

Course Syllabus

SurvMeth 652: Introduction to Focus Group Interviewing Research Methods

1 credit -- Summer 2021 -- June 14 – June 15

Summer Institute in Survey Research Techniques

University of Michigan

An online class taught by

Richard Krueger, Ph.D. and Alicia Menanteau, Ph.D.

Course description

This is a course on planning, conducting, and analyzing focus group interviews. It is designed to help students, researchers, and community members develop the skills needed to conduct defensible research.

Feedback on your focus group study

In this course you will have opportunity to develop a plan for a focus group study, an oral introduction, and set of questions to use in the study. Your instructors will review these assignments (your plan, your introduction, and your questions) and offer feedback including suggestions for improvement. Many class participants find this feedback useful, particularly if they are designing an upcoming study.

Instructors

Name: Richard A. Krueger, Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota, and
Alicia Menanteau, Adjunct Professor, University of Minnesota

Email: rkrueger@umn.edu and alicia@insights360.com

Goal

The goal of the course is to help students learn how to use focus group interviewing as a research method.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the core ingredients of a successful focus group.
2. Identify situations where focus groups could be useful.
3. Develop a plan for a focus group study.
4. Develop questions for a focus group study.
5. Identify characteristics of information-rich participants and recruit participants.
6. Begin a focus group in a way that creates a thoughtful and open environment.
7. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of virtual focus groups.
8. Capture data during a focus group.
9. Analyze and report focus group results.

Course Outline / Daily Schedule

Date	Time	Topic
June 14	9 – 11 am	Course introduction; Student introductions, Expectations; How to use class materials
June 14	1 – 3 pm	Characteristics of focus group interviews; Comparison of in-person, telephone and online focus groups; Observe demo online focus group (Zoom platform); Review assignment for next day
June 15 Class divided into 3 groups	8 – 9 am 9 - 10 am 10 – 11 am	Group 1 – Students present introductions Group 2 – Students present introductions Group 3 – Students present introductions
June 15	1 – 3 pm	Key components of focus group research Review assignments Questions and Answers
June 22	midnight	3 assignments due

- Zoom meetings on June 14 and 15 are on EDT – Ann Arbor time zone)

Class Materials

- 20 short video segments
- PowerPoint slides of 20 video segments (on class website)
- 2 video demonstrations
- 4 video lectures
- Notes: Focus Group Interviewing (on class website)
- Textbook (on class website)

20 short video segments

A series of 20 short (4 – 10 minute) video presentations by Richard Krueger on the basics of focus group interviewing. Internet locations of these videos will be sent to enrolled students.

PowerPoint slides*

PowerPoint slides for 20 YouTube video presentations. These are the slides that accompany the 20 short video segments.

2 video demonstrations

Short focus groups are demonstrated in two video presentations. One presentation is specifically on moderating skills and the second presentation is an actual focus group on healthy living. Internet locations will be sent to enrolled students.

4 video lectures

Lectures by R. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey on Developing Questions, Recruiting Participants, Moderating the Focus Group and Analyzing Focus Group Results (34 – 46 minutes each) Internet locations will be sent to students.

Notes

“Notes: Focus Group Interviewing” (January 2021) by Richard A. Krueger, Mary Anne Casey and Alicia Menanteau. University of Minnesota. 31 pages.

Textbook

Krueger, R. A. & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. 5th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (5th edition is recommended but 4th edition is acceptable.)

*These materials will be sent to students by email.

How the class instruction will occur

This class will likely differ from other online classes you’ve had. The core instructional materials or links to the materials will be provided on Canvas. You will be expected to be familiar with these materials and use them as you prepare your assignments. The Zoom class sessions will not be lectures in the traditional sense, but rather a chance to provide you with needed background information, demonstrations, practice sessions, and supplementary information. You will be expected to proceed through the materials at your own pace, but also to be mindful of the due date of the assignments.

Course Requirements

Watch the videos and read chapters in the textbook. Then, select a topic for a focus group study, develop a plan, an introduction, and a set of questions to use in the focus group. You are not required to conduct the study.

Non-Credit Students: The assignments are optional for non-credit students. In past classes we’ve found that over half of the non-credit students submit one or more of the assignments. They have told us that they anticipate conducting a focus group study in the future and would like feedback before they begin the process. We will review each assignment that is submitted and offer a critique pointing out the strengths and areas of improvement. We expect that the non-credit students will participate in the Zoom calls, watch the video sessions, and read the text.

Assignments and Expectations

1. A plan for a focus group study

Submit a plan using the instructions in Video 03: Planning the focus group study. Use the template on p. 17 of “Notes” as the basis of your plan. If additional background information is needed to explain your study, include it on a page or two after the completed template. Due on June 22nd (by midnight).

