CRIJ3361.09

Introduction to Methods of Research

Spring, 2018

Professor:	Dr. Steven Cuvelier	**Class:**	CJC A209, T-Th 2:00-3:20
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Textbook: Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology, 8th Edition, Michael G. Maxfield; Earl R. Babbie, ISBN-13: 978-1-337-09182-4

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introductory course designed to familiarize students with methods and techniques of social research for theory and problem solving in criminal justice and criminology. Beside attending lectures, students will participate in online discussions that will challenge their knowledge and application of subject matter while interacting with the class members as a learning community.

This class will make extensive use of Blackboard to facilitate learning and communication. Lecture materials and links to resources will be posted on the class site. You are expected to take personal initiative in self-assessing your understanding of course material by taking learning checks that are available on the class site. In addition, discussion assignments will be given across the semester that will require you to read and post material to the discussion board.

There will be a learning check with each assigned chapter and three midterm exams. The learning checks and exams consist of items drawn at random from a common test bank. The learning checks can be taken multiple times prior to the midterm exam. The maximum score on each learning check will be credited toward your point total for the course.

Assigned discussions remain open all semester and will be graded periodically. All discussion scores will be updated as you make additional contributions.

Course Policies

GRADING: Grades will be assigned on a percentage basis on the total of 500 points. Letter grades will be assigned on a 90/80/70 percent scale.

Learning Checks (14 x 10 pts)	120
Exams (3 x 60 pts)	180
Discussions (10 x 20 pts) (drop lowest 2)	200

Learning checks are provided to prepare you to take the exams and will be accessed on Blackboard. Each learning check will consist of 20 questions randomly drawn from a given chapter. You may re-take the learning checks as many times as you wish is get a different set of questions. Your highest learning check score for each

chapter (with your lowest 2 scores dropped) will be counted toward your grade. Learning checks close when the exam is administered.

Exams will be multiple choice on scantron forms. There will be three exams, each worth 60 points.

Discussions involve review of a video, reflection on certain questions or issues raised by the video and then responding to the reflections posted by others. There is a rubric that will be used to grade your performance. Please consult the Blackboard site for the rubric details.

Make-up exams: Will be administered during the final exam period.

Assignment Schedule

Date	Reading	Online Discussion
Jan		
18	Chapter 1	Course Introduction Crime, Criminal Justice, and Scientific Inquiry
23-25	Chapter 2	Foundations of Criminal Justice Research
30-1	Chapter 3	Ethics and Criminal Justice Research
Feb		
1		**Exam 1 – Chapters 1-3**
6-8	Chapter 4	General Issues in Research Design
13-15	Chapter 5	Concepts, Operationalization, and Measurement
20-22	Chapter 6	Measuring Crime
27-1	Chapter 7	Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs
March		
6		**Exam2 – Chapters 4-7**
11-17		**Spring Break**
20-22	Chapter 8	Sampling
27-29	Chapter 9	Qualitative Interviewing
April		
3-5	Chapter10	Qualitative Interviewing
10-12	Chapter 11	Field Observation
17-19	Chapter 12	Agency Records, Content Analysis, and Secondary Data
24-26	Chapter 13	Evaluation Research and Problem Analysis
May		
1-3	Chapter 14	Interpreting Data
8	**Final Exam**	**3:30 – 5:30**

