

CRIM 517: RESEARCH PRACTICUM IN JUSTICE POLICY & PRACTICE Spring 2023

Dr. Charlotte Gill (she/her/hers)

Department of Criminology, Law and Society, George Mason University
Mondays 4:30–7:10pm, Horizon Hall 4000 | In-Person - Fairfax Campus

✉ Email me at cgill9@gmu.edu | 📞 Call or text me at (703) 996-9403

📅 Schedule a meeting with me at calendly.com/charlotte_gill

🎓 Teaching Assistant: Clay Drummond (he/him/his), 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 throughout your time in the MS program 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 collaborate 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. **Remember, the capstone is the program's equivalent of a Masters thesis, so treat it with the time and energy such a project deserves.**

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 [list of classes](#) starting on page 3 for more details about each class session and topic.

Assignments and Grading

Full assignment instructions will be posted on Blackboard, and assignments should be submitted on Blackboard unless otherwise stated. A [summary of key deadlines](#) is on page 3.

- **Participation: 10%.** You will submit a weekly journal detailing your progress on the project. You are also expected to attend all scheduled sessions and required meetings and meet class deadlines (barring emergencies and other reasonable accommodations, which should be discussed with me ASAP).
- **Homework assignments: 10% total.** Several small homework assignments will be due near the beginning of the semester. These include reviewing a prior capstone paper, submitting CITI ethics training certification, and conducting an informational interview with a client.
- **Preliminary project plan: 5%.** You will write up an initial description of your research question and client, and an annotated bibliography of relevant research.
- **Research design and data collection plan: 5%.** You will write up a summary of your research question(s) and how you plan to collect and analyze data to answer them.
- **Draft white paper: 30% total.** Throughout the semester you will have opportunities to submit drafts of each section of your report for review. These will be submitted in three parts: (1) the literature review and methodology sections; (2) the executive summary and results; and (3) the conclusions and recommendations.
- **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.
- **Final presentation: 10%.** You will give a brief practitioner-oriented presentation on your key findings during one of the final two classes of the semester.
- **Final white paper: 20%.** Your final report will contain revised versions of each of the draft sections submitted earlier in the semester. The final paper will be 20-25 pages long.

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 Horizon Hall 4000 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.

List of classes

Class	Date	Content
1	Jan 23	Introductions and expectations
2	Jan 30	Writing and framing your research question
3	Feb 6	Using data to answer questions - ethically!
4	Feb 13	Methods workshop
5	Feb 20	MS SPEAKER SERIES: Hon. Theodore A. McKee Additional methods workshop TBD
6	Feb 27	Communicating findings: The presentation
7	Mar 6	Communicating findings: The white paper
	Mar 13	NO CLASS (Spring Break)
8	Mar 20	Individual check-ins
9	Mar 27	MS SPEAKER SERIES: Stephen Rickman
10	Apr 3	Individual check-ins
11	Apr 10	Individual check-ins
12	Apr 17	Individual check-ins
13	Apr 24	Final presentations 1
14	May 1	Final presentations 2

Summary of key deadlines

Due date	Due time	Deliverable	%
Jan 23	During class	5-minute presentation on your research idea	NA
Jan 30	End of day	Capstone reflection	5
Feb 6	End of day	CITI training and informational interview summary	5
Feb 13	End of day	Preliminary project plan	5
Feb 27	End of day	Research design & data collection plan	5
Mar 20	End of day	Draft report part 1 (Literature review and methodology)	10
Apr 10	End of day	Speaker Series paper	10
Apr 17	End of day	Draft report part 2 (Executive summary and results)	10
Apr 24	During class	Final presentations (group 1)	10
May 1	During class	Final presentations (group 2)	10
May 1	End of day	Draft report part 3 (Conclusions and recommendations)	10
May 12	End of day	Final paper (all sections)	20

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

Acknowledgments

This syllabus and course design draws heavily from a [capstone course](#) designed by Professor Nancy Augustine at the George Washington University and prior syllabi for CRIM 517 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.