

CRJ 325 Research Methods and Design
Fall 2009

Course: CRJ 325
Credits: 4

Scott A. Hoke
Curtis 231
610-606-4666 Ext. 4454
sahoke@cedarcrest.edu
Office Hours: M/T/W 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Course Description

This course is designed as an introduction to basic criminal justice research methods. This course will provide students with a conceptual understanding of the qualitative and quantitative research methods used in the criminal justice research. The course will provide students with the ability to critically examine criminal justice research material and construct criminal justice research questions.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate published criminal justice research with regard to the appropriateness of the conclusions drawn from the research and evaluate evidenced based interventions in order to effectively apply these findings to professional practices.
2. Identify the advantages of quantitative and qualitative research methods and the appropriateness of each method in answering particular research questions.
3. Conduct a comprehensive literature review in order to answer specific research questions.
4. Be able to identify issues of reliability and validity as it relates to criminal justice research.
5. Be able to understand and conduct focus group research.

Course Outcomes

Students will demonstrate the ability to conduct and critically evaluate criminal justice research.

Assessment: Students will read selected readings from the selected text; participate in classroom discussions; excel in written examinations; and complete focus group research.

Students will be able to identify research methods appropriate for answering a varied degree of criminal justice questions.

Assessment: Students will critically evaluate published criminal justice research; participate in classroom discussions; and excel in written examinations.

Students will successfully plan and conduct qualitative research.

Assessment: Students will plan and conduct focus group research; participate in classroom discussions; and excel in written examinations.

Text:

Bachman, R., & Schutt, R.K. (2007). *The practice of research in criminology and criminal Justice* (3rd ed.). Sage: Los Angeles.

Student Assignments

1. Students will be required to read all assigned readings in order to meaningfully participate in classroom discussions.
2. Students will take one written examinations covering selected readings from the text and classroom discussions.
3. Students will present a critical examination of one published criminal justice research article.
4. Students will complete a research proposal in which a selected topic is examined in detail.
5. Students will conduct a focus group relative to the proposed research proposal listed above.

Grading

Class participation	10%
Examination #1	20%
IRB Submission	10%
Analysis of research article	10%
Research proposal	<u>50%</u>
Problem statement- 15%	100%
Lit review - 15%	
Focus group - 20%	

Classroom Protocol

Appropriate classroom behavior is implicit in the Cedar Crest College Honor Code. Such behavior is defined and guided by complete protection for the rights of all students and faculty to a courteous, respectful classroom environment. That environment is free from distractions such as late arrivals, early departures, inappropriate conversations and any other behavior that might disrupt instruction and/or compromise students' access to their Cedar Crest College education.

Furthermore:

Students are expected to have prompt and regular classroom attendance in accordance with the policy stated on the syllabus. Faculty are expected to make clear on the first day of class reasons for specific classroom decorum and repercussions for non-compliance. Faculty should be aware of setting boundaries and procedures for exceptions to expectations stated in the syllabus.

Sleeping, or the appearance of sleeping is strictly prohibited. Any student who is observed sleeping will receive a zero for the class participation portion of the course. Repeated events will result in any student failing the course. Any student who is observed sleeping during a guest lecture will fail the course without question.

Students need to understand that open discussion is encouraged and expected in order to foster an advanced learning environment. However, all students should use caution when sharing personal information. There is a point to which personal experiences are detrimental to the learning environment.

Written assignments are due on the dates discussed in class. The dates presented on the syllabus are intended to serve as an outline only, recognizing that the speed of student learning cannot be predicted in advance. All assignment dates will be clearly discussed in class. Any assignment handed in late will not be graded and the student will receive a 0 for that particular assignment. Student assignments are not optional and all must be completed. If a student fails to complete two or more assignments they will fail the course for the semester.

Honor Philosophy

The Cedar Crest College Honor Philosophy is based upon the principle that, as a self-governing body, students have the ability to create an atmosphere of trust and support. Within this environment, individuals are empowered to make their own decisions, develop personal regard for the system under which they live, and achieve a sense of integrity and judgment that will guide them through life.

Research Assignment

Your assigned research project has several distinct purposes. The first is to exposure you to the process and complexity of academic research. In exploring a topic of interest you will be required to conduct a detailed literature review in which you gain knowledge of the subject you are researching. Conducting literature reviews requires that a student become familiar with academic concepts, library resources, and the critical evaluation of prior research.

Additionally, each student will be required to conduct a focus group in an attempt to gain exploratory information about the subject they have chosen. This is intended to expose the student to the complexity of conducting and evaluating qualitative research. Being the less dominant form of criminal justice research, it is often overlooked as a viable form of information.