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Chapter 1
1. Understand why knowledge of research methods is valuable to criminal justice professionals. 2. Describe the different ways we know things. 3. Distinguish inquiry as a natural human activity from inquiry through systematic empirical research. 4. Recognize that much of our knowledge is based on agreement rather than on direct experience. 5. Explain how tradition and authority are important sources of knowledge. 6. Understand the role of experience and systematic observation in criminal justice research. 7. Recognize that social science guards against, but does not prevent, political beliefs from affecting research findings. 8. Distinguish the different purposes of research. 9. Understand how to design a research project. 10. Be able to conduct a review of research literature. 11. Describe how to write a research proposal.
Chapter 2
1. Summarize three fundamental features of social science: theory, data collection, and data analysis. 2. Describe why social scientists are interested in explaining aggregates, not individuals. 3. Understand that social scientists are primarily interested in discovering relationships that connect variables. 4. Understand the difference between idiosyncratic and nomothetic explanations. 5. Distinguish between inductive and deductive forms of reasoning. 6. Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. 7. Recognize that intersubjective agreement, not objectivity, is a fundamental norm of science. 8. Describe the traditional image of social science theory. 9. Understand how scientific inquiry alternates between induction and deduction. 10. Describe how observations contribute to theory development in grounded theory. 11. Discuss how criminological theories draw on other social sciences, and sometimes on the natural sciences. 12. Describe how theory and public policy can be closely linked
Chapter 3
1. Recognize how criminal justice research is shaped by ethical considerations. 2. Understand that what is ethically “right” and “wrong” in research is ultimately a matter of what people agree is right and wrong. 3. Understand why researchers may not recognize whether their own work adequately addresses ethical issues. 4. Summarize how ethical questions usually involve weighing the possible benefits of research against the potential harm to research subjects. 5. Understand the norm of voluntary participation and how it can conflict with generalizability. 6. Describe examples of the special ethical questions sometimes raised by criminal justice research. 7. Discuss how informed consent addresses many ethical questions. 8. Distinguish anonymity and confidentiality as ways to protect the privacy of research subjects. 9. Summarize ethical principles presented in the *Belmont Report*. 10. Describe why prisoners and juveniles require special ethical considerations. 11. Understand the role of institutional review boards (IRBs) in protecting human subjects.

Chapter 4
1. Recognize how explanatory scientific research centers on the notion of cause and effect, and why this is a probabilistic model of causation. 2. Describe the three basic requirements for establishing a causal relationship in science, together with what is a necessary cause and a sufficient cause. 3. Understand the role of validity and threats to validity of causal inference. 4. Summarize the four classes of validity threats, and how they correspond to questions about cause and effect. 5. Discuss how a scientific realist approach bridges idiographic and nomothetic approaches to causation. 6. Describe different units of analysis in criminal justice research. 7. Explain how the ecological fallacy relates to units of analysis. 8. Understand the time dimension, together with the differences between cross-sectional and longitudinal research. 9. Describe how retrospective studies may approximate longitudinal studies.
Chapter 5
1. and experiences that have something in common. 2. Explain how concepts are mental images that do not exist in the real word. 3. Describe how operationalization specifies concrete empirical procedures for measuring variables. 4. Recognize that operationalization begins with study design but continues through the duration of research. 5. Explain why measurement categories must be mutually exclusive and exhaustive. 6. Distinguish different levels of measurement and the properties of different levels. 7. Understand precision, reliability, and validity as dimensions of measurement quality. 8. Summarize how creating specific, reliable measures may not reflect the complexity of the concepts we seek to study. 9. Understand how multiple measures of a concept can improve reliability and validity. 10. Describe composite measures and explain their advantages.
Chapter 6
1. Recognize how different approaches to measuring crime illustrate general principles of conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement. 2. Understand what crimes are included in different measures. 3. Describe different measures of crime and how they are based on different units of analysis. 4. Understand different purposes for collecting crime data. 5. Explain different measures based on crimes known to police. 6. Describe the main features of victim surveys. 7. Distinguish the main differences between crimes known to police and crimes measured through different types of surveys. 8. Understand why self-report measures are used, and list different types of crimes for which they are appropriate. 9. Summarize the major series of self-reported measures of drug use. 10. Understand how surveillance measures are obtained and used. 11. Explain how different measures of crime satisfy criteria for measurement quality. 12. Recognize that we have different measures of crime because each measure is imperfect.

