

CJ 300-01 Research Methods in Criminal Justice *Winter 2016*

Lecture: Monday, Wednesday 3:00 - 4:15 pm

Location: DeVos 205D

Text: W. Lawrence Neuman, (2009), Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (7th Edition), Allyn and Bacon.

Note: The text for this course should be considered optional.

Instructor: Dr. Christopher A. Kierkus

Office: DeVos Center, Room 239C.

Telephone: 331-7132 (Office)

E-Mail: kierkusc@gvsu.edu

Office Hours: 9:50 – 11:30 am Wednesday, Friday (Allendale, LOH 2nd or 3rd floor lounge).
Monday 4:15 – 6:00pm (DeVos 239C).

Evaluation: Two mid-term exams (20% each)
CITI human subjects certification (10%)
In-class exercises (15%)
Research assignment (35% total)

Final Exam: None (Final Part of Research Assignment is due by **2:00 pm on Thursday, April 28th**.)

Introduction

The purpose of this course is to provide you with an overview of the theories underlying quantitative and (to a lesser extent) qualitative research methods. It will also serve as a practical introduction to the research process. By the end of this course, you will be expected to understand what social research is (and is not). You should also be able apply different research methods to problems presented by your instructor.

More formally, upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the scientific method.
2. Examine and apply basic research designs and procedures used in the social sciences, with special attention to causality, validity and reliability.
3. Identify ethical concerns related to quantitative research and implement necessary subject protections, including consent forms and other IRB requirements.
4. Evidence written skills as outlined in course requirements.

I will give you the opportunity to plan, design, and implement a research project. By doing so, I hope to make the semester both fun and interesting. However, this approach will be demanding. It will force you to do much more than simply memorize facts and “regurgitate” them on formal exams.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Your performance in the course will be evaluated using two mid-term exams, the completion of a human subjects training course, a series of in-class exercises, and a semester long assignment. The exams will consist of objective questions and will test factual knowledge of key concepts from the course. I will provide you with a study guide for each exam prior to when it is given.

The assignment will require you to create a research proposal / design based on one of the techniques that we will be discussing during the semester (survey research). You will be expected to choose a topic, articulate a research problem, review the pertinent literature, formulate a hypothesis, design a research instrument, distribute your survey (to your classmates), collect and analyze your data, and produce a final report. Because you will actually be implementing your design, **you must choose a crime related research question that is relevant to college students!**

A detailed instruction sheet pertaining to this assignment, along with a break down of the grades for each component, is available on Blackboard. The in-class exercises are designed to teach you the skills needed to prepare the assignment. Grades for these exercises will be assigned on a pass/fail basis (if you're in class the day that we do the exercise, and you participate, you will earn a passing grade).

You will be required to have your topic and proposed research question approved in writing before beginning your literature review and completing your research assignment!

You will also be asked to pass an online human subjects certification course as one of the requirements for this class. The modules may be accessed at the following website:

<http://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp>

When logging on to this website, on Screen 7 select Group 2 (Social and Behavioral Investigators and Key Personnel) for Question 1, **"I have NOT previously completed an approved Basic Course"** for Question 2, "Not at this time" for Question 3, "Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course" for Question 4, and none of the options for Question 5. When you have done so, and have provided me with appropriate documentation, you will earn 10% toward your final grade. If you have already passed the CITI program elsewhere you may simply bring proof of your CITI certification and you will be given credit for this requirement.

Grades for this course will be assigned according to the following grading scheme. The final date for withdrawing from the class without a grade being assigned is March 11, 2016.

