

**CRIJ 3378 7B**  
**Introduction to Methods of Research (Online)**  
**Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology**  
**Fall 2017**

Professor: Dr. Wyatt Brown, Ph.D.  
Office: C204 Criminal Justice Building  
E-mail: wbrown@shsu.edu  
Class Hours: Online  
Classroom: Online  
Office Hours: By appointment

**Textbook**

Bachman, R. and Schutt, R. K. (2017). *The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice* 6<sup>th</sup> Eds. Los Angeles: Sage Publications. ISBN-13: 9781506306810

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the scientific approach to understanding the social world, the relationships between theory and research, research design, and data collection. The course will focus on research aimed at understanding crime and the behavior of the criminal justice system.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the semester, students will:

- Understand the social scientific perspective and the relationship between research and theory in criminal justice.
- Understand fundamental concepts in social science research, including causation, reliability, validity, and sampling theory and practice.
- Understand the basic elements of measurement, research design, the primary methods of data collection, and descriptive data analysis.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

Homework Assignments	20% of final grade
Exams	30% of final grade
Writing Assignments	50% of final grade
1) Problem Statement & Research Question	= 5%
2) Developing Research Hypothesis	= 10%
3) Methodology	= 15%
4) Final Research Paper	= 20%

Homework assignments are given throughout the semester and will compose 20% of the final course grade. Each chapter will have an online homework assignment posted in Blackboard. Three exams will count toward 30% of the final course grade. Exams are not cumulative. Homework, exam, and writing assignment due date are listed below. 50% of your final grade will be based on the writing assignments.

**There are NO extra credit opportunities in this class.**

## **Assignment #1- Problem Statement and Research Question**

Instructions: The problem statement should be about 1-2 pages double-spaced, typewritten paragraphs and uploaded in a Word document. Use one-inch margins and 12 point Times New Roman type.

Identify a problem in the field of criminal justice that you are interested in studying (i.e., you would like to conduct actual research on): 1) Define the problem; 2) explain why this topic should be researched; 3) develop a research question that could be used to study this problem. Be sure to explain the purpose of your research question (e.g., describe, explore, explain, evaluate); and 4) evaluate the degree to which your research question is feasible and socially/scientifically relevant for research.

## **Assignment #2- Developing Research Hypothesis**

Instructions: Assignment #2 should be about 1-2 pages double-spaced, typewritten pages and uploaded in a Word document. Use one-inch margins and 12 point Times New Roman type.

Write a hypothesis statement for your research question (that you presented in Assignment 1). Be sure to identify the independent and dependent variables in your hypothesis. What is the expected direction of the relationship? How will you conceptualize and operationalize your variables of interest? What are the levels of measurement for the main variables included in your (hypothetical) research study? Discuss some potential measurement issues with regards to your variables of interest.

## **Assignment #3- Methodology**

Instructions: The methodology section should be about 3-4 double-spaced, typewritten pages (not counting the cover sheet or reference section) and uploaded in a Word document. Use one-inch margins; 12 point Times New Roman type, and APA format for in-text citations. The paper should have a cover sheet with your name and the title of the paper. Be certain to *number the pages* in the paper.

Now that you've selected a topic and developed your hypothesis (and started to work on your literature review), it's now time to develop your (hypothetical) methodology (i.e., you will not actually conduct this research study in real life, this is simply an opportunity for you to develop a research proposal using all the tools you've learned in class). As you know, there are a lot of things to consider at this stage of the research process:

- What is your preferred sample size and why
- Identify the sampling frame
- Explain how your subjects will be selected (probability vs. non-probability sampling technique). Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of selecting your sample this way.
- Discuss the data collection strategy (e.g., interview, phone, email, face-to-face, etc.) and the advantages and disadvantages associated with the strategy you have selected.
- Identify any threats to internal and external validity associated with your research design.
- Discuss any ethical considerations that may impact your study and how you plan to overcome these potential problems.

## Research Paper

Instructions: The paper must be 10-12 double-spaced, typewritten pages (not counting cover sheet or references) and uploaded in a Word document. Use *one-inch* margins; 12 point Times New Roman type is preferred. The paper should have a cover sheet with your name and the title of the paper. Be certain to *number the pages* in the paper.

Using the feedback you've received all semester on your previous writing assignments, it is now time to put it all together and add a literature review to develop your research paper.

