

CRIM 315: Research Methods and Analysis in Criminology

Instructor Information

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Office Hours By Appointment

Course Information

CRIM 315 – DL4
Virtual instruction
4:30pm – 7:10 Tuesdays

Course Description

CRIM 315 introduces research design, methods, and analysis in the field of criminology. Students will learn to understand, interpret, and critique quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and become intelligent consumers of research.

A successful research methods course should not only teach students about statistics and research methods. Instead, it should teach students to become critical consumers of information. With research often presented in the media, it is important for all people to understand to evaluate what they are seeing and be able to gauge if a study is reliable. Some research methods are appropriate for only some research questions. Thus, it is important to know not only about the research methods, but when they apply and how we can better understand if they are performed effectively.

Strongly Recommended Text

Bachman, R.D. & Schutt, R.K. (2019). *The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice*. Seventh Edition. SAGE Press. Thousand Oaks, CA. (616pp.)

Some weeks require additional readings, noted in the syllabus and in class. These must be read **prior to the class period**. The outside readings will also be tested on the exam. Some in-class workshops may also require you to print materials before class.

You are also expected to conform to APA Style in all of your written assignments. You can obtain online APA help from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> or <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx> or the GMU Writing Center.

Class Preparation

This course is scheduled for 4:30 – 7:10 pm on Tuesdays. Viewing all lectures online (synchronous (live) and asynchronous (recorded)) can take place during that time, though recorded lectures will often be available before. By being enrolled in the course, you are making a commitment to attend lecture at the scheduled times and to actively participate in online class discussion. **You are expected to be available during this time each week, just as you would in an in-person course.**

Class time will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and demonstrations. Active involvement with the material is necessary to become a critical consumer of research in criminology. Active involvement involves asking questions and contributing to class discussions. Research has shown that active learning helps learners process the information at a deeper level, which aids in the understanding, subsequent recall, and critical questioning of the materials.

CRIM 315: Research Methods and Analysis in Criminology

Given the nature of the subject matter, all materials are highly interconnected and it is absolutely crucial that you show up for lectures and read the required materials to do well for the course. This is **especially** true regarding readings outside of the text, as the research methods presented in these articles could form the basis of not only the class discussion but also exams and participation. Readings will be made available on Blackboard at the start of the course, though the readings might be updated if new articles are published during the semester.

Respect

A good classroom is built on mutual respect between the instructor and students. In the physical classroom, this corresponds to a prohibition on text messaging, social media (Facebook, Twitter, whatever fancy new technology comes out), checking e-mail, using the internet or cell phones, reading newspapers, eating, playing games, sleeping and related behaviors are disrespectful and distracting. Online, it is a different environment and distractions are far more tempting. If you engage in these behaviors (especially sleeping!), you might be asked to stop or be removed from the class. Listening to something else via headphones during class is also unacceptable behavior.

This class will also touch on sensitive issues. If a topic is uncomfortable for you, you may leave the class no questions asked, and you are encouraged to contact the instructor about any missed material. In this instance, you will not be held accountable for missed participation (see below for participation grading).

All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

- Video recordings of class meetings that include audio or visual information from other students are private and must not be shared
- Live Video Conference Meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household

Most of our class meetings will be recorded to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard (or another secure site) and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester.

Late Work and Make-Up Policy

All written assignments are submitted via Blackboard. Work is considered “late” if it is not submitted by the start of the class period in which it is due. It is the student’s responsibility to make sure assignment files can be opened by the instructor (you must use .doc, .docx, or .pdf format). **Un-openable files cannot be graded or receive credit.**

In federal court, a late motion could lead to devastating consequences for the client (and an attorney malpractice claim). Accordingly, **late work is generally not accepted.** However, I understand that life does happen. In the case of an emergency, a late assignment can be submitted for 20% off each day late for a maximum of 3 days. If late work is going

CRIM 315: Research Methods and Analysis in Criminology

to be submitted, you must contact the Instructor via email **before** the deadline passes. If you read this and want 0.5 points of extra credit, send me an email with the subject "Syllabus" and, in the body, include a criminology topic you are interested in, your favorite movie, and your full name. It must be received before the start of the second class period.