There are four distinct types of research:

- Descriptive
- Exploratory
- Explanatory
- Evaluative

The type of research project covered in this course will be exploratory. It can take on two forms; the first being policy driven. The student must research the best known practice(s) on a given subject and then evaluate whether or not the public has an idea as to what those practices might be. This, in turn, will drive policy recommendations on how this information might affect future public policy initiatives.

Example:

As student may wish to evaluate whether or not gun ownership or the restrictions placed on gun ownership, has any influence on the incidents of school violence. Upon learning the answer to that question, the student will then conduct focus groups with a selected population to determine whether or not the public is aware of the answer to the research question. Whether or not the public knows if gun ownership has an effect of incidents of school violence has influence on public policy initiatives.

Alternatively, the student may choose to research what methods or initiatives have been most successful in reducing the level of school violence. In turn, the student will then conduct focus group interviews to determine whether or not the public has any knowledge as to what the most effective methods would be.

The second option for the research assignment is to compare the perceptions of two different groups of people, in order to determine if they have similar views or opinions on a given topic.

Example:

A student may wish to research whether or not certain age groups have different opinions of school violence. One would have to research whether there is a basis for suspecting the difference in opinion, and then test those previous findings in the current research. If the student would suspect that senior citizens would have different views than college age students one would then have to conduct two focus groups in order to compare and contrast their responses.

In either the example, the student will develop an understanding of public perception that may drive future public policy initiatives.

Course Content Outline

Week #1	Introduction to the course Review of course requirements Chapter 1 lecture <i>Reading assignment:</i> Chapter 1 & 2 (Bachman & Schutt)
Week #2	Lecture chapter 2: The process and problems of criminological research Presentation of library research <i>Reading assignment:</i> Chapter 3
Week #3	Labor Day
Week #4	Subject topic for research proposal – NO EXCEPTIONS Lecture chapter 3: Conceptualization and measurement <i>Reading assignment:</i> Chapter 4
Week #5	Cover letter, consent form, IRB form completed and typed (10% of grade) NO LATE EXCEPTIONS Lecture chapter 4: Sampling <i>Reading Assignment:</i> Chapter 6

Week #6	Problem statement due (APA format) (15% of grade) NO LATE EXCEPTIONS Lecture chapter 6: Experimental designs <i>Reading assignment:</i> Chapter 7
Week #7	Submission of 10 relevant criminal justice empirical research articles for the study (APA format). NO LATE SUBMISSIONS Lecture chapter 7: Survey research <i>Reading assignment:</i> Chapter 8
Week #8	Literature review – NO LATE SUBMISSIONS (15% of grade) Lecture chapter 8: Qualitative methods <i>Reading assignment:</i> Chapter 9
Week #9	Lecture chapter 9: Qualitative data analysis Review for examination #1
Week #10	Examination #1
Week #11	Presentation on research topic Submission and class evaluation of focus group questions
Week #12	Critique of journal article Journal article must be presented to class in advance Summary of article must be submitted to class in advance
Week #13	Flex day Completed research projects are due. NO LATE EXCEPTIONS
Week #14	Presentation on focus group research

Parts of the Research Project

The Problem Statement – APA format (3-5 pages) 15%

- The problem statement provides the rationale for your study. It serves as the introduction to your chosen topic.
- You must use professional, peer-reviewed journals or books to support and identify your topic. You must not assume that something is a criminal justice problem or issue, you must demonstrate it.
- **You may not use Wikipedia or any other internet source**
- You must:
 - Introduce the reader to the subject
 - Provide a brief statement (supported by evidence) as to why it is important in the study of criminal justice
 - Identify the background or history of the subject
- Identify any relevant theory relating to the topic
- What is the significance of the proposed study
- What is the research question (this must be clearly stated for the reader and must be made by inference)
- Form the hypothesis
- Identify the DV and IV
- Give operational definition to your variables

Literature Review – APA format (6-10) 15%

- The literature review provides the basis for your study. It serves to demonstrate that you have a keen understanding of the topic that you are researching. You must demonstrate considerable knowledge of your subject.
- Use ONLY empirical, peer-reviewed journals.
- Empirical articles provide information about the sample, how the data was collected, and findings that will be relevant to your topic. They are also a great source of information as to other available resources.
- You must use at least 10 peer-reviewed journal articles that are social science related and related to your topic
- **DO NOT WAIT TOO LONG TO BEGIN YOUR SEARCH!**
- Articles must be somewhat recent. The topic of your presentation will determine the date relevance of your articles. As an example, if you are comparing perceptions over time, the age of the articles will be determined by the time comparison.

