

CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH METHODS – SPRING 2017 SYLLABUS

CRJU 340-05, #16474, TTH 5:30-6:45, H-224

CRJU 340-06, #17091, F 1:00-3:45, MH-406

Faculty information (UPS item 1)

Instructor: Julius (Jay) Wachtel

Office: LH 624

Hours: TH 4:30-5:15, Fr 12:00-12:45

Telephone: (657) 278-6740. Please note that the instructor only answers the phone while in the office and does not check messages. E-mail is strongly preferred.

E-mail: jwachtel (at) fullerton (dot) edu

Weekly schedule is subject to change – please use the web schedule

Course information (UPS item 2)

Objective and learning goals

This course presents an overview of the research process. Its primary objective is to provide students sufficient fluency in statistics and research methodology to make appropriate use of scholarly journals in criminal justice and criminology. Students learn to frame research questions, formulate hypotheses, collect, analyze and display data, arrive at supportable conclusions and present their findings. Students are exposed to measurement issues and concepts, learn to use descriptive statistical techniques and are introduced to sampling and hypothesis testing.

Required text

Statistics for Criminal Justice and Criminology in Practice and Research: An Introduction, by Jack and Jerry Fitzgerald (Sage Publications, 2013).

Required calculator

Students must bring an inexpensive, solar-powered calculator with no special functions except a square root key to every class session (available for \$5-10). Cell phones and scientific or graphing calculators are not permitted while taking exams.

Required flash drive

An inexpensive flash drive is required for running your slide show in class. Students will not be able to download their presentations from the Internet – it uses up too much time.

Grading standards and policy, exams, presentations (UPS items 3, 4, 5)

Grading standards and policy

100 points can be earned: up to 70 for the for the exams, up to 20 for a panel presentation, and up to 10 (5 @) for attending presentations by other students. Term grades will be assigned using the conventional scale (A=90, B=80, C=70, D=60, F=59 or less), curved if necessary at the end of the term to reflect class performance.

Plus/minus grading is NOT used. For this course to count towards Criminal Justice degree requirements students must earn a grade of "C" or above.

Other than for the special exam (see below) there is no extra credit. Missed points for attending other students' presentations cannot be "made up."

Any instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism or cheating, will result in a grade of zero or "F" for that activity, and/or a term grade of "F", and/or referral to the Dean. It is the instructor's policy to not change grades except for a computational error. Please do not ask for special consideration.

Examinations

Three exams covering concepts and statistics. Exams 1 and 2 are worth 20 points each; the final is worth 30 points. Required non-scientific calculators must be used during exams. No cell phones or other gizmos - required calculators only!

If illness keeps you from taking an exam on the scheduled date, please e-mail the instructor. Makeups must be taken during the next class session, or if the student is still ill, by the end of the week following the week during which the exam was given. Only ONE of the first two exams can be "made up." Makeups are not allowed for the final. Students who have done well on the midterms but cannot take the final due to a bonafide emergency may, at the instructor's option, be allowed an "I"ncomplete.

Each exam is a mandatory component of the course. To earn a grade higher than "F" every exam must be taken.

Special exam

At the instructor's discretion, an optional special exam may be administered in class between the first and second exams. Its purpose is to insure that misunderstandings of basic concepts, as tested on the first exam, are corrected. Five points can be earned, and will be applied only if the term grade falls below a "C". These points cannot be used to earn a term grade higher than "C". No makeups will be administered for this exam.

Special notice about exams and online materials

The website has links to the PowerPoint slides used in class and supplemental materials. These, plus the text, class discussion and student presentations are all fair game for exams. Here's the best rule: if it's mentioned in class, it's important.

There is no guarantee that the website will always be "up." Final versions of slide shows may not be posted until the day of class.

Exams are prepared with those who come to class in mind. Neither an exam date nor grading will be adjusted because the website went down.

Presentations

There are six panels, each with five or six students. Each student is assigned to a panel. Students participate in one practice delivery (rehearsal) and make one presentation during the term. For information and instructions see "panel presentations," below.

Participating in a panel and making presentations are required components of the course. Failure to make a presentation will result in a term grade of "F".

Classroom management

Cell phones, pagers and laptops

Please set cell phones and pagers to silent mode.

Absolutely no use of laptops or other electronic devices in class. NO recording. Laptops and other devices are distracting to users, other students and the instructor. Students with special needs are excepted (please bring your form on the first day of class.) Please take notes the old-fashioned way and plan your online activities accordingly.

Why the rule? For an illustrated reason, click here.

Accommodations, academic integrity (UPS items 6-7)

Accommodations for documented special needs: <http://www.fullerton.edu/DSS/>

Academic dishonesty:

http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/ups/UPS%20300/UPS%20300.021.pdf

Emergency Instructions (UPS item 8)

Emergency instructions homepage: <http://prepare.fullerton.edu>.

Active shooters and hostage-takers – escape and shelter in place information:
<http://prepare.fullerton.edu/ShelterInPlace.php>

- Depending on the suspect's proximity, quickly decide whether to stay or run.
- Either way, spread out.
- If shelter in place, lock or barricade the door.
- Take whatever cover is available. Use furniture to your advantage.
- Quietly plan what to do if suspect gets in. Confronting the shooter is an option.
- If run away, keep spread out. Use multiple routes.
- Don't charge into arriving officers. Keep both arms visible.
- Call 911 asap. Don't wait for others to do it.

