Teaching Survey Methods to Students from Diverse Disciplines

Allyson L. Holbrook

University of Illinois at Chicago

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Department of Public Policy, Management, and Analytics

Courses taught (all graduate):

- Questionnaire design
- Survey data collection and management

- Survey nonresponse
- Psychology of survey response
- History of survey methodology
- Surveys, public opinion, and public policy
- Survey research ethics

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Sources of students:

- College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs
  - Urban planning
  - Public Policy
  - Public Administration
- Liberal Arts and Sciences
  - Sociology
  - Psychology
  - Criminology/Criminal Justice
  - Political Science
- Applied Health Sciences
  - Disability studies
  - Occupational therapy
  - Physical therapy
- School of Public Health
  - Community Health Sciences
  - Epidemiology
- Social Work
- Nursing
- Education
- Business
- Dentistry
- Pharmacy

Experiences from teaching students from diverse departments:

- Use examples from different disciplines from actual surveys
- Use assignments that allow students to customize
- Use assignments and activities that allow students to collaborate and learn from those in other disciplines
- Teach principles rather than specifics
  - Thoughtful consideration of decisions rather than simple rules

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Strengths:

- Sufficient enrollment from across campus (might not be from single department or program)
- Build up repertoire of examples for future classes
- Students learn from one another because they see the diversity of applications
- Students make connections with students from other disciplines in ways they don't get in other classes
- Allows PhD students to then teach survey methods in their own teaching once they become faculty members
- Allow PhD students to more confidently use survey methods in their own research once they become faculty members
- Classes become recommended by advisors in different departments

Weaknesses:

- Students come in with very different background and skills
- Doesn't allow in depth exploration of discipline specific constructs (e.g., political knowledge or public service motivation)
- Labor intensive – individualized feedback and requires a lot of expertise (TA support); requires small class size (20 optimal)
- Doesn't fit some bureaucratic/financial models – broadly attractive classes at the graduate level more of a drawback (different for undergraduate) – may be institution specific

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Thank you!

Allyson@uic.edu

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