Questionnaire Design
SURV 631
2 credits/4 ECTS
Spring 2019

Instructor
Gina Walejko, gkwalejko@gmail.com

Teaching Assistant
Mariel Leonhard, m.mckone.leonard@gmail.com

Video lectures by Florian Keusch & Frauke Kreuter

Short Course Description
This course introduces students to the stages of questionnaire development. The course reviews the scientific literature on questionnaire construction, the experimental literature on question effects, and the psychological literature on information processing. It will also discuss the diverse challenges posed by self versus proxy reporting and special attention is paid to the relationship between mode of administration and questionnaire design. Students will also get a hand-on experience in developing their own questionnaire.

Course and Learning Objectives
By the end of the course, students will...
- be able to develop their own questionnaire based on a research question.
- be able to apply the knowledge about the cognitive response process to write good survey questions.
- be able to select and apply tools to pretest their questionnaire.
- know different techniques to ask respondents about sensitive topics.
- be able to develop questions that ask about facts (i.e. behaviors and events) and non-fact (i.e. attitudes and opinions).
- be able to put individual survey questions in an appropriate sequence considering the idiosyncrasies of different modes of data collection.

Prerequisites
No prerequisites.
Class Structure and Course Concept
This is an online course using a flipped classroom design. It covers the same material and content as an on-site course but runs differently. In this course, you are responsible for watching recorded video lectures and reading the required literature for each unit and then “attending” mandatory weekly one-hour online meetings where students have the chance to discuss the materials from a unit with the instructor. Just like in an on-site course, homework will be assigned and graded, and there will be a final exam at the end of the course.

Although this is an online course where students have more freedom in when they engage with the course materials, students are expected to spend the same amount of time overall on all activities in the course – including preparatory activities (i.e. reading, studying), in-class-activities (i.e. watching videos, participating in online meetings), and follow-up activities (i.e. working on assignments and exams) – as in an on-site course. As a rule of thumb, for each credit offered by a course, students can expect to spend one hour per week on in-class activities and three hours per week on out-of-class activities over the span of a full 12-week term. This is a 2-credit course that runs for 8 weeks. Hence, the total average workload is about 12 hours per week.

Mandatory Weekly Online Meetings
Thursday, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/5:00-5:50 PM CET, starting March 21

Meetings will be held online through Zoom. Follow the link to the meeting sessions on the course website on https://www.elms.umd.edu/. If video participation via Internet is not possible, arrangements can be made for students to dial in and join the meetings via telephone.

In preparation for the weekly online meetings, students are expected to watch the lecture videos and read the assigned literature before the start of the meeting. In addition, students are encouraged to post questions about the materials for the relevant week to the forum for that unit by Wednesday at 6:00 PM EDT/Thursday 12:00 AM CEST. Students are encouraged to respond to each other’s questions.

Daylight savings time begins in the US on March 10, 2019, and clocks are turned forward 1 hour. Daylight savings time begins in Europe on March 31, 2019. Therefore, look carefully at the times of meetings and deadlines! The instructor is in the US and will follow US daylight savings time.

Students have the opportunity to use the Zoom meeting room set up for this course to connect with peers outside the scheduled weekly online meetings (e.g. for study groups). Students are encouraged to post the times that they will be using the room to the course website forum to avoid scheduling conflicts. Students are not required to use Zoom and can use other online meeting platforms such as Google Hangouts or Skype.
Grading
Grading will be based on

- 5 online quizzes (worth 30% total)
- Participation in discussion during the weekly online meetings and posting questions to the forum (deadline: Wednesday 6:00 PM EDT/Thursday 12:00 AM CEST) demonstrating understanding of the required readings and video lectures (10% of grade)
- Project (60%) consisting of 3 homework assignments

Dates of when assignment will be due are indicated in the syllabus. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangement with the instructor.

Technical Equipment Needs
The learning experience in this course will mainly rely on the online interaction between students and the instructor during the weekly online meetings. Therefore, we encourage all students in this course to use a web camera and a headset. Decent quality headsets and webcams are available for less than $20 each. We ask students to refrain from using built-in webcams and speakers on their desktops or laptops. We know from our experience in previous online courses that this will reduce the quality of video and audio transmission and therefore will decrease the overall learning experience for all students in the course. In addition, we suggest that students use a wire connection (LAN), if available, when connecting to the online meetings. Wireless connections (WLAN) are usually less stable and might be dropped.

Long Course Description
The objective of this course is to introduce the scientific literature on the design, testing, and evaluation of survey questionnaires. The course will explore the theoretical and experimental literature related to question and questionnaire design as well as focusing on practical issues in the design, critique, and interpretation of survey questions that are often not taught in formal courses.

Discussion will focus on the measurement of both factual and non-factual material. Topics include general principles of writing questions to ensure respondent understanding; techniques for measuring the occurrence of past behaviors and events; the effects of question wording, response formats, and question sequence on responses; an introduction to the psychometric perspectives in multi-item scale design; combining individual questions into a meaningful questionnaire; guidelines for self-administered surveys versus interviewer-administered surveys; strategies for obtaining sensitive or personal information; and an introduction to techniques for testing survey questions.
The course will also provide hands on applications of the methods discussed in class. Students will be expected to draw on the material covered in the video lectures and readings in conducting a series of exercises in the development of a questionnaire.

