

SOCJ 3700 Research Methods in Criminal Justice  
Summer Semester 2009  
MTWRF, 10:30am – 12:45pm  
Baldwin Hall

Instructor: Erin Winter  
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Office: Baldwin Hall  
Office Hours: by appointment

Textbook: Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology, Fifth Edition. By Michael G. Maxfield and Earl Babbie. 2008. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth /Cengage..

**Purpose and Goals of the Course:**

How do we learn what we know as social scientists? This course focuses on the process of how we learn and know things, not on the content of what we know. We will re-evaluate our everyday methods of gathering information and making conclusions, and will learn to examine the world around us with scientific rigor. In short, we will cover the fundamentals and logic of designing and carrying out research.

Throughout the semester, we will examine qualitative and quantitative research, and how sociological and criminological theories play varying roles in research design and analysis. We will learn about causality, measurement, sampling, along with various sources of data and methods of data collection and analysis. By the end of the semester, you should have a new perspective on what people “know” and many new intellectual tools for assessing information about the social world.

**Grades and Evaluation**

Grades for the course will be based on the following items:

Assignment	Percentage of Final Grade
4 Mini-Exams	10% each
2 Assignments	15% each
Research Proposal	20%
Class Participation	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **“Mini-Exams” (40% of final grade)**

We will have four “mini-exams,” one each week of the semester. Each exam will cover the readings assigned plus any lectures, films, and in-class discussions. If you miss a class, *you* are responsible for getting with a classmate or me to catch up. **There are no make-up exams except in case of emergency.** Going home for a long weekend or not hearing your alarm clock are examples of **unacceptable** excuses for missing an exam. If you are unable to take an exam, you must leave me a message via email **before** the exam begins. Additionally, the excuse must be verifiable (e.g., police report, hospital records). When allowed, make-up exams are done in my office. Make-up exams may be a different format than the regularly scheduled exam.

### **Assignments (30% of final grade)**

You will have two written assignments due the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks of the semester. These assignments will help you work towards your final assignment, the Research Proposal. In Assignment 1, you will define the problem you wish to investigate, formulate a research question, define your independent and dependent variables, and situate your research within the academic literature on the topic. In Assignment 2, you will create a hypothesis, operationalize your independent and dependent variables, and discuss how you would measure your concepts.

### **Research Proposal (20% of final grade)**

The final paper in this course will be a research proposal you develop on a sociological / criminological topic of your choice. For your proposal, you will not actually collect or analyze data. You will, however, present plans on how the data would be collected and analyzed. This proposal will build upon your first two written assignments, and will also include information on sampling and methods of data gathering and analysis.

#### ***\*\*\*Late Paper Policy\*\*\****

Any assignment that is turned in within 24 hours after the due date will be penalized **20% (two letter grades)**. Papers that are 24-48 hours late will be penalized **40% (four letter grades)**. No late papers will be accepted after two days / 48 hours.

### **In-Class Participation (10% of final grade)**

I will also keep track of who participates and who does not, as participating in class discussion will count toward your final grade. Class participation will be evaluated on an A-F grading scale, which will then be translated into the points system for the course. Class participation counts for 10% of the final grade. We will discuss in-class participation the first two days of the semester, after which I will give you a handout in class outlining A-level to F-level participation (and their accompanying points).

As you will see in the participation guidelines handout, class participation should reflect good class preparation as well as standards of politeness and respect. Engaging in side conversations, making disruptive and off-topic comments, reading newspapers, using cell phones, sleeping, and similarly rude behaviors are disruptive and I will not tolerate them. Make sure your cell phone is turned off when you enter class.

Final grades for the course are based on the following scale:

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	63-67
D-	60-62
F	0-59

Note: Sociology and Criminal Justice majors need a C or better in this course to graduate. A grade of C- is not high enough.

THERE IS NO EXTRA CREDIT.

### **Attendance**

Class attendance is required and will affect your final grade in the following way:

0 days missed = 1 point added to final grade 1 day missed = no grade change 2 days missed = 2 points subtracted from final grade 3 days missed = 4 points subtracted from final grade 4 or more days missed = automatic administrative withdrawal from the class
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There are **no exceptions** to this attendance policy, including sporting events, illnesses, hangovers, etc. As long as school is in session we will have class. Attendance will be taken every day by passing around an attendance sheet. It is your responsibility to make sure you sign the attendance sheet.

Note that a withdrawal after the midpoint withdrawal deadline will result in a grade of WF. Except under the most serious and highly unusual circumstances, no incompletes will be given.

**Academic Honesty:** Cheating will not be tolerated in any form. All students should understand University policies regarding cheating and its consequences. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” See [http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic\\_honesty/culture\\_honesty.htm](http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/culture_honesty.htm)

**Disability or Health-Related Issues:** Students with a disability or a health-related issue who need a class accommodation should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>READ</u>
5/5	Introduction to the course	
<b><u>Week One: Introduction to Criminal Justice Inquiry</u></b>		
5/8	library research	
5/9	Scientific inquiry, incorporating theory	Chs 1 & 2
5/10	Ethics and criminal justice research	Ch 3
5/11	General issues in research design	Ch 4
5/12	EXAM ONE Individual Meetings	
<b><u>Week Two: Structuring Criminal Justice Inquiry</u></b>		
5/15	Concepts, operationalization, and measurement ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE	Ch 5
5/16	Measuring Crime	Ch 6
5/17	Experimental and quasi-experimental designs	Ch 7
5/18	Overview of data collections and sampling	Ch 8
5/19	Survey research and asking questions EXAM TWO	Ch 9
<b><u>Week Three: Modes of Observation</u></b>		
5/22	Field Research ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE	Ch 10
5/23	No class	
5/24	Field research (cont)	
5/25	Agency records and secondary data	Ch 11
5/26	Evaluation research and policy analysis EXAM THREE	Ch 12
<b><u>Week Four: Application and Analysis</u></b>		
6/29	Interpreting Data	Ch 13
6/30	RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE	
7/1	Last day of class: EXAM FOUR	

\*\*This syllabus is a general outline of the course (course work and class policies). Changes to this course will be announced IN CLASS. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any changes announced and made to the course.

#### **HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT**

All students should know that the department of Sociology has a Human Rights Committee for the resolution of student grievances. Any student registered for a sociology course at the University of Georgia who feels that he or she has not been treated in a fair or professional manner by an instructor is advised to follow these procedures:

- 1) The student should discuss his or her problems with the instructor of the course, unless extenuating circumstances prohibit this.
- 2) If that discussion does not resolve the grievance, the student should then discuss the problem with the Head of the Sociology Department.

- 3) If that discussion does not resolve the grievance to the student's satisfaction, the student may request the activation of the Human Rights Committee by submitting a letter to the Chair of the Human Rights Committee, Department of Sociology, University of Georgia.

The Human Rights Committee will have the responsibility of investigating all charges in accordance with the procedures on file in the Sociology office, copies of which are available to students. The Committee will also have the responsibility of making recommendations in writing to the Head, copies of which will be made available to the student complainant and the instructor involved. The Department Head will review the recommendations and make a decision in writing, with copies to the student complainant and the instructor of staff member involved. Any appeal of that decision must be to the Dean of the college of Arts and Sciences.