Chapter 7
10. Recognize that experiments are well suited for the controlled testing of causal processes and for some evaluation studies. 11. Describe how the classical experiment tests the effect of an experimental stimulus on some dependent variable through the pretesting and posttesting of experimental and control groups. 12. Understand that a group of experimental subjects need not be representative of some larger population but that experimental and control groups must be similar to each other. 13. Describe how random assignment is the best way to achieve comparability in the experimental and control groups. 14. Describe how the classical experiment with random assignment of subjects guards against most of the threats to internal invalidity. 15. Understand that the controlled conditions under which experiments take place may restrict our ability to generalize results to real-world constructs or to other settings. 16. Recognize how the classical experiment may be modified by changing the number of experimental and control groups, the number and types of experimental stimuli, and the number of pretest or posttest measurements. 17. Know the reasons that quasi-experiments are conducted when it is not possible or desirable to use an experimental design, and be able to describe different categories of quasi-experiments. 18. Understand the differences between case-oriented and variable-oriented research. 19. Be able to describe how experiments and quasi-experiments can be customized by using design building blocks to suit particular research purposes.
Chapter 8
20. Understand how the logic of probability sampling makes it possible to represent large populations with small subsets of those populations. 21. Recognize that the chief criterion of a sample's quality is the degree to which it is representative of the population from which it was selected. 22. Summarize the chief principle of probability sampling: every member of the population has a known, nonzero probability of being selected into the sample. 23. Describe how probability sampling methods make it possible to select samples that will be quite representative. 24. Understand how our ability to estimate population parameters with sample statistics is rooted in the sampling distribution and probability theory. 25. Recognize how simple random sampling is logically the most fundamental technique in probability sampling. 26. **Distinguish the variety of probability sampling designs that can be used and combined to suit different populations and research purposes: systematic sampling, stratified sampling (proportionate and disproportionate), and multistage cluster sampling.** 27. **Understand the basic features of the National Crime Victimization Survey and the British Crime Survey, two national crime surveys based on multistage cluster samples.** 28. **Recognize how nonprobability sampling methods are less statistically representative than probability sampling methods, and be able to offer appropriate examples for nonprobability sampling applications.** 29. **Distinguish the variety of nonprobability sampling types, including purposive sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling. Describe examples of each.**

Chapter 9
1. Understand that survey research involves the administration of questionnaires in a systematic way to a sample of respondents selected from some population. 2. Describe how survey research is especially appropriate for descriptive or exploratory studies of large populations. 3. Describe examples of surveys as the method of choice for obtaining victimization and self-reported offending data. 4. Summarize differences between open-ended or closed-ended questions, and offer examples of the advantages and disadvantages of each. 5. Recognize how bias in questionnaire items encourages respondents to answer in a particular way or to support a particular point of view. 6. Describe different ways to administer questionnaires, and offer examples of how they can be varied. 7. Recognize why it is important for interviewers to be neutral in face-to-face surveys. 8. Provide examples of the advantages and disadvantages of each method of survey administration. 9. Discuss how survey data can be somewhat artificial and potentially superficial. 10. Understand how specialized interviews with a small number of people and focus groups are different from surveys as examples of collecting data by asking questions.
Chapter 10
1. Recognize when to use qualitative interviewing as a data-gathering tool. 2. Understand that there are multiple meanings or constructions about reality. 3. Know the advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured versus unstructured interviews. 4. Understand the use of focus groups or interviewing a group of people simultaneously. 5. Learn how to create interview questions so that data can effectively be gathered. 6. Be able to describe how to approach and interact with participants. 7. Learn how to record or log data. 8. Understand ways to analyze and interpret qualitative data. 9. Recognize how to enhance the quality of information gathered.
Chapter 11
1. Be able to describe field research as a data collection method that involves the direct observation of phenomena in their natural settings. 2. Recognize that field observation is usually the preferred data collection method for obtaining information about physical or social settings, behavior, and events. 3. Understand that field research in criminal justice may produce either qualitative or quantitative data. 4. Provide examples of how observations made through field research can be integrated with data collected through interviews and from other sources. 5. Understand why field researchers may or may not identify themselves as researchers to the people they are observing. 6. Recognize what sampling techniques are best suited for field research, and when they can be used. 7. Recognize the alternatives for recording field observations, ranging from video, audio, and other equipment to unstructured field notes. 8. Understand how field notes are taken, and be able to describe different ways to combine structure and flexibility in field notes. 9. Summarize how field research measures up on validity and reliability.