Earthquakes and fires

- In case of earthquake, drop and cover.
- In case of a fire, leave immediately. Use the stairs.
- Assembly point is the adjacent faculty parking lot.

Panel presentations

There will be six panels, each with up to six students. Each panelist will make a presentation that describes an aspect of an assigned journal article.

Presentations require four to six (max.) PowerPoint slides (ID slide plus three to five content slides). Links to examples are below.

Making a presentation is required to earn a grade higher than "F".

Purpose

1. Students will learn how research methodology and statistical techniques are applied in real-world criminal justice research
2. Students will learn to read and interpret scholarly articles in criminal justice
3. Students will have an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of basic methodology and applied statistics

Articles

Each panel will be assigned an article from a scholarly journal. Students will be e-mailed a .pdf version at the beginning of the semester. (For a discussion about journal articles in general, see <http://faculty.frostburg.edu/mbradley/journalarticles.html>)

Slides

PowerPoint slides broken into bullet points are used as prompts for the speaker and to help the audience follow along.

Slides condense and summarize the key points of the presentation. Use the examples as a guide.

Please avoid technical terms. Your assignment is to translate concepts into ordinary language that anyone would understand.

YOUR WORK MUST BE ORIGINAL. DO NOT quote or paraphrase from the article. Don't use its sentences, even if you substitute some words. Other than for the names of variables, everything must be originally composed. Your assignment is to "translate" technical information into ordinary language so that non-experts will understand. That's not simple, but it's very rewarding.

Please format your slides to look **EXACTLY** like the examples linked on the website. Font used in the examples is Calibri (body), 30 pt. You may also use Courier or Times Roman. Please adjust the font size so it approximates the example.

Slides must be black lettering on a plain white background, just as in the examples. **NO** graphics. (Only exception is position #5, which will display a slide with a table. The table will be emailed to the student.)

Oral presentation

Students have a maximum time limit of five minutes to cover their material. Insofar as possible they should avoid technical terms and jargon, translating everything to ordinary language, and proceed as though presenting to an educated but non-expert audience.

Panelists must rehearse and commit as much as is reasonable to memory and should only refer to notes when absolutely necessary. Please **DO NOT** read your presentation from notes -- it's painful for the audience and will cause a loss of points.

Grading will be based on coverage of the material, clarity of expression and avoiding reading from notes.

Grading

Twenty points are possible. Up to five points are awarded for making a practice presentation on the date scheduled, up to five for the actual oral presentation, and up to ten for the slides.

Grading for the slides will be based on coverage of the material, clarity of expression, neatness, and following instructions.

Detailed instructions for each panel

Panels present three times during the semester. Each student appears once. They split up the work as follows.

FIRST PRESENTATION DATE (presenters #1 & #2 – about week 4)

Student 1: Introduction and literature review

1. Article title, authors. Set out the research question. Explain in some detail what is being studied, and why.
2. From the literature review, discuss prior research into this issue. What have others researchers discovered?

Student 2: Hypothesis and key variables

1. Article title (only)
2. Set out the hypothesis (if there is more than one, the two or three most important)
3. For the main hypothesis, identify the main dependent and independent variable(s). Don't get into technical measurement issues.

SECOND PRESENTATION DATE (presenters #3 & #4 – about week 8)

Student 3: Research approach and methodology

1. Article title (only)
2. Very briefly restate the main hypotheses and identify the main dependent and independent variables. (You are summarizing what student #2 said.)
3. Explain where researchers got their data. Did they collect it? Or did they use data from another study? Often it's both. If existing studies were used, briefly describe them.
4. Identify the research design used in the study (experimental, quasi-experimental, non-experimental). Why did researchers take this approach?
5. Identify the sample (e.g., 250 high-school students in the XYZ school district) and the population - the largest group to which researchers intend to project their findings (e.g., all students in the L.A. School District).

6. Describe the sampling technique. How were cases selected? (If the data came from another study, how did those authors select their cases?) Identify the unit of analysis. What constitutes a "case"? (Remember that it's not always one person - it can be one event, or one place.)

Student 4: Variables and measurement

1. Article title (only)
2. Identify the main dependent and independent variables. If there are several categories, take the most important from each. State how each variable was measured. Is it categorical or continuous? Were "dummy" variables used?
3. Identify variables with possible validity and reliability concerns. (Validity - do they represent the real world? Reliability - can they be accurately and consistently measured?)

THIRD PRESENTATION DATE (presenters #5 & #6 – about week 16)

Student 5: Key findings

1. Article title (only)
2. Very briefly restate the main hypotheses and identify the main dependent and independent variables. (You are summarizing what student #2 said.)
3. Describe the main findings. Taking one finding at a time, point to and interpret the statistical significance of relationships in the table that support the finding. Describe the effect of independent variables in percentage or other appropriate terms.
4. Be sure to track any changes in the above effects across the table. Describe any differences, say, under different models or conditions, and explain why they exist.

Student 6: Discussion

1. Article title (only)
2. List principal and other key hypotheses (limit 3 total)
3. From the concluding section of the article, were the principal hypothesis/hypotheses confirmed? To what extent?
4. What implications were raised by the research? What of importance is there still to learn?
5. Was anything of importance lacking in the data or in the research design? How could future studies be improved?