

Applied Survey Research for Political Scientists¹ **MA Seminar, Summer 2023**

Day, time: Fridays, 10:00 – 11:30

Location: S100, IBW building

Instructor: Lea Kaftan

Witten/Herdecke University

University of Cologne

lea.kaftan@uni-wh.de

Office hours: Open request, offline or online

Course overview

Participants will be introduced to common research questions in the fields of polling and public opinion. They will learn the theoretical and technical basics for designing their own survey. To apply their newly acquired knowledge, participants will conduct their own short surveys together in groups and via a professional survey company. The results of the survey will be presented and discussed in term papers until the end of the summer term. After the course, participants will be able to implement their own surveys that address important questions regarding the public opinion of citizens in established liberal democracies. This knowledge is especially valuable for political science, market research or polling firms.

Prerequisites

Participants should be able to read and discuss scientific articles in English. Perfection is neither expected nor required. Participants should also be familiar with basic statistical concepts such as Ordinary Least Square regressions and significance. Some preliminary knowledge of R will make it considerably easier to follow the course, but introductory material will be provided for self-study before the course starts. Furthermore, the willingness to participate in the sessions and to prepare the required readings are expected.

Assessment

Participants of the course will have to *present their research ideas* and *write a final term paper*. The term paper shall address a novel research question and an appropriate hypothesis embedded in a theoretical framework, outline a survey project to test the hypothesis and present and critically discuss the results from their own data collected during the course via a professional online sample provider. The presentation shall give participants the opportunity to get feedback from their peers as well as to get insights into other research projects by other participants. Group work on the presentation and term papers is encouraged. Depending on the number of participants, surveys will have to be conducted in groups due to financial resource limits. Surveys will be financed by the Chair for European and Multilevel Politics led by Prof. Sven-Oliver Proksch. Students will *not* be burdened financially during the course nor for their term paper.

The presentation of the research project is mandatory, but will not be graded. The final grade is solely based on the term paper and will take the cohesiveness of the research project, the survey

¹ This is only a preliminary course description which might be subject to changes before the course starts.

design and the presentation and discussion of the findings into account for grading. Further details, including submission dates, will be communicated during the course.

Course organization

Participants are expected to participate in the sessions and to *stick to the deadlines listed below* since otherwise, we will not be able to go into the field and collect our own data by the end of the course. Participants who cannot participate in all offline sessions due to health issues or work or family related responsibilities will still have the possibility to participate. In this case, please get in contact as soon as possible. Active participation is highly encouraged.

Additional course material

R Software

- Installation: <https://rstudio-education.github.io/hopr/starting.html>
- Reiche & Bogdanski, 2021: Analysing Quantitative Data with R, <https://drfloreiche.github.io/association.html>
- See also: <https://cccp.uni-koeln.de/de/teaching/information-for-students/r-software-for-students-in-the-ma-political-science>
- There are many tutorials online for single packages or types of analyses. Answers to specific questions are normally responded to on: stackoverflow.com.

Material on Surveys

- Atkeson, Lonna Rae, & Michael Alvarez. 2015. *The Oxford Handbook of Polling and Survey Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- David L. Vannette & Jon A. Krosnick. 2018. *The Palgrave Handbook of Survey Research*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wolf, Christoph, Dominique Joye, Tom W. Smith & Yang-chih Fu. 2016. *The SAGE Handbook of Survey Methodology*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Any further information provided by the CCCP: <https://cccp.uni-koeln.de/de/teaching/information-for-students>

Deadlines

tba

If you have difficulties meeting the deadlines because of caring responsibilities for children or elders, due to illness or other important and unexpected events such as the death of a close person, please get in contact with me and we will find a solution.

Course schedule

Notes: Participants are expected to read and prepare the *required readings* before each session and make notes if they have questions. *Recommended readings* add further aspects to the required readings that will be of interest to students who want to learn more about the session's content. Their content might be discussed during the session, but I do not expect participants to have prepared the recommended readings, too, before each session.

7 April – Easter holiday, no session

Introduction

14 April, 10-11:30: Introduction

Recommended readings:

- Vannette, David L. and Jon A. Krosnick. 2018. "Introduction". In David L. Vannette and Jon A. Krosnick (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Survey Research*. pp.xxi-xxiv.