Chapter 12
1. Recognize that public organizations produce statistics and data that are often useful for criminal justice researchers. 2. Provide examples of nonpublic agency records that can serve as data for criminal justice research. 3. Understand why the units of analysis represented by agency data may be confusing for researchers. 4. Explain why researchers must be attentive to reliability and validity problems that might stem from agency records. 5. Summarize why “follow the paper trail” and “expect the expected” are useful maxims to follow when using agency records in research. 6. Summarize content analysis as a research method appropriate for studying communications. 7. Describe examples of coding to transform raw data into a standardized, quantitative form. 8. Summarize how secondary analysis refers to the analysis of data collected by another researcher for some other purpose. 9. Be able to access archives of criminal justice data that are maintained by the ICPSR and the NACJD. 10. Understand how the advantages and disadvantages of secondary data are similar to those for agency records.
Chapter13
1. Summarize evaluation research and problem analysis as examples of applied research in criminal justice. 2. Describe how different types of evaluation activities correspond to different stages in the policy process. 3. Explain the role of an evaluability assessment. 4. Understand why a careful formulation of the problem, relevant measurements, and criteria of success or failure are essential in evaluation research. 5. Describe the parallels between evaluation research designs and other designs. 6. Explain the advantages, requirements, and limits of randomized field experiments. 7. Summarize the importance of process evaluations conducted independently or in connection with an impact assessment. 8. Describe the role of problem analysis as a planning technique that draws on the same social science research methods used in program evaluation. 9. Explain how the scientific realist approach focuses on mechanisms in context, rather than generalizable causal processes. 10. Present an example of how criminal justice agencies are increasingly using problem-analysis tools, crime mapping, and other space-based procedures. 11. **Explain how evaluation research entails special logistical, ethical, and political problems.**

Chapter 14
1. Understand that descriptive statistics are used to summarize data under study. 2. Describe a frequency distribution in terms of cases, attributes, and variables. 3. Recognize that measures of central tendency summarize data, but they do not convey the detail of the original data. 4. Understand that measures of dispersion give a summary indication of the distribution of cases around an average value. 5. Provide examples of rates as descriptive statistics that standardize some measure for comparative purposes. 6. Describe how bivariate analysis and subgroup comparisons examine relationships between two variables. 7. Compute and interpret percentages in contingency tables. 8. Understand that multivariate analysis examines the relationships among several variables. 9. Explain the logic underlying the proportionate reduction of error (PRE) model. 10. Describe the use of lambda (λ) and gamma (γ), and Pearson's product-moment correlation (*r*) as PRE-based measures of association for nominal, ordinal, and interval/ration variables, respectively. 11. Summarize how regression equations and regression lines are used in data analysis. 12. Understand how inferential statistics are used to estimate the generalizability of findings arrived at in the analysis of a sample to a larger population. 13. Describe the meaning of confidence intervals and confidence levels in inferential statistics. 14. Explain what tests of statistical significance indicate, and how to interpret them. 15. Recognize the difference between statistical significance and substantive significance. 16. Understand that tests of statistical significance make assumptions about data and methods that are rarely satisfied completely in social science research

University Policies and Services

Students should refer to the following sites for updated language on the following policies and services.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty

DISABLED STUDENT POLICY:

http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/811006.html

SERVICES FOR DISABLED STUDENTS:

