COURSE SYLLABUS

CJ589-01W: Research Methods in Criminal Justice

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Required Reading:

Bachman, R., & Schutt, R.K. (2011). *The practice of research in criminology and criminal justice*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. ISBN: 978-1-4129-7875-0.

Other materials/readings as assigned and posted in DocSharing in eCollege.

Course Description/Explanation:

This course covers the basic techniques and procedures used in the process of criminal justice research. Topics include: defining research problems, ethics in criminal justice research, selecting and measuring variables, stating hypotheses, sampling, and developing experimental research designs.

Student Learning Outcomes/Core Competencies:

1. Think critically about important issues in criminal justice research methodology
2. Understand how to conduct criminal justice research
3. Problem-solve solutions to methodological problems
4. Enhance communication skills and reading/research/writing acumen

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional Methods/Activities/Assessments

This course will provide a variety of activities and assessments to assist you in achieving the outcomes/objectives for the course. You will work toward achieving these outcomes through discussions/comments, assignments, and tests. Below is an explanation of each course requirement including due date, assignment instructions, and other requirements.

Please note that a core competency of this course is critical thinking. Critical thinking requires students to think through situations, facts, and issues in an open-minded and objective way in an effort to analyze and evaluate information in an informed manner. Qualities of a critical thinker (and of arguments that embody critical thinking) include:

- **Certainty is not always necessary for a critical thinker; possibility and probability should always be a consideration**—in other words, just because the book tells you it is true, doesn't mean that there may not be another solution or possibility to consider. The way that facts relate to one another—and not just fact alone—should be used to determine truth.
- **Critical thinkers are not only independent thinkers; they are also fair-minded in that they are willing to consider all points of view, and they are careful to take every aspect of an argument into consideration**—your way of thinking may not necessarily be the only way or the right way of thinking. Consider other perspectives
- **Consider evidence (facts), source (from what source did your evidence come from), and motivations (what might be the underlying motivation behind these facts)**—in other words, gather information from credible sources and evaluation these sources/factual information in the context of what you have been asked to discuss/evaluate.

As defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, critical thinking is:

"The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness."

(Scriven, M. & Paul, R. Presented at the 8th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, Summer 1987.)

When preparing discussions/comments/assignments/papers/etc., use the following to help you critically think through each task. You will be graded (in part) on how well you are able to perform this skill.

- Determine the problem/issue you are trying to solve. Make sure you remain open-minded and objective and be aware of your own biases on the subject and put them aside
- Develop a hypothesis and/or possible solution to the problem/issue. Brainstorm other possible solutions. Think about the pros and cons of the problem/issue
- Gather information on the problem/issue that may support or contradict your position
- Analyze your facts. Don't assume anything. Evaluate the facts objectively
- Determine a reasonable conclusion based on all of the facts
- Make sure your facts (and the reporting of the facts) are accurate. You may assume a causal relationship but there might be other possible conclusions to be drawn based on other factors. Be sure to evaluate what those might be

Introduction/Discussion Posts: *(1 Introduction @ 50 points; 4 discussion posts @ 100 points each = 450 course points)*

Student Learning Outcomes #1-#4:   Think critically about important issues in criminal justice research methodology; Understand how to conduct criminal justice research; Problem-solve solutions to methodological problems; Enhance communication skills and reading/research/writing acumen

The **Introduction** is a chance for you to 'meet' your colleagues (although most of you likely know each other by now) in the class and an opportunity to introduce yourself to your professor. You will also be required to answer a course-related question. Specific instructions on what to post are available when you click on Introduction in Week #1. The Introductory post is due on **Wednesday of Week #1** of the course.

The **Discussions** are directly related to the assigned readings. Upon completion of the assigned readings, you are expected to engage in an **ongoing** discussion/debate with your classmates. Your contributions to the discussion forums will be graded for **quality** and a **detailed analysis** linking the material to a critical appraisal of theory, policy, and practice. The introduction of outside materials in not mandatory (unless otherwise noted in the discussion topic assignment), but is highly recommended. In all cases, students must cite in-text and provide a full bibliography/works cited at the end of their post for all citations mentioned in the post (See information later in the syllabus for more information on citing utilizing APA citation format. Also see the 'How to Cite' FactSheet in the CJ 500 Orientation Course).

