Summer Institute in Survey Research Techniques
Writing Questions for Surveys

24-28 June 2024
Monday-Friday 1:00pm-4:00pm Eastern Time (12:00pm-3:00pm Central Time)
Online modality

Instructor name:	Dr. Jennifer "Jen" Dykema
Instructor title:	Associate Professor of Sociology University of Wisconsin-Madison and UW Survey Center (UWSC) Faculty Director
Instructor website:	https://sociology.wisc.edu/staff/dykema-jen/
e-mail:	dykema@ssc.wisc.edu
Phone:	608-556-5813
Office hours:	By appointment

Course description
- This course distills research about survey questions to principles that can be applied to write survey questions that are clear with the goal of obtaining valid and reliable answers. Lectures provide guidelines for writing and revising survey questions and illustrate how to revise problematic features of questions. Sessions provide a detailed examination of guidelines for writing questions about events and behaviors and questions about subjective phenomena, such as attitudes and evaluations.
- The workshop style of the course provides students with tools to use in diagnosing problems in survey questions and in writing their own survey questions. Sessions combine lecture with group exercises and discussion. Exercises require that students analyze problematic questions and revise them.

Course objectives
- Introduce a structural analysis of parts of a survey question.
- Describe guidelines for diagnosing problems in survey questions and writing new survey questions.
- Focus on the structure and wording of survey questions, whether for interviewer-administered or self-administered instruments.
- Provide an opportunity to apply the guidelines and principles during in-class exercises.
- Focus on improving individual questions and sets of questions.
- Summarize research that underlies key decisions in writing survey questions.
- Introduce cognitive interviewing as a method for testing survey questions.

Who should attend
- Individuals who will be writing or reviewing survey questions or survey instruments or analyzing survey data.
- This course gives practical guidance to those who have written survey questions but who are not familiar with the research on question design, those who are just beginning to design survey instruments, and those who use survey data but do not themselves design survey instruments.

Course URLs
- Lecture will be held in over Zoom. A link to zoom will be provided.
- Course materials will be available on Canvas. A URL for the course will be provided.
- Guide to Canvas for Students: https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student

Assignments

- Assignments for this course include daily readings and some short exercises.

1. **Readings**
   - Readings are listed in the Course Outline and available on Canvas.
   - Lectures assume that you have completed the assigned readings before the lecture.
   - Completing the readings before class will greatly enhance what you learn from the course.
   - Reading these two articles before the first day of class will help you get the most from this course:
     - Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Stanley Presser. 2003. "The Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:65-88.
     - Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Jennifer Dykema. 2020. "Advances in the Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 46:37-60.

2. **Other exercises**
   - Exercises and discussion in class complement the lecture.
   - These exercises are designed to help you integrate the course material.

If you are interested in receiving a grade for this course

- Communicate this to me immediately so that we can make arrangements.

Course Outline
Schedule for Readings and In-Class Exercises

Day 1
Fundamentals in Questionnaire Design

Readings	Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Stanley Presser. 2003. "The Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:65-88.
	Schaeffer, Nora Cate and Jennifer Dykema. 2020. "Advances in the Science of Asking Questions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 46:37-60.
	Dykema, Jennifer, Nora Cate Schaeffer, Dana Garbarski and Michael Hout. 2020. "The Role of Question Characteristics in Designing and Evaluating Survey Questions." Pp. 449-70 in *Advances in Questionnaire Design, Development, Evaluation, and Testing*, edited by P. Beatty, D. Collins, L. Kaye, J. Padilla, G. Willis and A. Wilmot. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Day 2
Fundamentals (continued)/General Guidelines

Readings	Fowler, Jr., Floyd J. and Carol Cosenza. 2009. "Design and Evaluation of Survey Questions." Pp. 375-412 in *The Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, edited by L. Bickman and D. J. Rog. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
	Krosnick, Jon A. and Stanley Presser. 2010. "Question and Questionnaire Design." Pp. 263-313 in *Handbook of Survey Research*, edited by P. V. Marsden and J. D. Wright. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
	Bauer, Irina, Tanja Kunz, and Tobias Gummer. 2023. "Plain Language in Web Questionnaires: Effects on Data Quality and Questionnaire Evaluation." *International Journal of Social Research* 1-13.
In-Class Exercise	*Standardized Interview Pretest: Identifying Problems with Questions*

	Day 3 **General Guidelines (continued)/Questions about Events and Behaviors**
Readings	Redline, Cleo. 2013. "Clarifying Categorical Concepts in a Web Survey." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77:89-105.
	Beatty, Paul, Carol Cosenza and Floyd J. Fowler Jr. 2019. "Experiments on the Design and Evaluation of Complex Survey Questions." Pp. 113-29 in *Experimental Methods in Survey Research*, edited by P. J. Lavrakas, M. W. Traugott, C. Kennedy, A. L. Holbrook, E. D. de Leeuw and B. T. West. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
	Tourangeau, Roger, Frederick G. Conrad, Mick P. Couper, and Cong Ye. 2014. "The Effects of Providing Examples in Survey Questions." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 78: 100-125.
In-Class Exercise	*Identifying and Correcting Problems with Questions About Events and Behaviors*

	Day 4 **Questions about Events and Behaviors (continued)/Questions Asking for Evaluations and Judgments**
Readings	Dykema, Jennifer, Nora Cate Schaeffer, Dana Garbarski, Nadia Assad and Steven Blixt. 2022. "Towards a Reconsideration of the Use of Agree-Disagree Questions in Measuring Subjective Evaluations." *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy* 18:2335-2344.
	Debell, Matthew, Catherine Wilson, Simon Jackman, and Lucila Figueroa. 2021. "Optimal Response Formats for Online Surveys: Branch, Grid, or Single Item?" *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology* 9:1–24.
	Bradburn, Norman M., Seymour Sudman and Brian Wansink. 2004. "Asking Questions about Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions." Pp. 117-150 in *Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design*. New York: Wiley.
In-Class Exercise	*Identifying and Correcting Problems with Questions About Evaluations and Judgments*

	Day 5 **Questions Asking for Evaluations and Judgments (continued)/Question Evaluation and Testing**
Readings	Willis, Gordon B. and Judith T. Lessler. 1999. "Question Appraisal System: QAS-99." Vol. Rockville, MD: Research Triangle Institute. Pages 6-18; 52-59.
	Willis, Gordon B. and Susan Schechter. 1997. "Evaluation of Cognitive Interviewing Techniques: Do the Results Generalize the Field." *Bulletin de Methodologie Sociologique* 55:40-66.
	Maitland, Aaron and Stanley Presser. 2018. "How Do Question Evaluation Methods Compare in Predicting Problems Observed in Typical Survey Conditions?" *Journal of Survey Statistics and Methodology* 6:465–490.
In-Class Exercise	*Cognitive Interviewing Questionnaire: Development and Implementation*