RESEARCH METHODS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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Course #: CCJ 6705
Course Title: Research Methods Criminology
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course introduces the student to some of the fundamentals of knowledge-generating processes in criminal justice.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES
This course is an introduction to research methods for graduate students in the field of criminology and criminal justice. Some of the basic objectives of this course are:
1. to provide a better understanding of different approaches and techniques for conducting criminological research,
2. to improve critical reasoning abilities,
3. to assist the student in other course work by providing a vocabulary of methodological concepts making it easier to understand some of the materials in these courses,
4. to give the future administrator of criminal justice programs a basic understanding of research, which should provide a better basis for evaluating current or proposed programs, and
5. to create within the graduate student a little “scientific skepticism,” coupled with academic curiosity, and the interest in researching new ideas.

REQUIRED TEXT

CANVAS USE:
The class syllabus is posted in Canvas, an online course management system. In this class Canvas will be used for (add specific information to your course).
Information on how to use Canvas is available at: http://usfsm.edu/information-commons/faculty-resources/
CONTACT INFORMATION

My role as the professor of this course is to answer any questions you may have about the content of the course. I have created a “General Forum” in the Discussion Board section of Canvas to provide you with the opportunity to ask me course-related-content-related questions (see below). Please use this general forum instead of emailing me directly. In all likelihood, the other students in the class will profit from your question and my response to it. I will check the forum often and respond quickly to your posts. In fact, I will respond more quickly to your questions if they are posted in the General Forum than if you email them to me.

You can also use this forum to resolve technology-related questions. Post your question in the “General Forum” to see if any of your peers knows the answer to your question (e.g., “How do I…”). Many of your colleagues are “experts” in navigating around Canvas and probably know it better than I do.

Note that I have posted within Canvas a “Virtual Orientation.” It is on the same page as this syllabus. You are responsible for going through this orientation by the end of the first week. It describes how to navigate through the various online components of the course. You can also reference this orientation throughout the semester as various questions may arise.

The best and perhaps only way to contact me is email. It is highly unlikely to reach me by leaving a message on my office phone.

FORMAT

This class will be taught as a blended course, which means that most of our work will be completed online. However, we will three times. The dates that we meet are: 01/17/2015; 02/21/2015; 04/18/2015 from 12:00 pm-2:00 pm.

The last day to Drop from this class and be eligible for a full refund is January 9. The last day to Withdraw from this class with a ‘W’ grade (no refund and no academic penalty) is March 21.

REQUIREMENTS

Weekly Assignments/Quizzes

Assignments are based on 11 chapters in your textbook. Every week you will be responsible for completing an assignment, which means reading the class notes associated with a chapter and the chapter itself. Note that I also posted within Canvas supporting materials including an outline of the chapter, learning objectives for the chapter, and the terms which you need to become familiar with for each chapter. A list of the assignments accompanies this syllabus.

The best way to successfully complete the course is to think about reading my class notes and each chapter as a separate unit; as if you were studying for a test that will cover both sets of materials. Some of you might find that reading the textbook first and then my class notes works best and others may find that reading my chapter lecture first and the textbook second allows for greater comprehension. I suggest trying it both ways before you generate your game plan for how to get the most out of this required course.
The weekly assignments include two components. I have created a class lecture for each of the assigned chapters. These are essentially a hardcopy, in a narrative form, of the lecture I would have presented if you were taking the course with me in the classroom. I have put a great deal of effort in creating these class lectures drawing upon over 30 years of hands-on experience doing sociological and criminological research. You will find these lectures helpful in bringing to life what is described in each chapter. They substantively compliment the content of each chapter.

One of the two components of your weekly assignment is to read-study each chapter’s lecture notes. I have divided my lecture notes into sections. Each section has a corresponding online set of questions that you must answer. Consequently, at the end of that particular section of the class lecture you will be prompted to take a quiz. These are short relatively easy quizzes including no more than 6 questions. At this point, you should stop and attempt to digest what you have read before taking the quiz on that section. Once you complete that section’s quiz you need to return to the lecture notes and complete reading and studying the next section of the class notes. Again, you will be prompted to take another quiz at the end of that section. This will continue until you have successfully read and comprehended my class lecture for that particular chapter of the textbook. This may involve taking up to 6 short quizzes per chapter lecture notes. There is no time limit for completing the quizzes on my class notes. However, you cannot bookmark the quiz and return to it.

The second component of the weekly assignment is to complete a quiz on the book chapter. Most often, this involves a 20 question quiz. The majority of the questions on these quizzes are multiple choice questions; mixed in will also be a couple of true-false questions. You have 40 minutes to complete each of these book chapter quizzes.