These posts should be **the equivalent of 1 page in length or a minimum of 250 words**. The specific discussion assignment is located in each unit Week by clicking on the Discussion link. Posts are due by 11:00PM CST on **Thursdays** with the exception of **Discussion #1 which is due on Saturday.**

Comment Posts: *(20 comments @ 10 points each = 200 course points)*

Student Learning Outcomes #1-#4: Think critically about important issues in criminal justice research methodology; Understand how to conduct criminal justice research; Problem-solve solutions to methodological problems; Enhance communication skills and reading/research/writing acumen.

Comment posts are responses you make to the discussion posts that you and your classmates post each week. You are **required** to make a minimum of **five** comments each week. I would strongly encourage you to engage your colleagues well past the four-comment minimum in order to maximize your opportunity for meaningful discussion and learning.

Comment posts should be meaningful. Merely agreeing or disagreeing with a classmate will not be looked upon favorably and will result in a loss of points. A meaningful post is one that moves the discussion forward in some substantive way through providing one's perspective, additional information through research, or reframing the discussion in some new way. You are expected to engage in an **ongoing** discussion/debate with your classmates. Your comments will be graded for **quality**, and **relevance**. Your comments will also be graded based on your ability to engage in critical thinking. Students **must** provide one outside source for **at least** one comment that they make.

NO LATE COMMENTS ARE ACCEPTED. All comment posts are due by 11:00PM CST on **Saturdays** with the exception of **Comments for Discussion #1 which are due on Sunday.**

Assessment Method: Comments will be graded using the Comments Grading Rubric attached to the Discussion Post Grading Rubric. The discussion and Comments for each week will be graded together and posted as one grade (Discussion = 100 + Comments 5@ 10 points each = 150 points/week).

Assignment (1 assignment with multiple parts @ 250 points each = 250 course points; 100 points assigned for the annotated bibliography; 150 points assigned for your literature review).

Student Learning Outcomes #1 & #4: Think critically about important issues in criminal justice research methodology; Enhance communication skills and reading/ research/writing acumen.

Assignment Instructions: Students are required to complete an annotated bibliography and a literature review for this course. These assignments are linked and you must complete one before completing another. This will make more sense as you read below.

Before completing either assignment, you must choose a topic that you are interested in studying in criminal justice. This can be any topic, but ideally it is a topic that you feel strongly about/have great interest in, as the work you do in this class is the foundation for what you will continue in CJ 576 and complete in CJ 595. Therefore, you should give this topic some serious consideration.

Annotated Bibliography Instructions (100 points): Your first order of business is to choose your topic. This topic forms the basis for your Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review. As you will have received this syllabus prior to the start of the course, I highly recommend that you begin the process of selecting a topic immediately.

You want to strike a balance between a topic that is too broad and one that is too narrow. This is difficult. In order to work toward a viable topic, you might first consider brainstorming issues/topics of interest on a piece of paper. Then, you might consider narrowing down your interests to one or two topics. Then you should consider conducting some cursory searching in the library databases (CJ Abstracts, SOCIndex, PsychInfo, etc.) on the topics of interest to you. Once you have done this and zeroed in on your topic of choice, it is time to begin the process of writing a research question. Plan to allow some time to accomplish this task. This is not as easy as you think.

You should plan to converse often with your professor via Email during the first week of class to solidify your topic. Developing a topic is a VERY difficult task. Do not be lured into a false sense of security about your topic until and unless your topic has been approved by your professor.

 You will want to have an approved topic in hand PRIOR to posting your first discussion due on **Saturday of Week #1** as the discussion post is directly related to your paper topic. If you do not, you will be significantly behind in your work for this and other courses (not to mention make a poor grade on the assignment).

As you will learn in this class, there are several different study types. With only limited exceptions, most of you will not be conducting actual research that requires IRB

approval, but if you wish to take this route, you need to contact your professor immediately. There is much to be done in a short amount of time. Most of you will likely tackle a policy or practice consideration. For this you will need to rely on information and literature that others have written on the subject.

Once you have selected your topic, your next task is to begin the process of compiling a list of references for possible use in your annotated bibliography. You may have already found several references of interest when you were searching for your topic. At this point, however, you should refine your literature search and hone your list of applicable/relevant resources to 10. Obviously (and with limited exceptions), there will be well more than 10 credible sources that you could use. Your challenge is to pick the 10 most important/relevant articles to your topic.

