



**CRIM 315 Section 004**  
**Research Methods and Analysis in Criminology**

Professor: Dr. Sue-Ming Yang  
Semester/Year: Spring, 2020

Class Day/Time: Monday/ 10:30 pm - 1:10 pm

Office: 304 Enterprise Hall

Email: [syang10@gmu.edu](mailto:syang10@gmu.edu)

Class Location: Robinson Hall B203

Office Hours: M/ 1:15 pm – 2:15 pm, or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course deals with the issue of how to conduct research in the criminal justice field. We will cover various research designs, sampling issues, survey construction, interviewing, and ethical issues in criminal justice research. The goals of the course are to develop students' understanding of what constitutes the research process, to familiarize students with the language of research, the analytical tools and data sources, and to demonstrate the scientific ways of evaluating scholarly research articles and synthesizing research evidence. An orientation to library resources and online searches is provided to assist students in conducting library searches and information retrieval. Finally, the homework assignments are structured in such a way as to enhance the students' understanding of how to do research and to facilitate their performance on the literature review. You will not learn statistics in this course; however, we will deal with statistics by interpreting some of the key concepts relevant to the course.

**COURSE PREREQUISITES:**

A prerequisite for this course is the completion of CRIM 100.

**REQUIRED TEXT<sup>a</sup>**

Backman, Ronet & Russell K. Schutt. (2017). *Fundamentals of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice*. ISBN-13: 978-1506359571

**Alternate Textbook**

Bhattacharjee, Anol. (2012). *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*. Textbooks Collection. 3. ISBN-13: 978-1475146127. It could be downloaded for free using the following link: [http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa\\_textbooks/3](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/oa_textbooks/3)

**Readings:** Additional Readings will be provided in class by the instructor.

**It is imperative that you complete the assigned readings before the designated class.**

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<sup>a</sup> You can use an older edition of the textbook. But it's your responsibility to cross-check the content of the materials for discrepancies.

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

This course covers an extensive amount of material in 15 weeks. As such, it is extremely important that you keep up-to-date with assigned readings of the text. Any questions you may have about the reading materials should be brought up during class time to facilitate class discussion. Students are expected to attend all classes ON TIME and are responsible for all material covered in class. Lectures will cover some material not discussed in the text. The text will cover some material not covered in the lectures. Please read the textbook before coming to each class. Students are responsible for all material presented in the lecture, and all material covered in the text.

### ***FINAL GRADE COMPUTATION:***

The final grade will be weighted according to the percentages shown on the following.

**Class Attendance and Participation:** Attendance is mandatory. Each student is expected to attend classes and participate in class discussions. Since active and fully prepared participation in classroom discussion is critical to both the success of the class and your own performance, I expect you to attend all classes. Attendance will be taken at every class meeting. Students with more than three unexcused absences (notes for excused absences are to be given to the instructor prior to the class missed or during class) will face a reduction of their final grade by 5%.

**Examinations:** This course has three examinations during the semester. They will consist of multiple choice questions, true-false questions and short answer questions based on readings from all texts, class discussions and lectures.

Students are encouraged to attend all classes and meet reading requirements. Unless otherwise announced, the examinations will be held on the dates posted in the syllabus. There will be no make-up examinations without a *documented* disability, emergency, family tragedy, religious observance or participation in a University activity at the request of a University official. Students will not be allowed to use any books, notes, or other aids while taking the examinations. ***Note:*** It is the responsibility of the students to notify their instructor *in advance* of missing any examination. If students fail to notify their instructor of their intent (or need) to miss an examination, and/or do not provide proof of legitimate need to miss the examination, said students may not be authorized to take a make-up examination. In these instances, a student's final grade will reflect the *absence* of that examination, which will result in a 20% reduction of the final grade for each missing examination.

**Homework Assignments:** There are four homework assignments designed to facilitate your understanding of how to do research. An added benefit is that these assignments are geared toward the development of your research topic and proposal (assignments will be distributed in class).

**Research Poster Presentation:** The student is required to present your research on a problem in criminal justice or criminology and as a poster during the designated class time.

## GRADES:

Final grades are determined according to weights assigned to the course requirements:

Two Examinations (each exam worth 20%)	40%
Four Assignments (each assignment worth 5%)	20%
Poster Presentation	20%
Quizzes	15%
Class Attendance and Participation	5%

**Grade distribution: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = Below 60**

- ☐ Exam scores and quiz scores will NOT be curved.
- ☐ Final grades will NOT be rounded up (e.g., an 89.9999 is a B).
- ☐ Extra credit will NOT be offered individually.
- ☐ Final grades will NOT be altered because a student wants a better GPA, wants to graduate on time, etc