In sum, each weekly assignment includes the quizzes based on the sections of the class lecture for that chapter and a quiz on that particular book chapter. You will not be able to complete the assignment after its due date. This means that you will earn a 0 for each of the class lecture quizzes and a 0 for the quiz based on the book chapter if you do not complete them by their deadline. See the Assignment Sheet for the tentative completion dates. You will not be able to view the class lecture, chapter quiz, and supporting materials after the due date has expired.

**You must sequentially go through the material within each module and across modules. That is, you must complete the first module in its entirety before the second module will open up for your access.**

**No Feedback**

Note that I do not provide you with feedback on your quizzes. I do not provide feedback in order to maintain the integrity of the grading of the course. It is possible for students to take a quiz and generate a list of the correct answers, if I provided feedback. Students who attain this list will obviously generate higher scores than you thus undermining your hard work. It is also possible
for students to form teams and watch as one student takes a quiz recording the correct answers. The students then rotate among themselves in taking subsequent quizzes and exams insuring higher grades for each. This does not mean that you cannot find out what questions you missed on the quizzes and exams. You can do so by making an appointment with me after the quiz or exam has been taken and I will personally provide you with some feedback. We will meet in my office to go over your quiz. We can also meet after one of our scheduled classes.

EXAMS

There will be two essay exams. I will post a list of questions before each of the exams. From the list, you will be required to answer two of the questions, which will be randomly selected. You will have 75 minutes to complete the two essays. I am required to keep your exams. Therefore, I will not return them.

Essay Grade Matrix

The basis for your grade on your essays exams is as follows: A = Excellent: “I wish I’d written that.” Is masterful in control of purpose and graceful in expression; content is insightful, reflecting depth of understanding and perception; organization enhances meaning; author regards audience as intelligent and discriminatory, has virtually no mechanical flaws. B = Good: Has clarity and coherence of the C paper, but also has depth of content; organization is logical and effective; displays independent thought, careful concern for expression, and has virtually no mechanical flaws. C = Adequate or Competent: Few, if any mechanical errors; is clear, coherent, and contains some originality, but not beyond the obvious. D = Below Expectations: Isn’t sure what its’ trying to do or say; confusion is evident; has serious weaknesses regarding clarity of purpose, organization, development of ideas, understanding of issues, use of clichés, inappropriate word choice, has numerous or significant mechanical and grammatical flaws. F = Unacceptable: Little attempt at an idea; have several of the problems in one or more areas listed for the D essay.

Note that the quality of your grammar and writing style is part of your grade. Assignments that are riddled with misspellings and incomplete sentences will be graded down.

DISCUSSION BOARD

The “Discussion Board” is within Canvas. You can find it on the left menu after you access the course. It is listed as “Discussions.”

The discussion board will include two forums. The first forum is titled “General Forum.” You can post in this forum throughout the semester. This is the forum to ask course related administrative questions as well to get help from your classmates.

The second forum will be based on the weekly schedule corresponding to the assignments. These forums will be titled according to the title of the chapter from the textbook assigned for
that week. You can use this forum to further explore with your peers questions about that particular week’s assignments. I will also answer questions in this forum that are directed to me related to the content of that particular week’s readings. In order for me to answer your content-related questions, you have to post your question by Thursday at 5:00 pm and I will respond to your posting by the following Sunday. I will not respond to posting made after the Thursday at 5:00 pm deadline.

You can use the Discussion Board, for example, to ask clarifying questions, to disagree with what was posted, and to present life experiences that either dispute or clarify a point. The point here is that you react to my lecture as if we were in the classroom.

The posting within the Discussion Board is not graded. It is the equivalent of class discussion.

**GRADES**

Your quiz average accounts for 50 percent of your final grade.

Your exam average accounts for 50 percent of your final grade.

I will combine these weighted grades and assign a letter grade passed on your overall average score.

Your letter grade will be based on the following scale.

100-98 = A+  
77-74 = C

97-94 = A  
73-71 = C-

93-91 = A-  
70-68 = D+

90-88 = B+  
67-64 = D

87-84 = B  
63-61 = D-

83-81 = B-  
60 below = F

80-78 = C+

**Example**

Two essay exams each worth 25 percent = the average grade is 50 percent of your final grade
Average of quizzes = 50 percent of your final grade.
Grade on research proposal=50 percent.
Total = 100 percent

Essay exams; 90 on the first exam, 90 on the second exam; average essay exam grade = 90 + 90 = 180; average = 180/2 = 90; 90 X .50 = 45 points
USF SARASOTA-MANATEE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. Academic Dishonesty: The University considers any form of plagiarism or cheating on exams, projects, or papers to be unacceptable behavior. Please be sure to review the university’s policy in the USFSM Catalog, the USF System Academic Integrity of Students, and the USF System Student Code of Conduct.

