

Criminal Justice Research Methods – CCJ 6704
Fall Term 2009
Tuesday 6:00 – 8:50 pm

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Course Description

The 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. Accordingly, we will review basic and intermediate concepts of social research. Students will also develop deeper understandings of methodology by applying learned skills to a research project. By the end of the course, students will be able to identify parts of research, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and suggest alternative approaches to gathering knowledge.

Text and Materials

Maxfield, Michael G. and Earl Babbie. (2005 or newer). *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology* (4th or 5th edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Additional readings will be available for download in PDF format on my website.

Optional Software: Those students who do not own SPSS and do not wish to use the version available on the University's local area network (LAN) can purchase the SPSS Grad Pack. It is available at the UCF computer store (\$199).

Requirements

1. Exam #1 – October 6.
2. Exam #2 – November 24.
3. Class involvement. This involves preparing for, attending, and actively participating in class throughout the term (including the day that other groups are presenting their research).
4. You are required to collaborate with a group of other students in this class on a research study. 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, and to prepare a short report (approximately 15 pages) summarizing the relevant literature, describing the methodology, and reporting the results of the study, and discussing their larger meaning. The written report is due to me on the day that your group presents. I will provide a handout that describes the project in more detail.

Grading

Grades will be based on the following weighting of the exams, assignments, and other requirements:

Exam 1	30%
Exam 2	30%
Class Involvement	15%
Research Project	25%*

(* The members of your group will be asked to assess the quantity and quality of your contribution to the project; the average of your group's assessments will count for 5 of the 25% for your research project grade.)

Letter grades will follow this scale:

A	91-100	B-	76-79	F	0-63
A-	88-90	C	67-75		
B	79-87	C-	64-66		

Schedule

Date	Topic/What's Due	Readings*
Aug 25	Introduction	M&B 1, 2
Sept 1	Research Design (we will brainstorm survey topics)	M&B 4
Sept 8	Reviewing the Literature, Operationalization	Longmore et al. M&B 5
Sept 15	Independent Work	
Sept 22	Survey Research	M&B 9
Sept 29	Experimentation (submit your hypotheses and survey questions for me to review no later than noon, Sept 29)	M&B 7
Oct 6	Exam #1 (have your revised survey questions ready for me to review during your exam)	
Oct 13	Field Research, Questionnaire Construction (email a copy of the final version of your questions, exactly as you want them to appear on the questionnaire, to me no later than noon, Oct 13)	M&B 10
Oct 20	Secondary Data, Survey Administration, Data Entry	M&B 11, SPSS Guide I
Oct 27	Sampling	M&B 8
Nov 3	Data Analysis, Presentation Preparation (10 surveys must be completed and all data entered before this day; data due to me no later than noon, November 2)	M&B 13, SPSS Guide II
Nov 10	Evaluation Research & Policy	M&B 12, NIJ Report
Nov 17	Ethics & Responsible Research	M&B 3
Nov 24	Exam #2	
Dec 1	Presentations	
Dec 8	Presentations	

* "M&B" refers to chapters or pages in the assigned text. All other items listed under "readings" are available on my website (in PDF format). Readings for each class period should be completed before class.