All assignments will be submitted online via Blackboard. Make-up exams should not be necessary, given the extended time allowed for a take-home exam, and are only given for extended religious observances, scheduled University activities, or medical/family emergencies. The student is expected to notify the Instructor **before** the deadline on any assignment regarding observances or activities, and will be expected to complete the assignments **earlier** unless not possible. For emergencies, the student is required to notify the Instructor as soon as practical. Please see the instructor for more information.

Mason Impact

This class is identified as a Mason Impact course. The Mason Impact learning objectives are below. More is available at masonimpact.gmu.edu.

1. Understand knowledge creation: Students will understand how knowledge is generated and communicated, and how it can be used to address questions or problems in disciplines and in society.
2. Engage multiple perspectives: Students will be able to identify and negotiate multiple perspectives, work collaboratively within and across multiple social and environmental contexts, and engage ethically with their subject and with others.
3. Investigate a meaningful question: Students will use inquiry skills to articulate a question; engage in an inquiry process; and situate the concepts, practices, or results within a broader context.
 - Students will be able to ask increasingly complex questions about significant problems, debates, or challenges.
 - Students will be able to evaluate and choose inquiry methods that are appropriate to a project.
 - Students will be able to explain how a project has value to local, civic, professional, scholarly, or global contexts.

Technology

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system and Zoom, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable Internet connection. Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use web-conferencing software (Blackboard Collaborate / Zoom). In addition to the requirements above, students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.

Additional Resources

If you anticipate needing accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please contact the appropriate GMU entity and me for discussions of your needs

CRIM 315: Research Methods and Analysis in Criminology

for academic accommodation as soon as possible. I aim to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that have been disclosed to the appropriate GMU entity.

As needed, consider seeking out additional resources from the below GMU entities:

- Counseling and Psychological Services
- The Learning Services Office or field-specific tutoring
- The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME)
- University Career Services
- University Writing Center

Grading Scale:

A+ (100 - 97.50%)	A (97.49 – 93.00%)	A- (92.99 - 89.50%)
B+ (89.49 - 87.50%)	B (87.49 - 83.00%)	B- (82.99 - 79.50%)
C+ (79.49 - 77.50%)	C (77.49 - 73.00%)	C- (72.99 - 70.00%)
D (69.99 – 60.00%)	F (< 60.00%)	

The instructor reserves the right to round **up** but will never round **down**.

Assignments and Graded Activity

Your final grade will be based on the following. All assignments are due via Blackboard. Assignments are all individual assignments unless otherwise noted. Working together could constitute plagiarism, a zero on the assignment, and further University action.

CITI Training:	2 points
Research Critique #1:	10 points
Research Critique #2:	15 points
In-class assignments:	14 points
Take-home exam:	25 points
Data Assignment:	16 points
Final Paper	<u>20 points</u>
	100 points

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at the University, allowing the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. It is assumed that students have read and understand the University's Academic Honesty Policy as of the first day of class. You must not engage in or tolerate academic dishonesty. This includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exams, submitting work of another person, or work previously used for another class, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Violations of academic integrity will result in a failing grade on the exam, assignment, or the course and possible reporting. Failure to acknowledge other people's work by using quotes or appropriately referencing the author's work (even from the textbook, my lectures, or a past paper you've written) can constitute plagiarism. **Yes, you can plagiarize yourself!**

CRIM 315: Research Methods and Analysis in Criminology

GRADED WORK

Research Critiques: 25 points total (25% of your grade)

There will be two research critiques during the course, worth 10% and 15% of your final grade. Each will follow the same guidelines, though more will be expected in the second research critique (including some initial data analysis). The instructor will provide a set of articles for the students to choose from. The student will then write an APA formatted research critique on a set of factors discussed in the class (and provided to the student in the research critique prompt).