B. Academic Disruption: The University does not tolerate behavior that disrupts the learning process. The policy for addressing academic disruption is included with Academic Dishonesty in the USFSM Catalog, USF System Academic Integrity of Students, and the USF System Student Code of Conduct.

C. Contingency Plans: In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USFSM to suspend normal operations. During this time, USFSM may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Canvas, Elluminate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It’s the responsibility of the student to monitor Canvas site for each class for course specific communication, and the main USFSM and College websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information. The USF hotline at 1 (800) 992-4231 is updated with pre-recorded information during an emergency. See the Campus Police Website for further information.

D. Disabilities Accommodation: Students are responsible for registering with the Office of Students with Disabilities Services (SDS) in order to receive academic accommodations. Reasonable notice must be given to the SDS office (typically 5 working days) for accommodations to be arranged. It is the responsibility of the student to provide each instructor with a copy of the official Memo of Accommodation. Contact Information: Disability Coordinator, 941-359-4714, disabilityservices@sar.usf.edu, http://usfsm.edu/disability-services/

E. Fire Alarm Instructions: At the beginning of each semester please note the emergency exit maps posted in each classroom. These signs are marked with the primary evacuation route (red) and secondary evacuation route (orange) in case the building needs to be evacuated. See Emergency Evacuation Procedures.

F. Religious Observances: USFSM recognizes the right of students and faculty to observe major religious holidays. Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class for a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second week of classes. Instructors canceling class for a religious observance should have this stated in the syllabus with an appropriate alternative assignment.

G. Sexual Misconduct/Sexual Harassment Reporting: USFSM is committed to
providing an environment free from sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence (USF System Policy 0-004). The Counseling and Wellness Center is a confidential resource where you can talk about incidents of sexual harassment and gender-based crimes including sexual assault, stalking, and domestic/relationship violence. This confidential resource can help you without having to report your situation to either the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSSR) or the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity (DIEO), unless you request that they make a report.

Please be aware that in compliance with Title IX and under the USF System Policy, educators must report incidents of sexual harassment and gender-based crimes including sexual assault, stalking, and domestic/relationship violence. If you disclose any of these situations in class, in papers, or to me personally, I am required to report it to OSSR or DIEO for investigation. The Deputy Coordinator for USFSM is Mary Beth Wallace, AVP for Student Enrollment, Engagement and Success, 941-359-4330 or marybeth@sar.usf.edu.

Campus Resources:
Counseling Center and Wellness Center 941-487-4254
Victim Advocate (24/7) 941-504-8599
List of off-campus resources:
Hope of Manatee: 941-755-6805
Safe Place & Rape Crisis Center (SPARCC) – Sarasota: 941-365-1976
First Call for Help - Manatee: 941-708-6488

   Sarasota & North Port 941-366-5025
Manatee Glens: 941-782-4800

H. Web Portal Information: Every newly enrolled USF student receives an official USF e-mail account. Students receive official USF correspondence and Canvas course information via that address.

GENERAL INSTRUCTION FOR STUDENTS
A. Students are not allowed to tape lectures unless I give you permission.

B. Academic Support Services:
   Information Commons provides students with individual and group study spaces, computers, printers, and various media equipment for temporary use. Information Commons is staffed with a librarian, learning support faculty, tutors, and technology and e-learning specialists. Students challenged by the rigors of academic writing, mathematics, or other course content are urged to contact their professors early in the semester to chart out a plan for academic success, and/or regularly use the tutoring services provided by the Learning Support Services, which are provided at no cost to students.
# TENTATIVE READING ASSIGNMENTS AND DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read syllabus, buy book</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Human Inquiry and Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>#1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paradigms, Theory, and Research</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>#2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Ethics and Politics of Social Research</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>#3</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>#4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Conceptualization and Measurement</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>#5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Indexes, Scales, and Typologies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>#6</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Midterm</strong> 02/23-26 11:59 pm; List of questions available from 02/18. You have 1:15 to complete the midterm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Logic of Sampling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>#7</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Logic of Sampling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>#7</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Survey Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Experiments</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Qualitative Field Research</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>#10</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Evaluation Research</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>#11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam</strong> on 04/25 until 11:59; List of questions available from 04/20. You have 1:15 to complete it.</td>
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*THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THESE REQUIREMENTS.*
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MIDTERM AND FINAL

Here are some examples of exam questions. These may help you to organize your readings, your notes, and your thoughts about the course. Note that the exam questions for your class may differ substantially.

