

CRJ702: ProSeminar on Research Methods

Spring 2016 Syllabus

Class meets Mondays from 4:00 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. in the CRJ Conference Room (GUA 5126)

Instructor:

Email:

Office Phone:

Office:

Office Hours: Mondays from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
 Tuesdays from 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM
 Wednesdays from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
 Or by appointment

***By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu.*

Course Overview

Introduction to the formulation of research questions covering crime and justice, research designs, data collection, and interpretation and reporting in criminological and justice-system settings. In essence, this course is designed to teach you how to answer criminological questions. We will cover various research designs by focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of each method and what kinds of questions each method can address.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to do the following:

- 1) Recognize why it can be a problem to rely on your personal beliefs about the world, and understand how scientific inquiry can produce better information
- 2) Discuss the different purposes for doing research
- 3) Identify different ways of doing research on people (e.g., surveys, field research, experiments, etc.)
- 4) Be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches (e.g., cross-sectional vs. longitudinal, experimental vs. non-experimental, qualitative vs. quantitative)
- 5) Understand ethical problems that arise when studying the social behavior of people
- 6) Identify different types of variables in a study (e.g., dependent vs. independent), and be able to know whether a causal relationship exists between variables
- 7) Understand the relationship between theories and hypotheses, and be able to formulate a hypothesis
- 8) Understand the importance of appropriate sampling procedures, and be familiar with different sampling techniques (e.g., probability vs. non-probability)
- 9) Articulate issues of reliability and validity as they relate to measurement (e.g., face validity vs. criterion validity, test-retest reliability vs. split-halves reliability)
- 10) Articulate issues of validity as they relate to methods of data collection (e.g., internal validity vs. external validity)
- 11) Understand how to write good survey questions, including when to use different types of responses (e.g., close-ended vs. open-ended questions)
- 12) Summarize and critique a research article

Required Textbooks

Singleton, R.A., and Straits, B.C. (2010). *Approaches to Social Research*. New York: Oxford Press.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Any readings not from your textbook can be found on the WebCampus website.

Lecture #	Date	Topic	Reading(s)	Assignment Due
1	1/25	Introduction Purpose of studying research methods		
2	2/1	Asking a good research question Elements of research design	S/S Chapters 2 and 4	
3	2/8*	Ethical considerations in research	S/S Chapter 3 Cheit (2014)	<u>Assignment 1:</u> <u>Research Topic Ideas</u>
-	2/15	<u>NO CLASS:</u> <u>WASHINGTON BIRTHDAY</u> <u>RECESS</u>		
4	2/22	Conceptualization and measurement	S/S Chapter 5 (pp. 115 – 130) Sampson et al. (1997)	
5	2/29*	Measurement validity and reliability Start sampling	S/S Chapter 5 (pp. 130 – 146) S/S Chapter 6	<u>Assignment</u> <u>2: Introduction Due</u>
6	3/7	Sampling	Burke et al. (2002) Greenwood et al. (2002)	
7	3/14*	Causal Inference and Research Design <u>Midterm handed out</u>	S/S Chapter 7 Weisburd (2003) Sampson (2010)	<u>Assignment</u> <u>3: Sampling</u> <u>Due</u>
-	3/21	<u>Spring Break</u>		
8	3/28*	Field research: Observations and interviewing	S/S Chapter 11 Hopper and Moore (1990)	Midterm Due
9	4/4	Survey research	S/S Chapter 9 and Chapter 10	
10	4/11	Survey research (cont.)	Kazemian et al. (2011) Pickett and Chiricos (2012)	
11	4/18	Secondary data analysis	S/S Chapter 12 Love and Park (2013) Steffensmeier et al. (2013)	
12	4/25*	Experimental and Quasi-experimental research	S/S Chapter 8 Caplan et al. (2011) Ratcliffe et al. (2011)	<u>Assignment</u> <u>4: Research Design</u> <u>and Measurement</u> <u>Due by 5:00 PM on</u> <u>4/27</u>
13	5/2*	Multiple Methods/Evaluation research <u>Final handed out</u>	S/S Chapters 13 and 14 Hawken (2010)	<u>Assignment 5:</u> <u>Complete Proposal Due</u> <u>by 5:00 pm on 5/5</u>
	5/9*	Final Session/Debriefing at 4:00 p.m.	<u>FINAL DUE by 4:00 p.m.</u>	<u>FINAL DUE by 4:00</u> <u>p.m.</u>
	5/17	<u>GRADES DUE TO REGISTRAR</u>		

* indicates that an assignment or exam is due sometime this week

The above is a *TENTATIVE* schedule for lecture topics and exams. *All exams will be given on the dates indicated. In the event the University is closed on a scheduled exam date (e.g., weather emergency) the exam will be given on the next day that class meets.*

Course Requirements and Class Conduct

The overall success of this course, and your individual success, will depend in very large part on your regular attendance and active involvement in class discussions, as well as maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. Students are expected to attend and be prepared for all classes, arrive **on time**, be actively engaged in class discussion and activities, and refrain from any disruptive behavior (which includes talking during the lecture).

