

CRIM 315: Research Methods and Analysis in Criminology

Instructor Information

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Office Hours By Appointment

Course Information

CRIM 315 – DL

Virtual instruction

4:30pm -7:10pm 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.

As this is a **Mason Impact** course, the course seeks to achieve the following student learning outcomes. Students will:



- Understand how knowledge is generated and communicated, and how it can be used to address questions or problems
- Be able to identify and negotiate multiple perspectives, work collaboratively across contexts, and engage in research ethically
- Use inquiry skills to articulate a question; engage in an inquiry process; and situate the concepts, practices, or results within a broader context
- Be able to ask increasingly complex questions about significant areas of research
- Be able to evaluate and choose inquiry methods appropriate to a project
- Be able to show how research offers value across local, civic, professional, scholarly, or global contexts

Required Text

Bachman, R.D. & Schutt, R.K. (2020). *The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice*. Seventh Edition. SAGE Press. Thousand Oaks, CA. (616pp.)

You are expected to conform to APA Style in your writing. For more information on APA formatting see the GMU Writing Center, <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>, or <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>.

Class Preparation

This course is scheduled for 4:30 – 7:10 pm Tuesdays. **You are expected to be available and attentive during this time each week, just as you would in an in-person course, although I do not anticipate we will use all of that time every week.**

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Class time will include lecture, discussion, and demonstrations. Active involvement is necessary and 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.

All lessons are highly interconnected and it is crucial to attend, read materials, and complete assignments. This is **especially** true regarding readings outside readings which can provide how research is used and presented. Readings will be available on Blackboard.

Respect

A good classroom is built on mutual respect between the instructor and students. Rather than list everything you shouldn't do, I will focus on what you should do: pay attention, offer substantive feedback during class, and engage with the material. Also be respectful to others and their opinions. This includes actually **attending** class. If you log in and walk away for an extended period of time, you might be removed from the Zoom classroom.

This class will touch on sensitive issues. If a topic is uncomfortable, you may leave the class no questions asked, but you are encouraged to contact the instructor about any missed material or applied proposal work. In this instance, you will not be held accountable for missed participation (see below for 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
- Do not share any course materials, including assignments or rubrics, with websites. This will constitute an ethical violation that could lead to further review.

Most of our class meetings will be recorded and stored on Blackboard for the duration of the semester. If you are unable to attend a class, review the lecture you missed.

Late Work and Make-Up Policy

All written assignments will be 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 or .docx, 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 a possible attorney malpractice claim!). Accordingly, **late work is generally not accepted.** However, I understand that life happens. If you are going to turn in an assignment late for any reason, you must notify me before the assignment is due. **You have one free pass this semester for a late assignment.** To use it, you must notify me **before** the deadline. You then will have an extra day to submit. If you (a) did not notify me before the deadline, (b) already used your free pass, or (c) used your free pass and didn't submit the next day, a

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late assignment penalty of 10% off each day late will apply, for a maximum of three days until it can no longer be turned in. If you read this and want 0.5 points of extra credit, send me an email (addressing it to Dr. Cantone) with the subject "CRIM 315 EC". Include your favorite movie, intended career choice, your preferred name, and how to pronounce it if you believe that would be helpful. To receive this extra credit, an email with all of this must be received within 48 hours of the end of our first class period.

Make-up assignments or altered deadlines should not be necessary, given that assignments are posted with ample time before the deadline, but will be given for extended religious observances, scheduled University activities, or medical/family emergencies if necessary. The student is expected to notify the Instructor **before** the deadline on any assignment regarding observances or activities, and will be provided with the material earlier, and 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. It's a pandemic – I get it; emergencies will come up.

Technology

Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use Blackboard and Zoom, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable computer access with a stable Internet connection and should be able to complete assignments online during the course period. Students must 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 any accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please contact the appropriate GMU entity for discussions of your needs for academic accommodation as soon as possible. I aim to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented concerns that have been disclosed to the appropriate GMU entity. Please also consider seeking out additional resources from the below GMU entities (hyperlinks provided):

- [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](#)

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

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failing grade on the exam, assignment, or the course and possible reporting. Failure to acknowledge other people's work by using quotes or inappropriately 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!**

GRADES AND ASSIGNMENTS

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**.