Annotated bibliographies are not just lists of sources. Instead, they are critical appraisals of the articles/books you have selected. See these links for more explanation of what annotated bibliographies are. They will assist you greatly.

http://lib.calpoly.edu/research/guides/bibliography.html or
http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm

It isn't enough to provide an abstract (a summary) of an article/book. Instead, you must read the article/book and provide critical evaluation/assessment of what you have read. You will also wish to attempt to make linkages between materials that you read. Some material may agree/disagree/evaluate the same questions differently, etc. You will want to tease out relationships between your materials in the annotated bibliography. This will assist you immensely when you go to write the literature review.

Below is the format for your bibliography entries. You will be graded on your format and your ability to outline the key points of your materials in a clear, concise, and critical way. The sources you use for the annotated bibliography **MUST** be peer-reviewed publications **or** governmental reports.

Example:

> **Waite, L.J., Goldschneider, F.K., & Witsberger, C. (1986). Nonfamily living and the erosion of traditional family orientations among young adults.** *American Sociological Review,* **51 (4), 541-554.**
>
> The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to

test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living.

Each annotated bibliography should be at least 200 words but not over 500. Remember, the purpose of an annotated bibliography is to distill only the most important facts and information from the source you are citing. **Maximum** 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Include your name on the paper and utilize proper APA citation format. The annotated bibliography is due by **11:00PM CST on Tuesday of Week #4** of the course.

Literature Review Instructions (150 points): A literature review is substantively different than an annotated bibliography, but the work you do for the bibliography (if you so it correctly) will help you considerably with the literature review.

A literature review aims to highlight the current state of knowledge regarding a particular topic under study (see any journal article you have read for this program and/or the Literature Review FactSheet located in the CJ 500 Orientation course for more). Literature reviews generally include substantive findings as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic. Literature reviews are comprised of secondary sources and as such do not report any new or original experimental work. The main purpose of a literature review is to situate the current study/paper within the body of literature and to provide context for the reader.

A literature review is not a summary but a synthesis of the material from your annotated bibliography. As mentioned above, if you took the time to critically evaluate the 10 sources you chose, your literature review will be relatively easy. The idea is to take your sources and organize them in some way that informs the study you wish to conduct/paper you wish to write. This requires that you pull your sources together in a way that explains to the reader why the issue/topic/problem you have identified is worth studying (i.e., not covered in current literature, no consensus in existing literature, augmenting existing literature, etc.)

The literature review is due by **11:00PM CST on Saturday of Week #5** of the course. Your literature review must be a **minimum of 8 pages** in length (does not include references), maximum 12-point font, 1-inch margins, include your name on the paper, and utilize proper APA citation format.

Assessment Method: Students will be graded on their annotated bibliography using the Annotated Bibliography Grading Rubric. Students will be graded on their literature review using the Literature Review Grading Rubric.

Quizzes (2 @ 100 points each = 200 course points)

Student Learning Outcomes #2 & #3: Understand how to conduct criminal justice research; Problem-solve solutions to methodological problems

Quiz Instructions: You will take two quizzes in this course. They will be multiple choice/true false assessments of your knowledge of chapters 1-7 of your textbook.

Quiz #1 (covers chapters 1-4 of the text) Friday of Week #2 of the course
Quiz #2 (covers chapters 5-7 of the text) Thursday of Week #5 of the course

Quizzes will be available beginning at midnight on Wednesday of the week in which the quiz is assigned and close at 11:00PM on Friday of the week in which the quiz is assigned. Students will have only one opportunity to take the exam and the exam will be timed. Specific information regarding test length and time allotted will be available in the quiz link in Week #2 and Week #5.

Assessment Method: Quizzes will be graded automatically with scores available in eCollege.

Course Pre/Pos-test (not graded)

Pre and post-tests allow the professor to assess your baseline (foundation) knowledge of a particular subject at the time that you enter a course and the degree of increase in knowledge at the end of the course. This pre/post-test is comprised of no more than 10 questions that will assess your knowledge. You will be asked to complete the pre-test by **Friday** of Week #1 and your post-test by **Friday** of Week #5. These tests will not be graded (they are used for assessment purposes only).

GRADING

Assignments for this course will be scored using a points system. Below is an explanation of how each assignment type will be scored.

Assignment Type	# of Assignments	Point Value	Total Points
Introduction	1	50	50
Discussions	4	100	400
Comments	20	10	200
Assignments	1	250	250
Annotated bibliography	1	100	100
Literature Review	1	150	150
Quizzes	2	100	200
Pre/Post-test	1	0	0
		TOTAL	**1100**

Grades earned on each assignment will be added together and will be divided by the total number of points possible in the course. Below is the overall point scale/grading schema for the course.