Letter	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
%	100	93	89	86	83	79	76	73	69	59
	94	90	87	84	80	77	74	70	60	0

Although this is a junior level (300) class, I realize that for many of you it will be your first exposure to the research process. Therefore, we will spend a substantial amount of time at the beginning of the semester developing the necessary **knowledge** base to do research, and will work together to build **comprehension** of key terminology and research techniques. Once we have mastered these skills, we will begin **applying** what we have learned to a practical research problem. Although some preliminary attempts to **analyze** what we have done, **synthesize** everything we have learned, and **evaluate** the strengths and weaknesses of our decisions, will be made in this class, these will not be the primary goals of this course. Students unfamiliar with the terminology used in this paragraph should consult Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain (provided below):

Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain*

Benjamin Bloom created this taxonomy (organization of categories) to understand the level of abstract thinking required in various educational settings; the taxonomy works from the bottom up. That is, the higher you go on the chart, the more developed the level of critical thinking.)

6. EVALUATION	Students can use previously learned standards/criteria to determine the worth or merit of a complex product.	Compare and discriminate between ideas, Assess value of theories, presentations, Make choices based on reasoned argument, Verify value of evidence, Recognize subjectivity	Assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarize
5. SYNTHESIS	Students can create an original and complex product out of a set of simpler components.	Use old ideas to create new ones, Generalize from given facts, Relate knowledge from several areas, Predict, draw conclusions	Combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, build, solve, perform, establish, predict, produce, modify, plan, formulate, design, invent, compose, formulate, prepare, generalize, rewrite
4. ANALYSIS	Students can take a complex set of material and break it down into its component parts and/or explain why a complex set of relationships is organized as it is or what caused it to be or predict from the present to the future.	Seeing patterns, Organization of parts, Recognition of hidden meanings, Identification of components	Analyze, breakdown, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare and contrast, select, explain, infer, show how, draw a diagram, deduce
3. APPLICATION	Students can apply previously learned material such as concepts, rules or generalizations to newly taught material.	Use information, Use methods, concepts, theories in new situations, Solve problems using required skills or knowledge	Apply, classify, find, choose, compute, sort, generalize, organize, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, solve, examine, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover
2. COMPREHENSION	Students can express previously learned material in their own way.	Understanding information, Grasp meaning, Translate knowledge into new context, Interpret facts, Compare, Contrast, Order, Group, Infer causes, Predict consequences	Summarize, define, put in your own words, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, discuss, extend, summarize, translate, illustrate, restate, demonstrate
1. KNOWLEDGE	Students can recall, reproduce or recognize previously learned information as it was taught to them.	Observation and recall of information, Knowledge of dates, events, places, Knowledge of major ideas Mastery of subject matter	List, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, underline, place in order, reproduce, recognize, recall, name, who, when, where, etc.
LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	GOAL	SUGGESTED ACTION VERBS/QUESTION CUES

Adapted from Bloom, Benjamin S. 1984. *Taxonomy of educational objectives*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, Pearson Education

Tentative Schedule of Topics and Associated Readings

- 1. General Introduction (Week 1).** What is social research? How is it different from “science”? What is the research process?

MLK Day Break (January 18)

- 2. Research and Theory (Week 2).** Theory and ideology. How is theory related to research design?
- 3. Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research (Week 3).** Positivism vs. alternative schools of social science.

Assignment Proposal Due (February 8)

4. **The Research Process (Weeks 4-5).** Selecting a topic. Preparing a literature review. Formulating a hypothesis. Variables and operational definitions.

Mid Term #1 (February 15)

5. **Quantitative Research Design (Weeks 6-7).** The positivist approach to research. Correlation and causality. Measurement issues. Sampling.

**Literature Review Portion of Assignment Due (February 29)
CITI Training Must Be Complete by March 4!**

6. **Survey Research (Weeks 8-9).** Questionnaire construction, open versus closed questions, types of surveys, administration of surveys, the limitations of survey research.

SPRING BREAK (WOO HOO! – March 6 – 13!)

7. **Ethical Issues in Social Research (Week 10).** Human subjects and the role of the IRB.

**Research Design Portion of Assignment Due (March 28)
Mid Term #2 (April 4)**

8. **Analysis of Quantitative data (Weeks 11-12).** Descriptive and inferential statistics. The logic of regression analysis. Interpreting analyses. Writing a research report.