1. How do you know what you know? Describe and discuss various ways of knowing? How does social research compare to the other ways of knowing?
2. How is social research relevant to YOUR life? Why might learning social research skills be useful to you? Give many examples of the ways in which social research skills may be useful to your classmates.
3. Describe and give examples of three errors in personal human inquiry.
4. Describe the scientific method (i.e., Developing the problem, literature review, . . .). Be specific about the steps involved and be specific in characterizing the nature of the process.
5. What does it mean to make visible what is invisible?
6. What are the ethical constraints on social research? Be specific, thorough, and detailed in your response. Give one example of a study in which the ASA code of ethics was violated.
7. What is the relationship between theory and research? Show how theory and research interact with one another by describing the process by which one might attempt to understand academic achievement.
8. Describe and discuss the four most interesting research questions presented by your classmates. Why might the results of these projects be useful—reduce human suffering?
9. What are paradigms? Give specific examples of paradigms and discuss their relevance to social life and social research.
10. Discuss the basic criteria for making claims of causality. Offer an example of two variables which are related to each other, but are not causally associated. Explain which criteria are not met in this example and the possible consequences of making erroneous claims of causality.
11. What are units of analysis? Why are they important? Give at least two examples of four different kinds of units of analysis?
12. What is conceptualization, and why is this process important? Delineate dimensions of a concept, which we have not discussed in class and are not developed in the text.
13. What is reliability? Why is it an important consideration in research? How can you test for it?
14. What is validity? Why is it an important consideration in research? How can you test for it?
15. Describe and discuss the literature reviews presented by three of your classmates. Why were these literature reviews interesting to you? How will the projects of these students be improved by having reviewed the literature?

16. Discuss guidelines for writing questions; be specific and thorough. Compare open and
closed-ended questions. Under what circumstances would you be likely to use each kind of question? What level of measurement is preferred and why?

17. You are in charge of training someone in questionnaire construction. What issues would you want to be sure to present and why?

18. Discuss scales and indexes. In particular, describe how specific variables could be measured using a simple index, a Likert scale, a Bogardus Social Distance scale, and a Semantic Differential. Use variables not discussed in class or the text.

19. Describe and discuss the questionnaires presented by three of your classmates. How are the primary variables in each project being measured? Are these measures likely to be valid and reliable?

20. What is probability sampling? Discuss the problems which occur when probability sampling is not used.

21. Describe how and when you might use a simple random sample, a systematic random sample, a stratified sample, a multistage cluster sample, and a disproportionate sample.

22. What is non-probability sampling? Demonstrate how and why this sampling technique might be employed in a specific example not discussed in class or in your text.

23. What are the strengths and weaknesses of survey research? Compare interview, telephone and mail surveys.

24. Describe in detail the process of doing a mail survey, from beginning to end. Be sure to include a discussion of the choice of method, sampling, and data collection.

25. What is coding and why is it important in social research? What is data cleaning and why is it important in social research?

26. Give examples of how frequencies, percentages, means, modes, medians, cross tabulations, correlations, and graphs can be used to answer specific research questions.

27. Describe and discuss the methods section presented by three of your classmates.

28. What is evaluation research? How does it compare to basic and applied research? What problems/questions lend themselves to evaluation research? What methods may you use when doing evaluation research?

29. Give specific examples of research questions which could be addressed with each of the following kinds of evaluation research: needs assessment, program monitoring, program impact, efficiency analysis, and utilization research.

30. When would you use experimental research? What are the strengths and weaknesses of experimental research? What is the role of independent and dependent variables, pre- and post-tests, and experimental and control groups in experimental research?

31. What kinds of problems are avoided by using experimental and control groups in experimental research? Offer real examples to make your points.

32. Describe content analysis. When would you use content analysis? What kinds of measures are possible? What are the advantages and disadvantages of content analysis?

33. Discuss the analysis of existing statistics. What are the benefits and drawbacks to this type of research? Use real research examples to make your points.
34. Review the major points of four research projects presented by your classmates (two from each presentation day). The projects you discuss should be the ones which you found most interesting. How could each of these four projects have been improved?

**Web Resources**

www.thomsonedu.com
www.socialresearchmethods.net/
http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/