I strongly encourage you to be on time to class; it can be highly disruptive to me and to the other students when people arrive late to class. **Assignments and exams are due by 4:00 pm (unless otherwise noted) and will not be accepted after 4:10 pm on the day they are due.** See the section below titled “Instructor policy on Makeup Exams, Assignments, Class Notes, and Special Accommodations” for more information.

You are allowed to eat during the lecture, but please be courteous and consider the ability of others around you to hear and concentrate on the lecture. Also, please be considerate of the cleaning staff and pick up after yourself if you bring disposable food containers into the classroom.

The use of cellular phones is prohibited. If you are caught using your cellphone during the lecture, I will confiscate it for the remainder of class.

Grades

Your grades in this course will be based two exams, five term paper assignments, a class presentation, and class participation. Exams will be worth 50% of your total grade, term paper 40%, class presentations 5%, and class participations 5%.

Exams

Exam questions will come from all sources: lectures, video presentations, class handouts, guest speakers, and assigned readings. Students are responsible for preparing for exams based on all class materials. The dates of the exams are:

Exam 1: due 3/28 by 4:00 PM

Exam 2: due 5/9 by 4:00 PM

Term Paper

The term paper is to be a research proposal on a topic of your choice. The proposal can be a hypothetical study that you may never perform, or it can be an investigation that you plan to conduct in the future. It **cannot** be work that you have already written up for another class or for your thesis. The proposal should cover all segments of the research process, even though the proposed data collection and analysis will not actually be performed.

The proposal will be built incrementally. As each major segment of the course is completed, the section of the proposal that deals with that topic will be submitted and graded. As each additional section is added, the previous section(s) should be revised based on the instructor’s comments and additional methodological issues raised by the new section. This process will be discussed in class. The due dates are given below, followed by a description of each task.

Assignment 1 (Proposed Topic): 2/8

Assignment 2 (Introduction/Literature Review): 2/29

Assignment 3 (Sampling Plan): 3/14

Assignment 4 (Research Design and Measurement): 4/27 by 5:00 pm

Assignment 5 (Final, complete proposal): 5/5 by 5:00 pm

Assignment 1: Proposed Topics

Please submit a brief paragraph (each) on three possible research topics. Each paragraph should be 2 – 4 sentences.

Assignment 2: Introduction/Literature Review

In **no more than five double-spaced pages**, please clearly identify the research topic you will work on for the remainder of the semester. The introduction should state the topic and the theoretical and practical importance of studying it.

Also, identify and review the major studies that have examined this issue in the past. What are their methodological strengths and weaknesses? State the major hypotheses that your study will test. Identify the major independent and dependent variables and the unit of analysis.

Assignment 3: Sampling Plan

Please begin this assignment with a revision of your introduction, the hypotheses and independent and dependent variables. Revision should be modified based on my comments and to ensure consistency with your sampling design.

Then, in **no more than five double-spaced pages**, indicate clearly the type of sampling design you will use and your rationale for selecting this type of sample. In your discussion, clearly indicate the population to which your hypothesis applies and how you will select a probability or non-probability sample from it. Pay particular attention to practical issues, such as sample size, the sampling frame or list, and slippage between the population and the elements on the sampling frame. Provide a justification for the decisions you make.

Assignment 4: Research Design and Measurement

Please start with a revision of your hypothesis and your sampling design, if necessary.

Then, in **no more than five double-spaced pages**, clearly indicate the **type of research design** you will use to test your hypothesis. You should also indicate how this design allows you to test your hypothesis; that is, present a brief rationale for your selection. In presenting your design, don't be vague – e.g., experiment or survey. Be specific – e.g., pretest-posttest equivalent group design, panel study with four annual data collection points, etc. You should also provide enough detail about the design – for instance the age at Time 1, the length of the treatment program, the lag between interviews, and so forth – so that a clear description of what you plan to do emerges. You should also present a brief rationale for each of these decisions.

Then, in **no more than five double-spaced pages**, discuss your **measurement plan**. What key variables need to be measured in order to test the hypothesis? Indicate precisely how you will measure the ones noted in the last assignment. Start with the concept and end with the exact measure. Also, discuss how you will assess reliability and validity of these measures.