Total points possible for the term = 1100.

1100 - 990 = A
989 - 880 = B
879 - 770 = C
769 - 660 = D
559 and below = F

Grades will be available in the gradebook so that students can track their progress in the course in 'real time'.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

1.   You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband Internet connection. The minimum computer requirements for Ecollege are:
- Any current Flash-compliant browser (eg. Internet Explorer 7 or Firefox 3.0)
- 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
- Broadband connection required – courses are heavily video intensive

- Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display – 1024 x 768 or higher resolution
- A sound card and speakers or headphones

Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date

Some classes may have specific class requirements for additional software. These requirements will be listed on the course offerings page. Most home computers purchased within the last 3-4 years meet or surpass these requirements.

2. You will need some additional free software for enhanced web browsing. Ensure that you download the free versions of the following software:

Adobe Reader
Adobe Flash Player

3. At a minimum, you must have Microsoft Office 2003, XP, 2007 or OpenOffice. Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software utilized by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software, Microsoft Excel is the standard spreadsheet software, and Microsoft PowerPoint is the standard presentation software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading documents for assignment submission, will also be required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the bookstore to see if they have any student copies.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course will be facilitated using eCollege. To log in to eCollege/the course, use the eCollege/MyLeo log-in and password you received during the enrollment process.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

My primary form of communication with the class will be through Email and Announcements. Any changes to the syllabus or other important information critical to the class will be disseminated to students in this way via your official University Email address available to me through MyLeo and in Announcements. It will be your responsibility to check your University Email and Announcements regularly.

Students who Email me outside of regular office hours can expect a reply within 24 hours M-F. Students who Email me during holidays or over the weekend should expect a reply by the end of the next regularly scheduled business day.

eCollege Student Technical Support:

It is reassuring to know that technical support is available to make your online learning experience convenient. All you have to do is call or email and a knowledgeable representative will help you solve your technical issues.

myLeo Support:

Your myLeo email address is required to send and receive all student correspondence. Please email helpdesk@tamu-commerce.edu or call us at 903-468-6000 with any questions about setting up your myLeo email account. You may also access information at https://leo.tamu-commerce.edu.

Internet Access:

An Internet connection is necessary to participate in discussions and assignments, access readings, transfer course work, and receive feedback from your professor. View the requirements as outlined in Technology Requirements above for more information.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures:

Academic Honesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including (but not limited to) receiving a failing grade on the assignment, the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. In **ALL** instances, incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Department Head. Please be aware that academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, and collusion.

Cheating is defined as:
- Copying another's test of assignment
- Communication with another during an exam or assignment (i.e. written, oral or otherwise)
- Giving or seeking aid from another when not permitted by the instructor
- Possessing or using unauthorized materials during the test
- Buying, using, stealing, transporting, or soliciting a test, draft of a test, or answer key

Plagiarism is defined as:
- Using someone else's work in your assignment without appropriate acknowledgement
- Making slight variations in the language and then failing to give credit to the source

Collusion is defined as:
- Collaborating with another, without authorization, when preparing an assignment
  If you have any questions regarding academic dishonesty, ask. Otherwise, I will assume that you have full knowledge of the academic dishonesty policy and agree to the conditions as set forth in this syllabus.

Students should also reference the following link for more detailed information.
http://web.tamu-commerce.edu/academics/colleges/artsSciences/departments/sociologyCriminalJustice/frequentlyAskedQuestions/academicHonesty/default.aspx

Policy for Reporting Problems with eCollege

Students who encounter eCollege-based problems with submitting assignments/exams, etc., are required to do the following:

Call 1-866-656-5511 or 720-931-3847 (direct), or through the Online Chat by clicking on the "Tech Support" tab within your eCollege course. You may also Email helpdesk@online.tamuc.org

Hours: The eCollege helpdesk is open 24/7 to meet your needs.

Your call will be logged and I will check with the Tech Support staff to confirm your call. Once I have confirmed your call, I will contact you regarding the issue.

Only eCollege-based problems will be addressed. Make sure your internet connection is working and viable when taking tests or turning in assignments.

Attendance Policy

While this is an online course, students are expected to 'attend class' and actively participate. Student participation/activity will be monitored by the professor. Students should plan to dedicate approximately 15-20 hours/week of time to this course, of which approximately 1 hour/week should be spent in the discussion board (reading posts and comments and conversing with others).