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:	4 points
Research Critique #1:	13 points
Research Critique #2:	15 points
Infographic:	7 points
In-Class Applied Proposal Work:	14 points
Participation:	8 points
Take Home Exam:	21 points
Research Proposal:	<u>18 points</u>
	100 points

CITI Training: 4 points total (4% of your grade)

Early in the course, you must complete CITI ethics training (if you have not already done so) via <https://about.citiprogram.org/>. Additional instructions are provided on Blackboard. You will receive 4 points for completing it with a 100% score, 3.5 points for completing it with a 90-100% total score, 3 points for completing it with under a 90% reported score, 0 points for not completing it. You can re-take the quizzes to obtain a perfect score. You must submit the document that includes your quiz scores for credit. Only submitting the completion certificate will get you 3 points.

Research Critiques: 28 points total (28% of your grade)

There will be two research critiques during the course, worth 13% and 15% of your final grade. They will follow the same guidelines, though more will be expected in the second research critique (including some initial data analysis). The instructor will provide the article and a very structured list of questions to use in the critique.

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In-Class Applied Proposal Work (APW): 14 points total (14% of your grade)

Throughout the course, students will be asked to complete in-class assignments associated with that week's topic. This material is all usable for the final proposal, due at the end of the course. Each will be worth 2% of your final grade. **Only your TOP SEVEN will be graded.** If you are unable to complete one for whatever reason, there is no need to contact me, as you will be able to drop **at least two**. *These assignments will be due via Blackboard by 9am ET the day after class. Class will often end early so you can work on the assignment and submit it the night of class if you work efficiently.*

Participation: 8 points total (8% of your grade)

- **Outside Reading (3 points):** In the first week of the course, you will be asked to sign up in groups for an outside reading. When it is your week, you will (1) give a 5-minute **group** presentation of that reading and (2) one person will post the group's at least 200-word summary in the Blackboard Discussion Forum.
- **Discussion Forum (5 points):** Each student must respond to FIVE (5) different discussion forum posts during the semester. Responses must be **at least 150 words and offer substantive comments** on the reading/others' thoughts in the forum. The goal is to create discussion!

Infographic: 7 points total (7% of your grade) You will be required to create an infographic that explains research terms used in class. Information on that assignment is available here: <https://sites.google.com/view/crim315infographic/home>.

Research Proposal: 18 points (18% of your grade) You will be required to write a final research proposal that takes an area of criminology research and proposes research to answer your hypothesis. **Much of this assignment will stem from the weekly applied proposal work (APW) assignments and can be completed throughout the course. You may re-use material from the APWs.** There will be a very specific rubric provided on Blackboard. Please work on this throughout the semester!

Take home exam: 21 points total (21% of your grade)

The take home exam will cover all of the classroom material, including outside readings and focus on **application**. Students will be given at least **seven 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**. Part of the exam will involve data analysis and visualization; it will only require access to Microsoft Excel, Word, and a calculator. *This exam will take considerable time – plan ahead!*

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.

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Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week	Classes / Dates	Weekly Focus	Assigned Readings	Required Videos	Assignment Due Dates
1	Aug. 23	Research / Critical Thinking	Ch. 1, 2, Syllabus <i>Sources</i>	Video: Reading Articles	
2	Aug. 30	Ethics	Ch. 3 <i>Belmont Report</i> <i>Peer Review</i> <i>Ethics/COVID</i>	Video: Literature Reviews	
3	Sept. 6	Conceptualization and Measurement	Ch. 4 <i>Pandemic Crime</i> YRBS- Skim!		CITI Training
4	Sept. 13	Sampling	Ch.5 <i>Wine; Sampling Handout</i>		Research Critique #1
5	Sept. 20	Causation and Research Design	Ch.6 <i>SQF; Liberia</i>	Video: Basic Statistics	
6	Sept. 27	Experimental Designs	Ch.6 (cont'd) <i>Accent</i> <i>Taste/Punishment</i>	Video: Quasi-experiments	
7	Oct. 4	Survey Research	Ch. 7 <i>GSS – Skim!</i> <i>Survey Handout</i>		Research Critique #2
8	Oct. 11	FALL BREAK! Give yourself a well-deserved break!			
9	Oct. 18	Evaluation and Policy Analysis	Ch. 10	Video: Needs Assessment Video: Design Decisions	
10	Oct. 25	Catch-up Week			
11	Nov. 1	Quantitative Data Analysis / Visualization	<i>Chi-square Handout</i> <i>SD Handout</i>		Infographic
12	Nov. 8	Quantitative (cont'd)	<i>Youth Incarceration</i>		
13	Nov. 15	Qualitative Methods and Data Analysis	Ch. 8,9 <i>Community Policing;</i> <i>Fatal Police Shootings</i>		Forum Participation
14	Nov. 22	Mixing and Comparing Methods	Ch. 11, 12 <i>Baltimore Sun</i>		Research Proposal
15	Nov. 29	Exam Review			Final Exam (Take Home) Due 4:30pm December 13

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.