

CRIM 780 Research Methods

Class Information

Instructor Prof David Wilson
Day and Time Monday 4:30 PM—7:10 PM
Location Robinson Hall A205
Last Edited August 18, 2016

Office Hours

My office is in Enterprise 339. My phone number is 703.993.4701 and my email address is dwilsonb@gmu.edu. I will hold office hours on Monday from 2-4pm and by appointment. You may also drop by at other times (I'm often, but not always, around). I'm happy to meet with students—send me an email and we can confirm a time.

Course Description

This course provides you with an introduction to the logic and methods of social scientific inquiry in the areas of criminology and law and society. Topics covered will include the conceptualization and formulation of research questions, observation and measurement of phenomena, research designs applicable to field settings, principles of causality, and measurement methods.

Course Prerequisite

A prerequisite for this course is the completion of at least one undergraduate social science research methods course (e.g., from a sociology, psychology, criminal justice, economics, or political science department) or an undergraduate statistics course, preferably from a social sciences department.

Course Objectives and Learning Methods

The objective of this course is to prepare you for graduate level research activities, including your Master's thesis and doctoral dissertation. Upon completion of this course, you should have a strong conceptual understanding of the research process, be able to formulate a testable hypothesis derived from academic theory or practical policy concerns, and design research that will provide a valid assessment of the hypothesis. You will understand the complexities of conducting research in natural settings and will be sensitized to the numerous ethical issues involved in conducting research involving human participants.

The teaching methods for this course will include traditional lectures, didactic discussions, and class exercises designed to provide you with experience applying newly learned material. It is critical that you come to class prepared.

Course Grading

Your grade in this class will be based on two exams (a mid-term and a final), two written critiques of published research studies, one group project, class preparation and participation, and a final written research proposal. The exams will be short-answer and short-answer essay. The final exam will be cumulative.

Assignment	% of Grade
Participation/Preparation	5
Paper Critique 1	10
Paper Critique 2	10
Group sampling project	10
Mid-Term Exam	20
Final Exam	20
Proposal summary	5
Written Proposal	20

Instructions for specific assignments are in the *Assignments* folder of Blackboard.

There will be one group project as part of this course. I will form the groups for the project. The project will involve developing a sampling procedure for a survey using probability sampling methods. Detailed instructions will be provided. You will receive two grades on the group project: a group grade and an individual grade. The group grade will be based on the quality of the group project. The individual grade will be based on your group members' assessment of your contributions to the project.

All assignments will be graded using the following letter grades: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, and F. To compute your grade, I will assign these letter the following values: 4.00, 3.67, 3.33, 3.00, 2.67, 2.33, 2.00, and 0.00. Your final grade will be a weighted average of your individual assignment grades, weighting by the above % values. The cut-points for your overall class grade are:

A	3.90–4.00
A-	3.57–3.89
B+	3.23–3.56
B	2.90–3.22
B-	2.57–2.89
C	2.00–2.56
F	< 2.00

Required and Books

Trochim, W. M. K. (2005). *Research methods: The concise knowledge base*. Cincinnati, OH: Atomic Dog.

Bickman, L., & Rog, D. J. (Eds.). (2009). *The Sage handbook of applied social research methods*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Links or PDFs to other assigned readings can be found in the *Readings* section of Blackboard.

Schedule

- Aug 29 **Topic: Theory, Hypotheses, Designs, and Such**
Readings: Trochim Ch 1; Handbook Introduction & Ch 1; Campbell & Russo (1999)
- Sep 6 *Last drop date without tuition penalty*
- Sep 12 **Sampling**
Readings: Trochim Ch 2; Handbook Ch 3; National Crime Victimization Survey, Ch 2
- Sep 19 **Measurement**
Readings: Trochim Ch 3; Farrington et al. (1996); Sullivan and McGloin (2014)
- Sep 26 **Survey Research**
Readings: Trochim Ch 4 & 5; Handbook Ch 12
Assignment: Group sampling project
- Sep 30 *Last drop date with tuition penalty*
- Oct 3 **Qualitative Research**
Readings: Trochim Ch 6; Handbook Ch 7 & 17; Maher & Daly (1996)
Assignment: Paper Critique 1
- Oct 11 **Qualitative Research (continued)**
Readings: Trochim Ch 9; Marquart (1986)
Note: Class is on Tuesday this week
- Oct 17 **Mid-term**
- Oct 24 **Experimental Design**
Readings: Trochim Ch 7 & 8; Handbook Ch 5; Sherman et al. (1995); Gottfredson et al. (2006); Ridgeway et al. (2011)
- Oct 31 **Internal Validity & Quasi-experimental Designs**
Readings: Trochim Ch 9; Handbook Ch 6
- Nov 7 **Quasi-experimental Designs (continued)**
Readings: Esbensen et al., (2001); Wermink et al. (2010)
Assignment: Paper Critique 2
- Nov 14 No Class (American Society of Criminology Conference)
- Nov 21 **Discussion of Proposals**
Readings: Trochim Ch 13
Assignment: Proposal summary
- Nov 28 **Statistical Conclusion Validity**
Readings: Trochim Ch 11; Handbook Ch 2
- Dec 5 **Human Subjects and Ethics**
Readings: Handbook Ch 4
Assignment: Complete the Social and Behavioral Sciences HSR training at: <http://oria.gmu.edu>
Proposal due
- Dec 12 Reading day
- Dec 19 **Final-exam**

Statement on Academic Integrity

I expect adherence to the University Honor Code (<http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/>). If I witness a suspected violation of the Honor Code, I will follow the standard reporting procedures as outlined in the University Handbook. Most forms of cheating are self-evident and need no elaboration here. Plagiarism is not always well understood by students. Plagiarism is representing another's work as one's own. This extends to ideas as well as words. That is, if you paraphrase the ideas expressed in something you have read, you need to cite the author and source. Exact phrases, sentences, etc. from someone else's writing must be quoted and properly cited. If you are unsure how to cite properly, consult the APA Style Manual or ask.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474 (<http://ods.gmu.edu/>). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.