In-class assignments: 14 points total (14% of your grade)

Attendance will not be taken in the class, but attendance is strongly encouraged if not mandatory. Many weeks there will be an in-class assignment to complete during the course period. Each will be worth 2% of your final grade. **Only your TOP SEVEN will be graded.** It is likely that your lowest two will be dropped. If you are unable to make a class, there is no need to contact me. That in-class assignment will be a "0" but that is why the lowest two (or so) will be dropped. Just don't miss three weeks of class!

Take home exam: 25 points total (25% of your grade)

A take home exam will be given in this course. The take home exam will cover all of the classroom material, including outside readings and focus on **application**. Students will be given at least **five days** to complete the exam, which will be submitted via Blackboard. It is an open notes exam, but students **are not allowed to discuss it with each other**. The instructor will hold an office hours / exam review in lieu of class the week of the exam.

Data Assignment/CITI: 16 points total (16% of your grade) [CITI: 2%]

You will complete a long data assignment that will involve multiple parts. The data will stem from the class workshops on case coding and statistics, as well as the course material and the class research survey. This could involve both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Only access to Microsoft Excel is necessary for this analysis. In addition, early in the course, you must complete CITI ethics training (if you have not already done so) worth 3 points. Additional instructions will be provided.

Final Paper: 20 points (20% of your grade) You will be required to write a final paper that takes an area of criminology research and proposes research to answer your hypothesis. The focus of the paper (and the majority of the grade) will be on your hypothesis and methods sections, though you will also be expected to write a short introduction literature review. As an overview, it will be 7-9 pages (not including the title page and references), double-spaced, Times New Roman and following APA format. It must be at least 7 pages. You must have five empirical sources (peer-reviewed preferred.) You are not required to get your topic approved by the instructor, but please start early. More instruction will be provided on Blackboard. Much of the preparatory work for this paper will be completed within the in-class assignments.

Extra credit may be offered. If so, it will be offered equally to the entire class, not on an individual basis. Please do not ask for extra credit work.

CRIM 315: Research Methods and Analysis in Criminology
Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week	Classes / Dates	Required Reading / Topics	Readings	Assignments Due
1	January 26	Foundations of Research / Critical Thinking and Writing	Ch. 1, 2, <i>Syllabus, Video Games</i> [Note: I do not expect you to read before class]	
2	February 2	Foundations / Writing (cont'd) / Ethics	Ch. 3 <i>Belmont Report, Peer Review</i>	
3	February 9	Conceptualization and Measurement	Ch. 4 <i>Systematic; YRBS- Skim!</i>	CITI Training Due
4	February 16	Sampling	Ch.5 <i>Wine</i> <i>Sampling handout</i>	Research Critique #1 Due
5	February 23	Causation and Research Design	Ch.6 <i>SQF; Juveniles</i>	
6	March 2	Experimental Designs	Ch.6 (cont'd) <i>Accent; Taste/Punishment</i>	
7	March 9	Survey Research	Ch. 7 <i>GSS – Skim!</i>	Research Critique #2 Due
8	March 16	Evaluation Studies and Policy Analysis	Ch. 10	
9	March 23	No class; instructor will hold office hours to help with exam		Take Home Exam Due March 24
10	March 30	Quantitative Data Analysis / Visualization	<i>Handouts</i>	
11	April 6	Quantitative (cont'd)	<i>Handouts, cont'd</i>	
12	April 13	Qualitative Methods and Data Analysis	Ch. 8,9	Data Assignment Due
13	April 20	Mixing and Comparing Methods	Ch. 11, 12	
14	April 27	Research writing / Catch-up		Final Paper Due April 30

In the case of any emergency (technological, medical, apocalyptic?), please check your email and Blackboard Announcements. Always review the required readings each week BEFORE coming to class, except for in Week 1.