

University of North Florida
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
CCJ 3700 Research Methods in Criminology and Criminal Justice
Thursdays, 6:00 – 8:45 PM
Building 51, Room 1201
Spring 2009

Professor: Dr. Alicia Sitren

Office: Building 51, room 2126

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 – 3:00 PM or by appointment

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Course Description:

The primary objective of this course is to provide students with sufficient skills to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate research studies and findings in the field of criminal justice. As secondary objectives, this course seeks to prepare students to conduct their own basic research and to provide a basis for understanding more advanced topics in research methodology. Knowledge about research methodology is essential to assessing the quality and usefulness of information in criminal justice.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. To develop an understanding of the fundamentals of social scientific inquiry, the link between theory and research, and causation.
2. To learn the different approaches to research design, this includes experiments, quasi-experimental design, survey research, case studies, field research, content analysis, and secondary data analysis.
3. To develop an appreciation and understanding of the importance of research methods.

Required Text:

Maxfield, M.G., & Babbie, E. (2nd Edition). *Basics of Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology*. Thomson and Wadsworth.

Additional readings will be assigned and will be available within the course.

Course Requirements:

Completion of the following requirements will assist you in accomplishing the learning objectives for this course:

1. Examinations: Students must take and complete all four exams on time (each representing 15% of the final grade). Exams will consist of questions developed from the reading assignments, lectures, and any supplemental information provided. Exam dates are January 29th (Exam 1); February 19th (Exam 2); March 5th (Exam 3); and April 16th (Exam 4). Exams will consist of true-false and multiple-choice questions. A scantron is required for each exam. Students are responsible for taking exams during the scheduled time. Make-up exams will only be given during extreme, documented circumstances.

2. Research Project: You are required to collaborate with a group of other students in this class on a research study (2 – 4 students per group). This project will include conceptualization of an issue to be studied, operationalization of relevant variables, input on questionnaire design, collection of data, and analysis of data. In addition, each group will be required to present its study to the class (approximately 20 minutes in length), summarizing the relevant literature, describing the methodology, and reporting the results of the study. We will spend class time discussing these requirements and you will have an opportunity to complete some of the work during class time.

Note: I will be happy to offer comments and suggestions on any part (or all) of your project before you present it to the class.

3. Assignments: Throughout the semester students will be expected to complete class assignments. These assignments are designed to enhance your understanding of the lecture material.

Grading Scale:

A = 90 – 100%
B = 80 – 89%
C = 70 – 79%
D = 60 – 69%
F = below 60%

Grading Policy:

Exam 1 = 15%
Exam 2 = 15%
Exam 3 = 15%
Exam 4 = 15%
Research Project = 20%*
Assignments = 20%
Total = 100%

(* The members of your group will be asked to assess the quantity and quality of your contribution to these assignments; the average of your group's assessments will count for 25% of your project grades.)

Class Format:

This class will meet once a week on Thursday evenings for two hours and 45 minutes. Class will begin at 6:00pm and will end when the professor indicates, on or close to 8:45pm. There will be one break about half way through the class period. All students should come to class on time and remain for the duration of class until dismissed. Class format will include lectures, class exercises, discussions, and videos.

Blackboard:

The Professor will use the University's Blackboard system to disseminate general course information, course notes, reading materials, and exam grades. Therefore, all students will be required to learn how to access their Osprey e-mail and Blackboard accounts if they do not already know how to do so.

Academic Integrity:

All members of the community recognize the necessity of being honest with themselves and with others. The integrity of the educational experience is diminished by cheating in class, plagiarizing, lying and employing other modes of deceit. None of these should be used as a strategy to obtain a false sense of success. The need for honest relations among all members of the community is essential.

I expect that each of the exams, projects, and assignments reflect your own individual work. Particularly, you should not copy another student's work or allow them to copy your work. When discussing ideas and concepts from something you have read, you must cite the source. Lastly, if you include any direct quotes from another source, you must place them in quotation marks and cite the original author (direct quotes should only be used when you cannot restate those ideas in your own words). For more details on the consequences of academic dishonesty please see the rules of conduct described in The Student Conduct Code, which can be found at: http://www.unf.edu/unfinfo/policies-regs/pdf_files/5_student_affairs/5_0010R.pdf.

Civility Statement:

Students are expected to communicate in a civil manner in academic interactions at all times, both in and out of the classroom. This means that interactions are to be carried out in a polite, courteous, and dignified manner, which are respectful and understanding toward both peers and professors.

Proper decorum includes, but is not limited to, arriving to class on time, participating in classroom activities and discussions, paying full attention during all aspects of the class, respecting the views of other students and the professor, and making meaningful contributions to class content. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who are disruptive will be dismissed from class and referred to Student Affairs. Such behavior includes (but is not limited to) arriving late or leaving in the middle of class, chatting with other students during lecture and discussions, permitting cell phones and other electronic devices to ring during class, and engaging in other activities unrelated to course content (such as reading newspapers, surfing the internet, and doing work for another class).

Class Attendance:

According to various studies, class attendance and grades tend to positively correlate. Thus, it is in the best interest of the students to attend class regularly, except in cases of extreme illness or emergency. In the event that students do miss class, they should borrow notes from someone who attended, in order to maintain continuity when preparing for the course exams. I reserve the right to take attendance at any time and factor this into your final grade.

Course Schedule

Week	Topics	Readings
Week 1 (1/8)	Introduction	N/A
Week 2 (1/15)	Criminal Justice and Scientific Inquiry	Ch. 1
Week 3 (1/22)	Ethics and Criminal Justice Research	Ch. 2
Week 4 (1/29)	Exam 1	Ch. 1 – 2
	General Issues in Research Design	Ch. 3
Week 5 (2/5)	Concepts, Operationalization, and Measurement	Ch. 4
Week 6 (2/12)	Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs	Ch. 5
Week 7 (2/19)	Exam 2	Ch. 3 – 5
	Sampling	Ch. 6
Week 8 (2/26)	Survey Research and Other Ways of Asking Questions	Ch. 7
	Field Research	Ch. 8
Week 9 (3/5)	Exam 3	Ch. 6 - 8
	Agency Records, Content Analysis, and Secondary Data	Ch. 9
Week 10 (3/12)	No class	N/A
Week 11 (3/19)	Spring Break	N/A
Week 12 (3/26)	Evaluation Research and Problem Analysis	Ch. 10
	Interpreting Data	Ch. 11
Week 13 (4/2)	Class Presentations	
Week 14 (4/9)	Class Presentations	
Week 15 (4/16)	Exam 4	Ch. 9 – 11
Week 16 (4/23)	Final Activity	

The purpose of the course schedule is to be used as a guide to assist you in planning class preparation. The syllabus and the course schedule are subject to change, as the instructor may deem necessary. It is in the best interest of students to come to class prepared by reading the material prior to class.