2. Focus group questions

A typical two-hour focus group in the academic tradition usually consists of 10 to 14 open-ended questions. An online focus group or telephone focus group usually has 6 to 7 open-ended questions. These questions should be conversational (written using words the participants use—no jargon) and sequenced carefully. Questions should be numbered with estimated time needed for each question. At the top of the page indicate the purpose of the study and the anticipated focus group participants. Before submitting, review the videos: 04 Types of questions in a focus group, 05 Developing questions for a focus group, and 06 Examples of focus group questions. Note examples of format on p.14-15 of Notes. Due on June 22nd.

3. An introduction for your focus groups

The introduction is the first thing the moderator says at the beginning of the focus group interview. It is short and snappy. Again, use words the participants would use if they were talking about the study. Include why you are conducting the study, what you will do with the results, and how it will benefit people. Students will practice this introduction on the June 15th online class and receive feedback from the instructors and other students. The written introduction is due on June 22nd. Note the examples in Videos 09 – 13 and on p. 4-5 of “Notes”.

Course Sessions and Readings

Note: The course is planned to be completed within two weeks. Contact the instructor if you need additional time.

How to Proceed -- We recommend the following sequence:

INTRODUCTION – We recommend doing this section before class begins.

01 - What is a focus group? (4:34 minutes)

02 - What makes it research? (3:56 minutes)

Reading: Chapter 1 “Overview of focus groups”

PLANNING

03 - Planning the focus group study (2:59 minutes)

Reading: Chapter 2 “Planning the focus group study”

DEVELOPING QUESTIONS

- 04 - Types of questions in a focus group (6:59 minutes)
- 05 - Developing questions for a focus group (7:52 minutes)
- 06 - Examples of focus group questions (7:18 minutes)
- Video Lecture: Developing Questions (46:10 minutes)
- Reading: Chapter 3 “Developing a questioning route”

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

- 07 - Locating focus group participants (9:15 minutes)
- 08 - Recruiting focus group participants (8:57 minutes)
- Video Lecture: Recruiting Participants (34:55 minutes)
- Reading: Chapter 4: “Participants in a focus group”

MODERATING

- 09 - Moderating skills – Before the group (7:34 minutes)
- 10 - Moderating skills – During the group (9:38 minutes)
- 11 - The role of the assistant moderator (5:26 minutes)
- 12 - Tips for moderating – Part 1 (7:23 minutes)
- 13 - Tips for moderating – Part 2 (7:04 minutes)
- Video Lecture: Moderating the Focus Group (34:27 minutes)
- Video Demonstration: Moderating a Focus Group (30:13 minutes)
- Video Demonstration Focus Group (32:04 minutes)
- Reading: Chapter 5: “Moderating skills”

ANALYSIS

- 14 - Capturing data during the focus group (4:37 minutes)
- 15 - Taking field notes in focus groups (7:50 minutes)
- 16 - Transcribing focus groups (7:09)
- 17 - Analysis basics ((6:38 minutes)
- 18 - Classic analysis (6:10 minutes)
- 19 - Deciding what is important in the focus group analysis (5:31 minutes)
- 20 - Preparing a focus group report (6:37 minutes)
- Video Lecture: Analysis (41:04 minutes)
- Reading: Chapter 6: “Analyzing focus group results”
- Chapter 7: “Reporting”

Additional References

Byseth, Jean, et al. (2003) *Moderating to the max*. Ithaca, NY: Paramount Market Publishing.

Grob, G.F. (2015). Writing for impact. In K. Newcomer et al. (Eds.). *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. 4th Ed. (pp 739-764). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley

Guest, G., A. Bunce and L. Johnson. (2006). "How many interviews are enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability." *Field Methods* 2006; 18; 59.

Hennink, M.M. (2007). *International focus group Research: A handbook for the health and social sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Krueger, R.A., & Casey, M.A. (2015). Focus group interviewing. In K Newcomer & H. Hatry (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation*. 4th Ed. (pp. 500 - 528). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

Krueger, Richard A. (September / October 2006), "Analyzing focus group interviews." *Journal of Wound Ostomy and Continence Nursing Society* pp 478 - 481.

Krueger, Richard A. (1998). *Analyzing and reporting focus group results*. (Volume 6). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Krueger, Richard A. (1998). *Developing questions for focus groups*. (Volume 3) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krueger, Richard A. (1998). *Moderating focus groups*. (Volume 4) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Krueger, Richard A. and Jean A. King (1998). *Involving community members in focus groups*. (Volume 5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morgan, D. (1998). *Planning focus groups*. (Volume 2) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

1.26.21