Assignment 5: Complete Proposal with All Sections Revised

Please revise all four sections of the proposal so that your final proposal attends to prior comments and presents a coherent and coordinated research proposal. Term papers must be typed double-spaced, using the format and style of Criminology. All references must be complete and conform to the Criminology style. Be sure to use spell-check! At this stage the page limit – **no more than 20 double-spaced pages** – will be strictly enforced. Specifically, there will be a one-point reduction in your grade for every quarter page past this limit. Such limits are standard practice at funding agencies. Please use **Times Roman size 12 font, 1-inch margins**.

Class Presentation

Most weeks, I will have you read one or two articles in addition to your textbook chapters. Each of you will choose one article to lead a class discussion on. To prepare for the class discussion, I expect you to provide an outline of the article to your fellow students (**no more than 1 page in length**) and write up **at least 4 discussion questions on that article**. In class, you will encourage your fellow students to discuss their thoughts and concerns about the article **for at least 10 minutes**. Be sure to move beyond statements of fact; inquire about opinions on the article/methods used, why I may have assigned it, etc.

Class Participation

There will be short-answer quizzes given in certain sessions, each worth 5 points. These quizzes will be based on the readings assigned. At the end of the semester, the grades on these quizzes will be averaged to provide your class participation grade. If you miss a class (and a quiz) you will receive a 0 on that quiz which will lower your class participation grade.

So, in sum, your grades will consist of the following:

Exam 1	20 points
Exam 2	30 points
Term Paper Assignment 1	1 points
Term Paper Assignment 2	7 points
Term Paper Assignment 3	8 points
Term Paper Assignment 4	9 points
Final Draft of Term Paper	15 points
Class Presentation	5 points
Class Participation	5 points
Total	100 points

Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following number system:

A	93 to 100 points	C	73 to 76.9
A-	90 to 92.9	C-	70 to 72.9
B+	87 to 89.9	D+	67 to 69.9
B	83 to 86.9	D	63 to 66.9
B-	80 to 82.9	D-	60 to 62.9
C+	77 to 79.9	F	59.9 points or less

Grade Disputes

If you have questions or concerns about your grade(s) and believe that I should review them, you should submit a written request over email to me describing your concern in detail. This request must be submitted within one week of the date that grades for that assignment are distributed.

The grade of I – Incomplete – can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed all course work up to the withdrawal date of that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. **A grade of incomplete will be given only in exceptional circumstances—poor class performance is not a reason to give an incomplete. Individual extra credit assignments will NOT be given.** A student who receives an I is responsible for making up whatever work was lacking at the end of the semester. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Instructor Policy on Makeup Exams, Assignments, and Class Notes

I have a very strict policy regarding makeup exams and excused absences. Makeup exams will only be given in cases of excused absences and official documentation is required. Excused absences are: illness with a doctor's note, death in the immediate family, required University activities, and required court appearance. **I will not accept a Health Center honor statement to verify an illness.** If you go to the Health Center and a doctor will not write you a note, you will need to get a copy of your medical record from them to verify your illness. By law, you are entitled to get a copy of this and it is your responsibility to do so. I must be notified in person, e-mail, in writing, or by phone **PRIOR** to missing an exam for me to consider giving you a makeup. Makeup exams are essay in nature. If you have a problem on the day of an exam, call me. **If you know in advance that you will be absent for an exam with an approved absence, you will be expected to take the exam prior to the exam date.** There will be no makeup opportunities for missed quizzes.

Religious Holidays Policy

Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor **within** the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or **within** the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

Transparency in Learning and Teaching

The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

Tutoring and Coaching

The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

Rebelmail

By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

Final Examinations

The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Students who represent the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, at any official extracurricular activity shall have the opportunity to make up any assignments or examinations missed as a result of this event. It is the responsibility of the student to provide official written notification to the instructor of the course(s) at the earliest time possible of his or her intention to participate in a university-sponsored event but no less than one week prior to the date of the missed class(es). This policy shall not apply in the event that completing the assignment or administering the examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university that could reasonably have been avoided. There should be good-faith effort by both faculty and student to come to a reasonable resolution. When disagreements regarding this policy arise, they can be appealed to the department chair, dean of the college, and the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee. For purposes of definition, extracurricular activities may include, but are not limited to, intercollegiate athletics, band, drama, forensics, recruitment, or any other activity sanctioned by the dean and/or the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

UNLV Writing Center

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

University Library

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is Susie Skarl (https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

Academic Integrity and Misconduct

Academic integrity is an absolute requirement. Dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

Copyright

The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves **with** and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.