Major Steps in Preparing a Literature Review

1. Select a topic
2. Read the selected professional literature carefully to get a broad overview
3. Evaluate and interpret the literature on the topic – do not simply list studies but interpret them.
4. Create a synthesis of the similarities and differences in the literature.

Writing the Literature Review (use subheadings)

Introduction:

- provide a brief introduction - establish the importance of the topic in the introduction – and include the purpose of the study

Dependent Variable (name it):

- organize the studies first around your dependent variable
 - give the name of your DV as the heading
 - provide a narrative of all the studies that have also researched your DV
 - identify the purpose of the study, how the sample was obtained, size of the sample
 - major concepts of the study
 - describe the method of data collection
 - summarize the findings in 2-3 sentences

Independent Variables

- organize the studies around each of your Independent Variables
- give the name of your IVs as a separate heading
- discuss briefly what the studies found in relationship to you IV- (i.e. age – talk about all of the studies that included age as an IV)
- briefly summarize the study and the findings of the IV

Additional Notes:

- for each DV and IV Section include what you think are the major findings
- use headings throughout the literature review
- avoid slang (cool, thing, stuff)
- do not use contractions in formal academic writing (e.g. don't, can't, etc.)
- use scientific writing (nothing clever or amusing)
- you may NOT use long direct quotations - paraphrase
- avoid using direct quotations
- write the literature review using your own words
- evaluate and interpret the studies – do NOT simply list studies but interpret them
- create a **synthesis** of the similarities and differences in the literature
- use APA reference style
- cite all sources properly – do not plagiarize

Note:

- cross-check the references in the body of your lit review against those in your reference list. Make sure what is cited in-text is located on your reference list.

Methodology – (centered heading) All in APA format (3-5pages typed)

- 4 subheadings. Participants, Instrumentation, Procedures, Analysis (subheadings are flush left)

Participants:

- Describe the research design that will be used to answer the research question and/or hypotheses (i.e. survey, description, etc.)
- Describe the population to whom the study's findings will be generalized.
- Describe the study's sample.
- Describe the sampling strategy (i.e. non-probability, convenience, etc.)
- Specify the unit of analysis (the persons or things to be studied), the precise procedures to be used in selecting the sample, the number of people to be included in the sample.

Instrumentation:

- Describe the specific measuring instruments to be utilized (attach) (i.e. survey, data collection sheet)
- Discuss the validity and reliability of the completed instruments.
- If using existing measuring instruments, discuss their validity and reliability.

Procedures:

- Describe the procedures used to analyze the data.
- Detail each specific procedure to test each research question or hypothesis.

Note: (The table below must be set-up in your methodology section.)

Analysis:

- Identify the DV, the IV, the level of measurement of each variable and the test used:
- Identify any limitations (i.e., validity and reliability of data collection instrument, generalizability of the sample to the population, access to data, ethical problems). Use your notes and textbook, re: internal and external validity.
- Identify when the study will be carried out – identify specific time frames.

Written Requirements for All Assignments**APA Style and Format Required***

Grades will be determined by the following criteria:

1. Depth of the analysis.
2. Completeness and accuracy of written assignment.
(Tip: Follow the outline)
3. Quality of critical thinking is provision of supporting evidence.
4. Care in the articulation of ideas.
5. Specificity rather than vagueness.

***APA Note:**

You may formally cite a reference in your narrative in several ways. At the conclusion of a statement that represents someone else's thoughts, you cite the author's last name and year of publication, separated by a comma, set off in parentheses (Doe, 1999). If using in a narrative, give the year of publication in parentheses immediately following the name as in Doe (1999) noted that

- When you cite multiple authors' names in parentheses, use the ampersand (&) instead of the word "and". If the citation is in the narrative, use the word "and".
- Use semicolons to separate multiple citations in parentheses, as in this example: (Black, 1999; Brown, 1998; Green, 2000).
- When you cite a secondary source, be sure you have made it clear, as in: (Doe, as cited in Smith, 1998). Note that only Smith (1998) would be placed in the reference list.
- Numbers from zero through nine and spelled out, numbers 10 and above are written as numbers.
- Always spell out a number when it is the first word or phrase in a sentence.
- Make sure you have used complete sentences.
- Avoid plagiarism at all costs – cite your source properly.
- Journal article format (APA) style:

Kan, M.Y., & Heath, A. (2006). The political values and choices of husbands and wives. *Journal of Marriages and Family*, 68, 70-86.