### Schedule of Classes

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
	Introduction		
01/27	Scientific Inquiry vs. Common Sense		
	(Class Exercise: NCVS)		
	Library Information Session (Christopher D Magee)		
	The Process and Problems of Research:		
02/03	Deductive methods vs. Inductive methods (Class Exercise: identify research questions)	Textbook Chap 1-2	
	<b>** 02/05 is the last Day to Drop with 100% Refund</b>		
02/10	The Process and Problems of Research: Research question and hypothesis testing	The Craft of Research: Chap 3-4	<b>HW1: Google It!</b>

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
	Social research strategies		
02/17	Conceptualization and Measurement	Textbook Chapter 4	
02/24	Sampling and Unit of Analysis (Class exercise: Sampling Exercise)	Textbook Chapter 5	<b>HW2: Initial Paper Ideas</b>
03/02	<b><u>Examination #1</u></b> Research Ethics	Textbook Chapter 3	
<b>03/09</b>	<b>Spring Break (No class)</b>		
03/16	Causation and Experimentation (Class Exercise: Random Assignment)	Textbook Chapter 6	
03/23	Survey Research (Class Exercise: Bad Questionnaire)	Textbook Chapter 7	<b>HW 3: Annotation Assignment</b>
03/30	Qualitative Research Methods (Watch Documentary: Girlhood)	Textbook Chapter 8	
04/06	Agency Records, Secondary Data, and Content Analysis: Crime Mapping and other Methodological Issues	Textbook Chapter 9	<b>HW 4: (TBD)</b>
04/13	<b><u>Examination #2</u></b>		
04/20	Methods Review and Project related discussion	The Craft of Research: Chap 12-14	
04/27	Data Analysis		

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
05/04	Poster presentation		
05/11	<u>Final Examination</u>		

**\*\* The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.**

### **Academic Integrity And The GMU Honor Code**

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Students are expected to abide by the GMU Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, stealing, and plagiarizing (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/> for detailed information). **All graded work for this class (including homework assignments and exams) must be completed *independently*. Do not discuss or share your answers with anyone. The use of another student's clicker during class is prohibited.** Instructors are required to report all violations of the Honor Code to the GMU Honor Committee. Suspected cases of plagiarism may be evaluated using anti-plagiarism software. Please be sure that the work you submit in this class is your own, and that you provide proper citations when referencing another person's words or ideas. Violations of the Honor Code may result in a failing grade for the assignment or exam, a failing grade for the course, or any additional penalties determined by the committee, including dismissal from the university.

### **Classroom Conduct**

Do your best to attend all classes. Arriving late or leaving early is very disruptive; chronic tardiness or absences will affect your participation grade. **To avoid disrupting your peers and/or the instructor, please turn off the ringers to all cell phones/blackberries and do not access the Internet during class on your laptop or smartphone unless it's related to the course activities.**

### **Students With Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please inform the instructor and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. See <http://ods.gmu.edu> for more information.

### **The Writing Center and Mason Library**

The Writing Center at Mason (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>) is a fantastic and free resource providing information and one-on-one tutoring for all your writing needs. While I am always willing to review drafts of your writing and provide feedback, consider the Writing Center if you need more intensive assistance with any part of the writing process, from planning and organizing your paper to proof-reading and revising. Their website also has guides on best practices for reading, note-taking, and citing sources. Mason Library also has excellent tutorials on writing, reading, note-taking, giving presentations, time management, and academic integrity. See <http://library.gmu.edu/tutorials> for a full list.

### **Personal and Academic Resources**

If you are struggling, in crisis, or just need information and resources, the Offices of University Life provide support and assistance for many areas of your personal and academic life, including academic integrity, counseling and psychological services, disability services, diversity and inclusion, health and wellness, LGBTQ resources, and advice for international students. See <http://ulife.gmu.edu/home/offices-of-university-life/> for a full listing of service areas and contact information.

### **Counseling and Psychological Services**

If you are facing significant life stressors and feeling overwhelmed, there are resources available to help you. These include Counseling and Psychological Services (703-993-2380), which provides confidential psychological services, including 24/7 crisis intervention. There is also Student Support (703-993-5376), which helps students negotiate life situations by connecting them with appropriate resources. Student Support also has an on-line referral system (for non-emergencies only): <https://ssac.gmu.edu/make-a-referral/>. The non-emergency number for the GMU police is 703-993-2810. See <http://ulife.gmu.edu/home/offices-of-university-life/> for a full listing of service areas and contact information.

### **Administrative Information**

This syllabus is provided for your information and **may change as deemed necessary**. You are responsible for learning all the material contained in this syllabus as well as any modifications that are made to the syllabus during class time. All changes to the syllabus will be announced during class time and will be sent to everyone via Blackboard. If you have any questions about the syllabus or course requirements, please feel free to contact me. I am looking forward to getting to know you, and I encourage you to stop by or email to discuss ideas, questions, and comments you may have about the class or material.