If you fail to submit your research proposal paper by the deadline, it is considered late. You will be docked a letter grade for each day the research proposal paper is overdue (including weekends). As such, please be sure to submit your research proposal paper on time.

## Example Outline for Research Paper:

### **I. INTRODUCTION (about 1/2 page)**

### **II. STATEMENT OF THE STUDY TOPIC (1 page)**

State the topic that you plan to study.

Explain why it is important to study this topic.

State your study hypothesis.

Explain how your study will contribute to the existing literature in this area.

### **III. LITERATURE REVIEW (4-5 pages)**

Provide a review of the literature in this area.

- What studies have been conducted on this topic in the past?
- What were the findings of these studies?
- How were these studies conducted?
- Identify any methodological problems with past research that your study will overcome
- What is the main gap in the research and how will your study fill that gap.

### **IV. METHODS (3-4 pages)**

- Sample size
- Level of measurement
- Identify the sampling frame
- Explain how your data will be collected. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of collecting the data this way.
- Identify independent and dependent variables and how these variables will be operationalized.
- Discuss the research design and the advantages and disadvantages associated with the design you have selected. Identify any threats to internal and external validity associated with your research design.
- Discuss any ethical considerations that may impact your study and how you plan to overcome these potential problems.

### **V. CONCLUSION (about 1/2 page)**

### **VI. REFERENCE SECTION**

A minimum of 10 academic resources is required (APA style).

## **General Tips on Paper Writing**

### **Formatting**

1. Include a title page with the paper title, your name, the class title, and the date. This title page does not count toward the page requirement.
2. Use black ink, double spaced lines, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1" top and bottom, left and right margins, on white letter-size paper (8.5" x 11") paper with portrait orientation.
3. Include page numbers on the bottom center of the page. The first page of the text should be page 1.
4. As a matter in principle, a paragraph should be inserted when you have a shift of one primary idea to another. Generally, paragraphs contain three to six sentences; they take up about one-third to, at most, one half of a page.

### **Grammar / Tone**

5. Do not write in the first person. Do not write "I think" or "I conclude" or "My opinion is" etc. The paper should be impersonal. Similarly, never write "Our next move must be" or "We must" to refer to something that must be done in the world or by a government (in particular, do not refer to the U.S. government or police departments as "we").
6. Do not write "you" either to make something impersonal or as if you are writing a letter to the professor. For example, do not write "If you understand this theory, you can prevent crime."
7. Do not use slang unless you are directly quoting another source.
8. Do not use contractions such as "aren't" and "don't" – spell them out (i.e. are not, do not).
9. Research papers should have a formal tone like a journal article rather than a chatty tone like a newspaper or an informal letter.
10. Be sure to write whole sentences rather than fragments of sentences.
11. Make sure that your grammar and syntax are correct.
12. Try to improve your writing style. For help with grammar, see *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White.

### **Content / Substance**

13. Quality (rather than quantity) is the key to getting a good grade. A quality research paper makes sound arguments that are supported by research findings.
14. Always start with a detailed outline before you begin writing your paper. This outline is your "roadmap" and should break the paper down into substantive sections to keep you "on track" as you write. Continually refer back to this outline to be sure all of the substantive issues have been covered in the paper in a coherent, logical manner.
15. The goal of a research paper is to integrate research findings (or in some cases entire bodies of literature) in a unique and thoughtful manner. With this in mind, be sure that you have at least one thesis statement, or central argument that the paper is structured around. Some research papers will have several propositions or theses, but all research papers must have at least one.
16. It is not appropriate to simply offer opinions or assertions unsupported by research. Express arguments based on logic, or conclusions based upon evidence, with references as appropriate.
17. In research papers, use subheadings to differentiate sections of your paper. These subheadings should be titled according to the content of the material included in that section. Sections of the paper should be differentiated based on substantive changes in the content / arguments of the paper. Use scholarly journal articles as a guide to writing in this format.
18. A research paper should begin with an introduction, sometimes titled "Introduction" in longer papers. It is short and gives an overview of the essay.

19. A research paper typically finishes with a conclusion section, often titled “Conclusion,” which often speculates on policy implications and suggests areas for future research. This section provides the finishing touch on your research paper and is your last opportunity to make an impression on the reader.

