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## RESEARCH METHODS IN CRIMINOLOGY

Florida State University  
CCJ 4700 • Fall 2021

**Course Instructor:** Dr. Sonja Siennick

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**Student Hours:** Thursday 11-12:30 and by appointment; individuals and groups welcome

**Graduate Teaching Assistant:** Brittney Clemons

**Contact Information:** [bclemons@fsu.edu](mailto:bclemons@fsu.edu); 114A Criminology Building

**Student Hours:** Tuesday 2-4 and by appointment

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### Course Description

This course will introduce you to the fundamentals of research in criminology, criminal justice, and social science more generally. My overarching goals are to help you become an informed consumer of social science research and to give you scientific tools that will help you in your career as a practitioner, researcher, or academic.

Upon successfully completing this course, you will know the following:

- The purposes of social science research
- The difference between causation and association (and how to tell which you have)
- The key modes of observation in social science
- The major sources of crime statistics and data
- Some basic statistical methods for describing social science data

You will be able to:

- Think scientifically about social problems
- Recognize signs of strong and weak social science research
- Interpret basic descriptive and inferential statistics

### Required Materials

**Textbook.** Hagan, F. E. (2018). Research Methods in Criminal Justice and Criminology. Pearson. ISBN: 9780134558912

Please complete all readings prior to the date for which they are assigned.

**Calculator.** You will need a basic calculator. The one on your phone or computer is fine.

### Course Activities and Requirements

**Pretest and Posttest.** Please help the College assess student learning outcomes by completing the research methods pretest and posttest. You won't receive a grade or any credit for these; that

is, they won't count towards or against your course grade. They are solely to provide us with feedback on how well we are meeting our teaching goals. We appreciate your help!

**Practice Quiz Attendance.** You will complete three in-class practice quizzes. These quizzes are designed to help you prepare for the exams. You will take them during the first part of the class period, and will review them as a class during the second part of the period. You can take the quizzes home with you for use as study aids. You will receive 2 points for attending each quiz.

**Discussion Board Posts.** You will complete three discussion board assignments in this course. The first two will be worth 5 points and the third 4 points. There are two parts to this requirement. First, you will write a 200-300 word post on either (1) a question you have about the material for the upcoming exam or (2) a tip you have about understanding some part of the course material. Second, you will write a 75-100 word reply to another person's question or tip. In grading these, we will assess things such as your familiarity with the material, how much effort you appear to have put into understanding your chosen topic, how helpful or insightful your reply post is, and whether your posts meet the length guidelines.

**Assignments.** You will complete two written assignments, each worth 10 points. Each assignment should be 2-3 pages long (double-spaced and excluding statistical output). Submit each assignment to Canvas before the due date and time. Grades will be based on:

- Accuracy: Has the course material been applied correctly? 3 points.
- Insight: Has the material been paraphrased and explained in a way that demonstrates understanding? 3 points.
- Completeness: Has each element of the prompt been addressed? Have sufficient elements of the course material been included? 3 points.
- Mechanics: Does the assignment meet the length requirement and contain no spelling errors? Assignments that are markedly too long or short will lose some credit! 1 point.

**Exams.** You will take three multiple-choice exams in this course, each worth 20 points. The exams are not cumulative, though you will need to know some basic methods terminology for all three of them. They will feature information from the lectures and the readings. The exams are open book, and you are free to use the slides and notes. I recommend that you do not use outside materials for the exams because different authors use different terminology for the same concepts. Please submit your own work and do not consult each other as you work on the exams; I am invoking the honor system here.

### Course Grades

Practice quiz attendance	3 X 2 points	= 6
Discussion board posts 1 & 2	2 X 5 points	= 10
Discussion board post 3	1 X 4 points	= 4
Assignments	2 X 10 points	= 20
Exams	3 X 20 points	= 60
Total		100 points (%)

### **Grading scale**

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

I round according to conventional mathematical rules. I am glad to discuss your course grades in person, but to protect your privacy I cannot discuss grades over email.

### **Course Communication**

**How we will contact you.** Please check Canvas regularly for course announcements and changes. I strongly recommend that you set your Canvas notification preferences to ensure that you receive emailed versions of the course announcements as well.

**How you should contact us.** Please email us with any questions about the course material, requirements, or policies. Monday through Friday, we will respond to your email within 24 hours. We will try to respond promptly to emails sent on weekends and holidays, but may not be able to respond until the next business day.

### **Course Policies**

**Syllabus Change Policy.** Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

**Attendance.** I expect you to come to class. Attendance and grades are strongly positively correlated. If you absolutely must miss a class meeting, please get the notes from another student.

