

# **POL 351: Social Surveys in Contemporary Society**

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Fall 2014

Lecture: 7:00-8:20, Tuesday and Thursday, Soc. Behv. Sci. N748

Course website: <https://sites.google.com/a/stonybrook.edu/mperess/sscs2014>

**Prof. Michael Peress**

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Soc. Behv. Sci. N743

OH: Tuesday and Thursday afternoons (pop-in or by appointment)

Overview: Public opinion surveys are a vital component of contemporary politics and surveys are used to measure why the public votes as it does and to predict the results on an election. In this course we will explore the fundamental elements of survey research—selecting a sample, designing and implementing a questionnaire, interpreting the results, and presenting the findings. This semester, we will pay special attention to polling done for the 2012 presidential election and the 2014 congressional elections as well as polling on current public policy issues such as health care and immigration. We will also study existing election forecasting techniques used by such websites as [fivethirtyeight.com](http://fivethirtyeight.com) and develop forecasts for the 2014 congressional elections.

## Recommended Books:

The following books will be on reserve in the library.

- [1] Weisberg, Herbert F., Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen (1996). *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*.

[2] Groves, Robert M., Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau (2004). *Survey Methodology*.

Lecture Notes: To supplement the readings, I will post lecture notes for some of the topics that we cover.

Readings: Course readings can be found on the course web page. I reserve the right to update the readings on the syllabus, but I will indicate on the course website which readings will be assigned at least one week in advance.

Software: We will be using Excel and SPSS in this class.

Final Project: The final project will require you to design, implement, and analyze a survey, using the different techniques we will cover in class. I will provide the exact details later in the course. The final project will be due on December 11<sup>th</sup>. The final class of the semester will involve short student presentations of the final projects.

Data Analysis Assignments: I will assign ~6 data analysis assignments throughout the class, which will require you to use of Excel and/or SPSS.

Class Participation: You are expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussion.

Exam: There will be one exam about two-thirds of the way through the class which will cover basic data analysis and survey analysis.

Grading: Grades will be based on the exam (25%), the data analysis assignments (25%), the final project (25%), and class participation (25%).