

CRIM 517: RESEARCH PRACTICUM IN JUSTICE POLICY & PRACTICE Fall 2022

Dr. Charlotte Gill | Department of Criminology, Law and Society, George Mason University
Mondays 4:30–7:10pm, Aquia 346 | In-Person - Fairfax Campus

✉ Email me at cgill9@gmu.edu | 📞 Call me at (703) 993-6085 or text me at (703) 996-9403
📅 Schedule a meeting with me at calendly.com/charlotte_gill
👤 Teaching Assistant: Clay Drummond, cdrummo@gmu.edu

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

This research practicum is the capstone course for the Master of Science in Criminal Justice program. You will work with a justice organization to plan, conduct, and write up a research project that focuses on a problem or issue relevant and useful to the organization. You will present your findings in a policy-oriented white paper and a final presentation. You will also reflect on lessons you have learned from criminal justice leaders from the MS Speaker Series during your time in the program. The goal of this course is to synthesize what you have learned about the translation of criminal justice research into policy and practice in justice organizations by directly experiencing the translation process.

On completion of this course you will have:

- Created an original research project
- Communicated knowledge from an original research project
- Engaged in scholarly inquiry by
 - Articulating and refining a research question
 - Following ethical principles
 - Gathering evidence appropriate to the question
 - Assessing the validity of key assumptions and evidence
- Synthesized knowledge on criminal justice research, policy, and practice in order to effectively translate the findings of your research project to your partner agency.

Course Format and Expectations

As the culminating experience of your MS degree, this capstone course is intense and requires a good deal of preparation! You will be successful if you prepare ahead of time by lining up an agency to work with and think about what topic or area you want to research. The course is also structured to ensure you make progress on your project throughout the semester and don't wait until the last minute. There will be several milestones to meet along the way to keep you on track.

This course will be taught in person on the Fairfax campus. You are expected to attend classes when they are scheduled, but later in the semester we will have fewer formal classes and more opportunities for individual work time. You are also expected to work on your projects outside of class time, just as you would do reading and homework for any other course. While some classes will require you to read or prepare ahead of time, the workload will be balanced to give you time to work on your project as well.

Classes in the first part of the semester will focus on developing your research question, identifying appropriate research methods, and developing your writing and presentation skills. Later in the semester I will schedule individual meetings with you to ensure you are making progress on your project. During class sessions you may be expected to provide updates on the status of your project, as well as participate in discussion and small-group activities. See the [Course Schedule](#) starting on page 2 for more details about the class sessions and topics.

Assignments and Grading

- **Research proposal presentation: 10%.** You will give a brief presentation in class on **September 19** introducing your research question, why you chose it, and how you plan to conduct the research. We will discuss the presentations as a class and give collaborative feedback. Full instructions are posted in the Assignments section of Blackboard.
- **Final presentation: 20%.** You will give a 5-10 minute policy-focused presentation on your key findings during the final class of the semester (**November 28**). Full instructions are posted in the Assignments section of Blackboard.
- **Research report: 50%.** You will submit a final paper describing your research question, literature review, research methodology, findings, and policy recommendations. The paper will be 20 to 25 pages (minimum 5,000 words) and will include a one-page executive summary. Drafts of each section of this paper will be due at various points throughout the semester to keep you on track. Full instructions and deadlines are posted in the Assignments section of Blackboard.
- **Paper on MS Speaker Series: 10%.** You will prepare a brief (500-750 words) paper synthesizing insights and information gained from attending the MS Speaker Series during your time in the program. Full instructions are posted in the Assignments section of Blackboard. **Deadline: November 7.**
- **Weekly research journal: 10%.** You will keep a **weekly** research journal documenting the time you spent working on your project, what you were doing, what you accomplished, and questions/ideas you have while working. Full instructions are posted in the Assignments section of Blackboard.

Letter grades for this course will be based on the following points breakdown, according to the Graduate Regular scale:

A+	97-100	A	93-96.9	A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9	B	83-86.9	B-	80-82.9
C	70-79.9	F	< 70		

Course Schedule and Important Dates

In-person class sessions will be held in Aquia 346 every Monday from 4:30 - 7:10pm, unless stated below. The weekly schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced on Blackboard and via email. All readings and resources will be posted in the Course Content section of Blackboard and should be completed *before* coming to that week's class. Note that while there are fewer assigned readings in this class than you may be used to, you will also be expected to work on your project consistently throughout the semester.

Class	Date	Content & Information
1	Aug 22	Introduction and expectations
2	Aug 29	Writing and framing your research question
	Sep 5	LABOR DAY (Class does not meet today)
3	Sep 12	How to answer questions with data
4	Sep 19	RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS DURING CLASS TIME
5	Sep 26	Methods workshop 1 DEADLINE: Written research proposal due on Blackboard by 11:59pm
6	Oct 3	Methods workshop 2
7	Oct 11	Data management and analysis IMPORTANT: This week's class is on Tuesday
8	Oct 17	Individual check-ins and work time DEADLINE: Draft methods section due on Blackboard by 11:59pm
9	Oct 24	Individual check-ins and work time
10	Oct 31	Individual check-ins and work time
11	Nov 7	Individual check-ins and work time DEADLINE: Speaker Series paper due on Blackboard by 11:59pm
12	Nov 14	Presentation skills
13	Nov 21	Finalizing your report: The Recommendations section DEADLINE: Executive Summary and draft results section due on Blackboard by 11:59pm
14	Nov 28	FINAL PRESENTATIONS DURING CLASS TIME
	Dec 12	DEADLINE: FINAL PAPER DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 11:59PM (Class does not meet today)

See Blackboard for full syllabus, including links to readings and assignment instructions, course policies, and student resources.

Acknowledgments

This syllabus draws heavily from prior syllabi for this course developed by Professor Laurie Robinson. The course learning objectives are based on learning objectives for undergraduate courses designated as Research and Scholarship Intensive by George Mason University's Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research's (OSCAR) Students as Scholars initiative.