APA Citation Format Policy

It is very important that you learn how to cite properly. In some ways, citations are more important than the actual text of your paper/assignment. Therefore, you should take this task seriously and devote some time to understanding how to cite properly. If you take the time to understand this process up front, it will save you a significant amount of time in the long run (not to mention significant deductions in points).

In the social and behavioral sciences (including Criminal Justice), we use APA (American Psychological Association) format. As a rule of thumb, one cites whenever they are paraphrasing other people's words or when they quote other's words directly. You may learn to cite from a variety of different sources including the APA Tutorial and the sources listed below and in the CJ 500 Orientation Course.

www.apastyle.org
 http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/
www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa

It is the student's responsibility to understand how to cite properly. If you have questions, feel free to ask.

Late Work

In principle, I do not accept late work and do not believe in allowing students to turn in work after the due date. My position is that everyone knows the rules of engagement at the beginning of the term and that it is the student's responsibility to ensure that they plan accordingly to submit their assignments in a timely manner. However, I also do understand that sometimes there are circumstances outside one's control that may impact timely submission of assignments. To that end, I have developed a policy on late work. Please note that this policy applies **ONLY** to your discussions, papers, and quizzes, **not** your comments.

Late assignments will be accepted after the due date and time up to 1 day (24 hours) late. Twenty (20) points will be deducted from all late assignments. Assignments turned in more than one day late **will not** be accepted/graded.

Drop Course Policy

Students should take responsibility for dropping themselves from the course according to University policy should this become necessary.

University Specific Procedures:

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library
Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook).* Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Every effort will be made to adhere to the course schedule as noted below. However, unforeseen circumstances may require changes to the schedule. In that case, changes will be announced via University Email and in Announcements. The professor reserves the right to change the schedule if necessary and depending on the progress of the class.   I highly recommend that you follow the schedule outlined below **VERY CAREFULLY** so that you are sure to complete readings as assigned and turn your assignments in on time.

Please note that all discussions/comments/assignments are due by 11:00PM CST in eCollege on the day they are due as outlined in the syllabus. Please note that this course runs on a Monday-Sunday schedule.

WEEK #1—The Challenges Associated with Social Science Research

Monday	Read the syllabus carefully and make note of important course due dates. **Readings from the Text** *Chapter 1*: Science, Society, and Criminological Research *Chapter 2*: The Process and Problems of Criminological Research *Chapter 3*: Research Ethics and Philosophies
Wednesday	Post a Week #1 Introduction where you introduce yourself, accept the conditions of the syllabus, agree to the Rules of Netiquette, and answer the question I pose. Please note that this post is required for ALL students and will be graded. The link to the Rules of Netiquette may be found under Course and University Procedures/Policies under Student Conduct or here: http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html
Friday	Complete course pre-test
Saturday	Complete Discussion Assignment #1
Sunday	Complete Comments for Discussion Assignment #1

WEEK #2—Conceptualization and Measurement

Monday	This week's chapter discusses the conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement of variables used in social science research **Readings from the Text** *Chapter 4:* Conceptualization and Measurement Consider accessing this website for further information on this week's topic of study: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php
Thursday	Complete Discussion Assignment #2
Friday	Quiz #1 (covering Chapters 1-4)
Saturday	Comments for Discussion Assignment #2 due

WEEK #3—Sampling

Monday	This week's chapter covers issues related to sampling including planning the sample and challenges associated with developing a viable sampling method. **Readings from the Text** *Chapter 5:* Sampling Consider accessing this website for further information on this week's topic of study: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php
Thursday	Complete Discussion Assignment #3
Saturday	Comments for Discussion Assignment #3 due

WEEK #4—Causation and Research Design

Monday	This week's chapter covers the principles of causal explanation. **Readings from the Text** *Chapter 6:* Causation and Research Design Consider accessing this website for further information on this week's topic of study: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php
Tuesday	Annotated Bibliography Due
Thursday	Discussion Assignment #4 Due
Saturday	Comments on Discussion Assignment #4 Due

WEEK #5—Experimental Design

Monday	This week's chapter covers experimental design including issues related to validity. **Readings from the Text** *Chapter 7:* Experimental Designs Consider accessing this website for further information on this week's topic of study: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/index.php
Thursday	Quiz #2 (covering chapters 5-7)
Friday	Course Post-test due
Saturday	Literature Review Due