Survey Week! (April 11 - 13)

9. **Experimental Design (Weeks 13-14).** The importance of random assignment. Control/comparison groups. Internal and external validity.
10. **Wrap Up (Week 14).** What have we learned? Review for final exam.

Final Report from Research Assignment Due (April 28)

The preceding schedule describes the major topics that will be covered in the course. If you miss a lecture on a topic, I **strongly** suggest that you obtain notes from a classmate, and review the material with me during my office hours.

I reserve the right to alter this schedule as necessary. In this course, more so than any other, it often becomes necessary to alter the rate of presentation based on student understanding of the material.

Helpful Advice

Attendance of the lectures is not mandatory; **however**, my experience is that students who do not regularly attend lectures do poorly in my courses. **If you expect to get a good grade in this course you should plan to attend all of the lectures.** If you miss a lecture you are **completely** responsible for the consequences of doing so: "I didn't know how to do the assignment because I couldn't make it to class on the day we discussed / worked on it" is **not** an acceptable excuse. If you know that you are going to be absent on a specific day please talk to me **before** the absence so that I can tell you what will be covered that day.

If you miss a graded in-class exercise, quiz or exam, or fail to hand in a part of the assignment on the due date, a **grade of “F”** will be assigned. The **only** excuses that I will except for missed course requirements are ones that are supported by appropriate documentation (ex. a letter from a physician).

All students are expected to behave thoughtfully and courteously while in class and to observe the university policy on academic integrity (see sections 223.00 and 223.01 of the Student Code). If you talk, use your cell phone, or engage in any other disruptive behavior while in class you will be asked to leave. If you plagiarize your assignment, or are caught cheating on a quiz or exam, a **grade of “F”** will be assigned for the **entire course**, I also reserve the right to initiate the formal grievance procedure against you which can result in your expulsion from the university.

If you are having trouble with the course please see me **right away**. The concepts and ideas presented in class build upon one another. Therefore, it is almost impossible to help a student with major problems the day before an exam. Also, if you don't understand something that is taught during a lecture, please raise your hand and ask me to clarify it. Don't think that you will look foolish by asking for clarification. Foolish people are the ones who pretend to understand when they really don't.

I am happy to meet with students during my office hours, and to set appointments to see you at other times. I am also happy to give advice via e-mail. However, please observe basic rules of courtesy when you seek help. These include:

1. Giving me enough time to respond to your inquiry: If you e-mail me a detailed question the night before an assignment is due, one that would require me to write a 10 page response, **do not** expect a reply.
2. Introducing yourself properly in e-mails (and in person during the first few weeks of the class): I reserve the right not to reply to a question such as “Hey, when is the assignment due?” (With no reference to which assignment or which course) from partyDooD@yahoo.com (The address is fictitious, but the example is not ... I trust you get the idea).
3. Making every effort to make my scheduled office hours, and keeping appointments you make outside those hours: If you ask me to make a special trip out the university, and then fail to show up, I will **not** be happy!

If you have a need for disability-related accommodations, please inform me and the Office of Disability Support Services at 200 STU (331-2490). Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if the requests are made in a **timely manner**, with appropriate documentation in accordance with federal, state, and university guidelines.

When preparing your written assignments, I encourage all of you to make use of the **Fred Meijer Writing Center**. The center provides help with research and writing concerns, including paper organization, common writing mistakes, proper APA formatting, proofreading and editing, and other services. It also maintains a web-page: there you can find useful handouts and resources to assist you in your research and writing:

<http://www.gvsu.edu/wc/>

Finally, I encourage you to get to know Ms. Patricia Bravender. She is the criminal justice librarian and she can provide you with individualized research assistance for all of your classes. Her office is in the Steelcase Library on the downtown campus and she can be reached at bravendp@gvsu.edu or 331-7338. Her criminal justice library subject guide (<http://libguides.gvsu.edu/cj>) contains links to all of the criminal justice databases and other specific resources for criminal justice students, including crime statistics.