Part I: Polling and public opinion research

Part I introduces the participants to common research questions regarding polling and public opinion. Participants shall not only *prepare the required readings*, but also *have a research question for their term paper until 12 May, 10 am*.

21 April, 10-11:30: Why polls (sometimes) fail to predict elections

Required readings:

- Pack, Mark. 2022. *Polling Unpacked*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. Chapter 2: How Political Polls Work. (on Ilias)
- Kennedy, Courtney et al. (2018). "An Evaluation of the 2016 Election Polls in the United States". *Public Opinion Quarterly* 82(1): 1-33.

Recommended readings:

- Jennings, Will & Christopher Wlezien. 2018. "Election polling errors across time and space". *Nature Human Behaviour* 2:276–283. Preprint available at: <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/413658/1/JenningsWlezienPollingErrors.pdf>.

28 April, 10-11:30: Public Opinion Research I: Have Europeans grown tired of democracy?

Required readings:

- Foa, Roberto Stefan, and Yascha Mounk. 2016. "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Discontent." *Journal of Democracy* 27(3): 4-17.
- Wuttke, Alexander, Konstantin Gavras, and Harald Schoen. 2022. "Have Europeans Grown Tired of Democracy? New Evidence from Eighteen Consolidated Democracies, 1981–2018." *British Journal of Political Science* 52(1): 416-28.

05 May, 10-11:30: Public Opinion Research II: Are politicians responsive to changes in public opinion?

Required readings:

- Klüver, Heike & Jae-Jae Spoon. 2016. "Who Responds? Voters, Parties and Issue Attention". *British Journal of Political Science* 46(3): 633-654.
- Pereira, Miguel. 2021. "Understanding and Reducing Biases in Elite Beliefs About the Electorate". *American Political Science Review* 115(4): 1308-1324.

Part II: Introduction to survey design

In Part II, participants will learn the basics of survey design for political scientists and work together in groups on their own survey project. This is why participants must *prepare the required readings* and *have a final research question by 12 May, 10 am*. Furthermore, *applications for ethical consent must be submitted by 19 May, 10 am* to be able to go into the field in Part III of the course. Further information will be provided during the course. Participants also need to *have basic R skills by 2 June, 10 am*. For an introduction to R and tutorials, see the Additional course material section above. If help is needed, please get into contact as soon as possible.

12 May, 10-11:30: Presentations of your research ideas (obligatory!)

19 May, 10-11:30: Ethics and data protection

Required readings:

- Joe, Kathy, Finn Raben & Adam Phillips. 2016. “The Ethical Issues of Survey and Market Research” in Wolf, Christoph, Dominique Joye, Tom W. Smith & Yang-chih Fu (Eds.): *The SAGE Handbook of Survey Methodology*. no pages provided.

26 May, 10-11:30: Response biases

Required readings:

- Yuen, Samson, Gary Tamg. Francis L. F. Lee & Edmund W. Cheng. 2022. “Surveying Spontaneous Mass Protests: Mixed-mode Sampling and Field Methods”. *Sociological Methodology* 52(2): 75-102.
- Stefkovics, Ádám. 2022. “Are Scale Direction Effects the Same in Different Survey Modes? Comparison of a Face-to-Face, a Telephone, and an Online Survey Experiment”. *Field Methods* 34(3): 206-222.

02 June: Pentecost, no session

09 June, 10-11:30: Survey experiments

Required readings & preparations:

- Berlinski et al., 2021. “The Effects of Unsubstantiated Claims of Voter Fraud on Confidence in Elections”. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*: 1-16.
- Learn basic R skills for data analysis (see above)

Part III: Hands on

In Part III, participants will write their own questionnaire, program the survey themselves and go into the field. During Part III, the workload might be exceptionally, depending on the complexity of the research question you aim to address and the survey you want to conduct. Participants are expected to work on their project *during and outside course hours*. Participants are expected to *have basic R skills by 7 July, 10 am*. If help is needed, please see the material listed above and get in contact as soon as possible.

16 June, 10-11:30: Programming and pre-testing

Required preparations: Know your research question and hypothesis

23 June, 10-11:30: Going into the field

Required preparations: Have the final survey programmed in LimeSurvey

30 June, 10-11:30: Guest speaker: tba

Required preparations: Think about potential questions you would like to ask the guest speaker.

7 July, 10-11:30: Analyzing the data

Required preparations: Download the data

Closure

14 July, 10-11:03: Final questions and feedback