**Readings**

Primary readings will be from the following volume, available at bookstores:


Interested students might find the following additional recommended books helpful in preparing for the course:


**Academic Conduct**

Clear definitions of the forms of academic misconduct, including cheating and plagiarism, as well as information about disciplinary sanctions for academic misconduct may be found at

[https://www.president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/III-100A.pdf](https://www.president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/III-100A.pdf) (University of Maryland) and


Knowledge of these rules is the responsibility of the student and ignorance of them does not excuse misconduct. The student is expected to be familiar with these guidelines before submitting any written work or taking any exams in this course. Lack of familiarity with these rules in no way constitutes an excuse for acts of misconduct. Charges of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be dealt with very seriously and may result in oral or written reprimands, a lower or failing grade on the assignment, a lower or failing grade for the course, suspension, and/or, in some cases, expulsion from the university.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

In order to receive services, students at the University of Maryland must contact the Disability Support Services (DSS) office to register in person for services. Please call the office to set up an appointment to register with a DSS counselor. Contact the DSS office at 301.314.7682; [http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/](http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/).

Students at the University of Mannheim should contact the Commissioner and Counsellor for Disabled Students and Students with Chronic Illnesses at [http://www.uni-mannheim.de/studienbueros/english/counselling/disabled_persons_and_persons_with_chronic_illnesses/](http://www.uni-mannheim.de/studienbueros/english/counselling/disabled_persons_and_persons_with_chronic_illnesses/).
**Course Evaluation**
In an effort to improve the learning experience for students in our online courses, students will be invited to participate in an online course evaluation at the end of the course (in addition to the standard university evaluation survey). Participation is entirely voluntary and highly appreciated.

**Class Schedule**
*Please note that assignments and dates are subject to change. Information (e.g. articles and assignments) posted to the course website supersedes the information noted here.*

**Unit 1: Instrument Development**
- Video lecture: available Thursday, March 14, 2019
- Online meeting: Thursday, March 21, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/5:00-5:50 CET
- Online quiz 1: due Thursday, March 21, 6:00 PM EDT/11:00 PM CET

**Daylight saving time begins in the US on March 10, 2019 and clocks are turned forward 1 hour. Daylight saving time begins in Europe on March 31, 2019. Therefore, look carefully at the times of meetings and deadlines!**

Readings:
- Recommended (optional):
  - Sinkowitz-Cochran, R.L. (2013). Survey Design: To Ask or Not to Ask? That Is the Question... *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 56, 1159-1164.

**Unit 2: Writing Survey Questions**

*Video lecture: available Thursday, March 21, 2019*

*Online meeting: Thursday, March 28, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/5:00-5:50 CET*

*Course Project Assignment 1: Thursday, March 28, 6:00 PM EDT/11:00 PM CET*

Daylight saving time begins in the US on March 10, 2019 and clocks are turned forward 1 hour. Daylight saving time begins in Europe on March 31, 2019. Therefore, look carefully at the times of meetings and deadlines!

**Readings:**


Recommended (optional):


Unit 3: Asking about Facts and Quasi-Facts
Video lecture: available Thursday, March 28, 2019

Online meeting: Thursday, April 4, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/6:00-6:50 CEST

Online quiz 2: due Thursday, April 4, 6:00 PM EDT/12:00 AM CEST

Daylight saving time begins in the US on March 10, 2019 and clocks are turned forward 1 hour. Daylight saving time begins in Europe on March 31, 2019. Therefore, look carefully at the times of meetings and deadlines!

Readings:

Recommended (optional):


Unit 4: Questions about Subjective Things (Attitudes)
Video lecture: available Thursday, April 4, 2019

Online meeting: Thursday, April 11, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/6:00-6:50 CEST

Online quiz 3: due Thursday, April 11, 6:00 PM EDT/12:00 AM CEST

Readings:

Recommended (optional):


**Unit 5: Response Categories and Response Scales**

Video lecture: available Thursday, April 11, 2019

Online meeting: Thursday, April 18, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/6:00-6:50 CEST

Online quiz 4: due Thursday, April 18, 6:00 PM EDT/12:00 AM CEST

Readings:

Recommended (optional):


**Unit 6: Sensitive Questions**

Video lecture: available Thursday, April 18, 2019

Online meeting: Thursday, April 25, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/6:00-6:50 CEST

Course Project Assignment 2: due Thursday, April 25, 6:00 PM EDT/12:00 AM CEST

Readings:


Recommended (optional):


Unit 7: Questionnaire from Start to Finish; Layout and Mode Dependencies
Video lecture: available Thursday, April 25, 2019

Online meeting: Thursday, May 2, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/6:00-6:50 CEST

Online quiz 5: due Thursday, May 2, 6:00 PM EDT/12:00 AM CEST

Readings:

Recommended (optional):


Unit 8: Tools for Developing and Testing Questionnaires
   Video lecture: available Thursday, May 2, 2019

   Online meeting: Thursday, May 9, 12:00-12:50 PM EDT/6:00-6:50 CEST

   Course Project Assignment 3: due Thursday, May 9, 6:00 PM EDT/12:00 AM CEST

   Readings:

   Recommended (optional):