**Missing and late work.** Missing or late work will receive 0s unless (1) you are unable to complete or submit the item due to an excused absence (per the University attendance policy below) and (2) notify me within 48 hours of the due date. When you email me, please include any documentation of your absence (e.g., a doctor's note, a jury duty summons). Forgetting about the post, assignment, or exam, needing to work late, being unable to get to a computer, and having an undocumented illness will not qualify as excused absences, so please plan accordingly and do not procrastinate. The only exception to this policy is noted below.

The University attendance policy is as follows: Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

You are allowed ONE undocumented absence in this course. This equates to a free extension on a single course requirement. Please contact me within 48 hours of the requirement's due date to make arrangements for makeup work.

**Technology.** When you submit your work to Canvas, it is your responsibility to ensure that the submission was successful (try the tips at <https://support.canvas.fsu.edu/kb/article/962-students-tips-for-a-better-canvas-experience/#VerifySubmission>). If you experience internet or Canvas problems while you are submitting something, please email us immediately. If the trouble relates to a written assignment, please attach your assignment. It is important that you contact us before the due date and time so that we know you did the work on time. You have a one hour grace period to contact us about technology-related problems. If you do not successfully submit a post, assignment or exam by the due date and time and we do not hear from you within an hour of that date and time, you will receive a 0 for that course requirement.

**TurnItIn.** This course will use Canvas's TurnItIn anti-plagiarism tool. Assignments receiving high similarity scores will be investigated according to College procedures.

**Academic Honor Policy.** The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>)

**Academic Success.** Your academic success is a top priority for Florida State University. University resources to help you succeed include tutoring centers, computer labs, counseling and health services, and services for designated groups, such as veterans and students with disabilities. The following information is not exhaustive, so please check with your advisor or the Dean of Students office to learn more.

**Americans with Disabilities Act.** Florida State University (FSU) values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. FSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities in a manner that is consistent with academic standards of the course while empowering the student to meet integral requirements of the course.

*To receive academic accommodations, a student:*

- (1) must register with and provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS);
- (2) must provide a letter from OAS to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type; and,
- (3) should communicate with the instructor, as needed, to discuss recommended accommodations. A request for a meeting may be initiated by the student or the instructor.

Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from the Office of Accessibility Services has been provided.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Office of Accessibility Services  
874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
[oas@fsu.edu](mailto:oas@fsu.edu)  
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas/>

**Confidential Campus Resources.** Various centers and programs are available to assist students with navigating stressors that might impact academic success. These include the following:

Victim Advocate Program  
University Center A  
Rm. 4100  
(850) 644-7161  
Available 24/7/365  
Office Hours: M-F 8-5  
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/vap>

University Counseling  
Center  
Askew Student Life  
Center, 2nd floor  
942 Learning Way  
(850) 644-8255  
<https://counseling.fsu.edu/>

University Health Services  
Health and Wellness  
Center  
(850) 644-6230  
<https://uhs.fsu.edu/>

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Week</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
1	8/24 Introduction	8/26 Chapter 1 (key terms)
2	8/31 Chapter 2 (ethics)	9/2 Chapter 2 (ethics)
3	9/7 Chapter 3 (causality)	9/9 Chapter 3 (internal validity)
4	9/14 Chapter 3 (experiments)	9/16 Chapter 3 (quasi-experiments)
5	9/21 <b>QUIZ 1</b> <b>Discussion board post</b>	9/23 Review
6	9/28 <b>EXAM 1</b>	9/30 Chapter 4 (sampling)
7	10/5 Chapter 4 (sampling)	10/7 Chapter 4 (the UCR)
8	10/12 Chapter 5 (surveys) <b>Assignment 1</b>	10/14 Chapter 6 (surveys)
9	10/19 Chapter 7 (qualitative)	10/21 Chapter 9 (validity and reliability)
10	10/26 <b>QUIZ 2</b> <b>Discussion board post</b>	10/28 Review
11	11/2 <b>EXAM 2</b>	11/4 Chapter 11 (program evaluation)
12	11/9 Chapter 12 (statistics)	11/11 No class; Veteran's Day
13	11/16 Chapter 13 (statistics)	11/18 Chapter 13 (statistics)
14	11/23 Lab session	11/25 No class; Thanksgiving
15	11/30 <b>QUIZ 3</b> <b>Discussion board post</b>	12/2 Review <b>Assignment 2</b>
Finals week	<b>EXAM 3</b>	