http://www.shsu.edu/~counsel/sswd.html

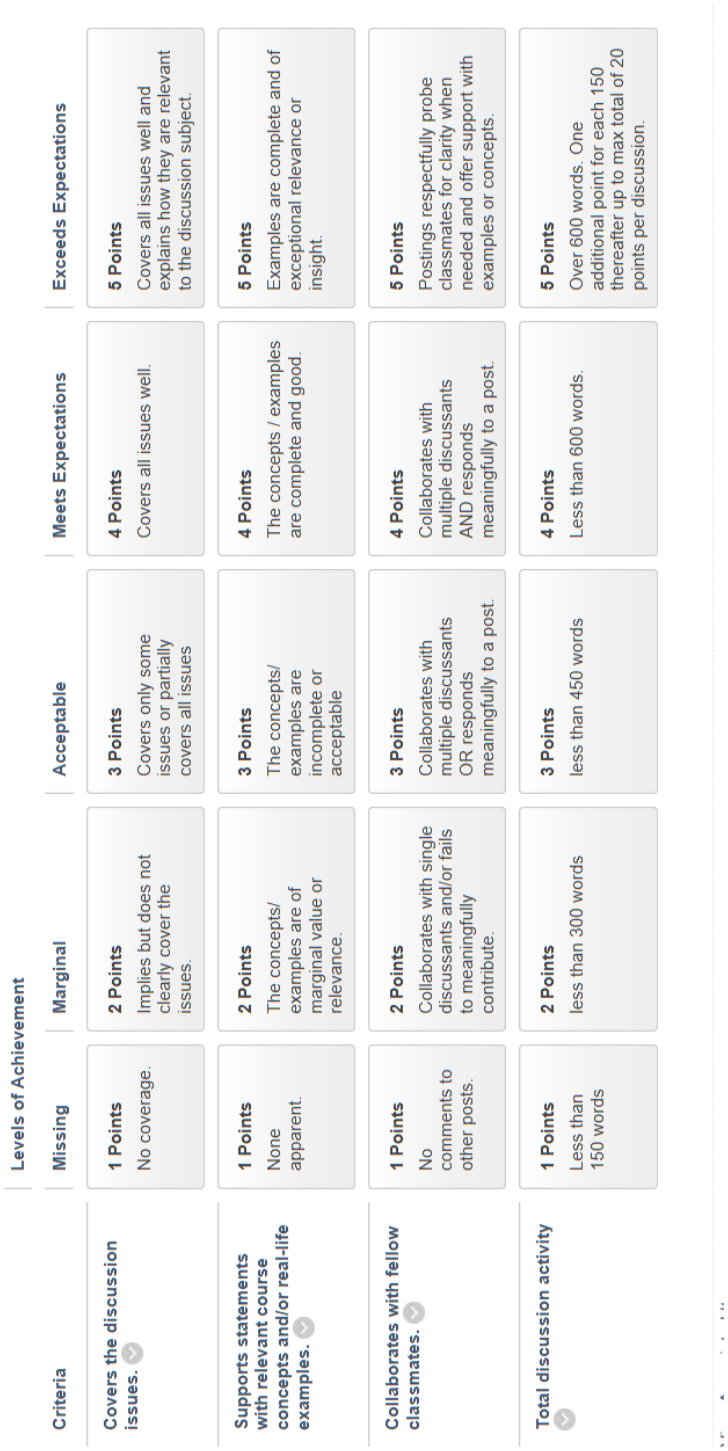
STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAY POLICY:

http://www.shsu.edu/catalog/scholasticrequirements.html#holyday

USE OF TELEPHONES AND TEXT MESSAGERS IN ACADEMIC CLASSROOMS AND FACILITIES:

http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/documents/100728.pdf

DISCUSSION FORUM RUBRIC



Criteria	Levels of Achievement				
	Missing	Marginal	Acceptable	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Covers the discussion issues.	**1 Points** No coverage.	**2 Points** Implies but does not clearly cover the issues.	**3 Points** Covers only some issues or partially covers all issues	**4 Points** Covers all issues well.	**5 Points** Covers all issues well and explains how they are relevant to the discussion subject.
Supports statements with relevant course concepts and/or real-life examples.	**1 Points** None apparent.	**2 Points** The concepts/ examples are of marginal value or relevance.	**3 Points** The concepts/ examples are incomplete or acceptable	**4 Points** The concepts / examples are complete and good.	**5 Points** Examples are complete and of exceptional relevance or insight.
Collaborates with fellow classmates.	**1 Points** No comments to other posts.	**2 Points** Collaborates with single discussants and/or fails to meaningfully contribute.	**3 Points** Collaborates with multiple discussants OR responds meaningfully to a post.	**4 Points** Collaborates with multiple discussants AND responds meaningfully to a post.	**5 Points** Postings respectfully probe classmates for clarity when needed and offer support with examples or concepts.
Total discussion activity	**1 Points** Less than 150 words	**2 Points** less than 300 words	**3 Points** less than 450 words	**4 Points** Less than 600 words.	**5 Points** Over 600 words. One additional point for each 150 thereafter up to max total of 20 points per discussion.

The rubric shown on the left will be used to grade your discussion posts. You will be able to see this rubric on each of your discussions. Most questions you may have on your discussion points total should be explained by your rubric score.

You can add postings after a discussion has been graded, so use that opportunity to address any short-falls identified in the rubric.