 4):

- Topic: Partisanship.
- Reading: Green, Palmquist, and Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 1.
- Assignments: Quiz 5.

Session 2 (Wednesday, October 6):

- Topic: Survey and Questionnaire Design.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Lab 4. Data Management II.

Session 3 (Friday, October 8):

- Topic: Group Project Workshop 3. Questionnaire Design (Operationalization).
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Workshop prep.

Week 9

Session 1 (Monday, October 11):

- Topic: Polarization.
- Reading: Hetherington and Weiler. 2018. *Prius or pickup?*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Chapter 3, pp. 60-88.
- Assignments: Quiz 6.

Session 2 (Wednesday, October 13):

- Topic: Frequency Distributions.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Session 3 (Friday, October 15):

- Topic: Lab 5. Distribution Plots.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Group Project. Survey Questions and Instrument Design.

Week 10

Session 1 (Monday, October 18):

- Topic: The Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS) Model
- Reading: James Stimson. *Tides of Consent*. 2015. Chapter 4, pp 85-124.
- Assignments: Quiz 7/Lab 5. Distribution Plots.

Session 2 (Wednesday, October 20):

- Topic: Central Tendency Measures.
- Reading:
- Assignments: Data Assignment 2. Introduction to R.

Session 3 (Friday, October 22):

- NO CLASS (Fall Break).

Week 11

Session 1 (Monday, October 25):

- Topic: The Partisan Sort.
- Reading: James Stimson. *Tides of Consent.* 2015. Chapter 5, pp 125-145.
- Assignments: Quiz 8.

Session 2 (Wednesday, October 27):

- Topic: Dispersion Measures and Standardization.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Session 3 (Friday, October 29):

- Topic: Lab 6. Frequency Distributions and Central Tendency Measures.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Week 12

Session 1 (Monday, November 1):

- Topic: Public Opinion and Democracy (reappraisal)
- Reading: James Stimson. *Tides of Consent.* 2015. Chapter 6, pp 146-157.
- Assignments: Quiz 9/Lab 6 Frequency Distributions and Central Tendency Measures.

Session 2 (Wednesday, November 3):

- Topic: Frequency Tables.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Data Assignment 3. Descriptive Statistics.

Session 3 (Friday, November 5):

- Topic: Lab 7. Dispersion Measures and Frequency Tables.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Group Project. Data Collection.

<u>Week 13</u>

Session 1 (Monday, November 8):

- Topic: Statistical Inference.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Lab 7. Dispersion Measures and Frequency Tables.

Session 2 (Wednesday, November 10):

- Topic: Hypotheses Testing (T-Test).
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Data Assignment 4. Descriptive Statistics 2.

Session 3 (Friday, November 12):

- Topic: Chi-2 and Correlations.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

<u>Week 14</u>

Session 1 (Monday, November 15):

- Topic: Lab 8. T-Test, Chi-2, Correlations.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Group Project. Preliminary Data Analysis.

Session 2 (Wednesday, November 17):

- Topic: Linear Regression.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Lab 8. T-Test, Chi-2, Correlations.

Session 3 (Friday, November 19):

- Topic: Linear Regression 2.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Data Assignment 4. Statistical Inference.

Week 15

Session 1 (Monday, November 22):

- Topic: Lab 9. Linear Regression.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Session 2 (Wednesday, November 24):

- Topic: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving).
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Lab 9. Linear Regression.

Session 3 (Friday, November 26):

- Topic: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving).
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Week 16

Session 1 (Monday, November 29):

- Topic: Review.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: -.

Session 2 (Wednesday, December 1):

- Topic: Office Hours.
- Reading: -.
- Assignments: Group Project. Final Paper.

Final (Tuesday, December 7)