### **Citations / Referencing**

20. Include in-text citations when paraphrasing or using a direct quote from another author. Generally, the author’s name and year of publication are required when paraphrasing another author’s work. When using a direct quote, include the author’s name, year of publication, and page number where the quote can be found. Failure to include appropriate citations is plagiarism. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Edition, by American Psychological Association. ISBN: 1-55798-791-2

21. You cannot cite in your article anything that you have not actually read yourself. Do not cite works that the authors you read have cited—unless, again, you have gone to the library and read the works yourself.

22. In general, quotations are fine to use. However, they should be used sparingly. Do not write a paper in which you have one sentence and four lines of a quotation; and then another sentence followed by four lines of a quotation; and so on and so on.

### **Editing**

23. Before submitting your research paper, read it through, and pretend that you are somebody else - read it through their eyes. Then, clarify those sentences that made sense to you earlier but which may be less clear in meaning to someone else.

24. Use a spellchecker.

25. Have someone else read through your essay to make comments on both substance and presentation/grammar. Then read through your essay again.

## **Class and Attendance Policies**

It’s important to understand that this is not an entirely self-paced class. There are important deadlines and students are expected to make routine progress. It will very likely be more difficult to learn the material in this class if you devoted only a single day to the class and tried to cram a week’s worth of material into a single day. Please make a strong attempt to work on the class material and to log into the class throughout the week. You’ll probably learn the material more effectively and may have a more enjoyable experience with the class.

Regular and ongoing participation in this course is *required*. You are expected to check the course throughout the week. Among other things, this means that exams must be completed during the scheduled time and that assignments must be completed within the specified time. Makeup exams and quizzes will NOT be given unless the student notifies the professor *prior* to the absence. Assignments will not be accepted after the due date unless the student notifies the professor *prior* to the absence. Rare situations arise in which it is impossible to notify the instructor in advance. If this occurs the student must provide the instructor with a typed description of the reason for the absence. This must be provided to the professor within five school days of the absence. Verbal excuses will not be accepted. Furthermore, if a student wishes to dispute a grade on any assignment or exam, the student must provide the instructor with a typed description of the dispute within five school days of the date on which the assignment was returned to the class.

Attendance is required and critical to your performance in this class. Class attendance

requirements will be followed in accordance with Academic Policy Statement 800401

<http://shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/aps/aps-students.html>

In all other matters, such as course additions and withdrawals, assignment of “incomplete” grades, Student Code of Conduct, including Academic Honesty, Disabled Student Policy and use of telephones and text messages in academic classrooms and facilities, the policies of Sam Houston State University will be followed.

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/aps/aps-students.html>

**DISCLAIMER: The class schedule in this syllabus is subject to change. Announcements of any changes to the schedule will be made via email and/or posted in Blackboard. These announcements are considered proper notice of change.**

## TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK	TOPICS	READ	ASSIGNMENTS DUE	DUE DATE
10/18/17- 10/22/17	Science, Society, and Criminological Research; The Process and Problems of Criminological Research	Chapter 1 & 2	Homework 1 & 2	11:59pm on Sunday, October 22nd
10/23/17- 10/29/17	Research Ethics; Conceptualization and Measurement	Chapter 3 & 4	Homework 3 & 4; Problem Statement/Research Question (5%)	11:59pm on Sunday, October 29th
10/30/17- 11/05/17	<b>Exam 1</b> Covers Chapters 1-4; Sampling; Causation and Research Designs	Chapters 5 & 6	Exam 1 (10%); Homework 5 & 6	11:59pm on Sunday, November 5th
11/06/17- 11/12/17	Experimental Designs; Survey Research	Chapters 7 & 8	Homework 7 & 8; Research Hypothesis (10%)	11:59pm on Sunday, November 12th
11/13/17- 11/19/17	<b>Exam 2</b> Covers Chapters 5-8; Qualitative Methods; Analyzing Content	Chapters 9 & 10	Exam 2 (10%); Homework 9 & 10; Methodology (15%)	11:59pm on Sunday, November 19th
11/20/17- 11/26/17	Work on Research Paper		Happy Thanksgiving!	
11/27/17- 12/03/17	Evaluation Research; Reporting Research Results	Chapters 11 & 15	Homework 11 & 12; Research Paper (20%)	11:59pm on Sunday, December 3rd
12/04/17- 12/07/17	<b>Exam 3</b> Covers Chapters 9, 10, 11, 15		Exam 3 (10%)	11:59pm on <b>Thursday</b> , December 7th