

# CRM 340-901: Research Methods in Criminology and Criminal Justice

Professor: Ethan Amidon, Ph.D.

Course Meets: TR 2:00 – 3:15 pm

Office Hours: 10 am – 2 pm (Tues -Thurs) or by appointment

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Location: Strong Hall 0409

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## **Course Description**

The objective of this course is to examine the basic research methodologies that are used in the field of criminology and criminal justice. Students will learn various research strategies used in quantitative, qualitative, and evaluation research.

## **Student Learning Outcomes & Methods of Assessment**

The core objectives of this course are described by the following goals and learning objectives. Students who complete this course should be able to:

1. Critically examine the core methodologies used to conduct research in the field of criminology and criminal justice.  
**Assessment Strategy:** Quizzes, assignments, exams, and the final paper
2. Design an appropriate research strategy for the purpose of answering an empirical research question.  
**Assessment Strategy:** Final paper
3. Demonstrate the ability to conduct a literature review of academic research.  
**Assessment Strategy:** The literature review portion of the final paper will be assessed in terms of whether the student: **1)** produces an organized and readable review of the academic literature on their topic, **2)** maintains a scholarly and objective writing tone throughout the literature review, **3)** shows the ability to synthesize multiple readings into a coherent flow, **4)** identifies the core methodological strategies and findings from scholarly sources, and **5)** demonstrates appropriate grammar, spelling, and writing skills for an upper-level student.

## **Required Materials**

There is one textbook required for this course, and it is available in the MSU bookstore or online (e.g., [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.half.com](http://www.half.com)):

**Maxfield, Michael G. and Earl Babbie. 2012. *Basics of Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.**

\*Additional required readings and articles will be assigned throughout the course and will be provided by the professor on Blackboard.

## Grading

Your final grade for this class will be based on your performance on three exams, ten quizzes, one final paper, and ten assignments. The breakdown of your final grade is as follows:

3 Exams	300 points
10 Quizzes	100 points
1 Final Paper	150 points
10 Assignments	150 points
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 700 points

**Exams (~43%):** There will be four exams worth 100 points each given **in class** throughout the course. These exams will consist of material covered in the assigned readings, class lectures and notes, and online assignments. A student's overall exam grade will be determined by their performance on **only three** out of the four exams. A **non-mandatory** cumulative final will be given at the end of the semester that can be used to substitute for the student's lowest test grade.

**Quizzes (~14%):** There will be eleven weekly quizzes given **in class** over the course of the semester. These quizzes are worth 10 points each, and they will cover the reading material assigned for the particular day the quiz is distributed. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

**Final Paper (~21%):** The paper assignment will be due on **MAY 11<sup>th</sup>** at the beginning of class. This assignment will require students to design a short 20-question survey and write a 10-15 page paper that explains how their survey questions address their research question. The paper portion of this assignment will consist of students clearly identifying their research question, performing a literature review on the main concepts in their research question, defining the key concepts in their research question, and explaining how the questions in their survey are designed to answer their research question. Students will be expected to turn in a short one-page summary of their project on **APRIL 11<sup>TH</sup>**. **The one-page summary is worth 10% of your overall grade on the paper (i.e., one letter grade).**

**Online Assignments (~21%):** There will be eleven assignments worth 15 points each that will be due throughout the course of the semester. These assignments will consist of short thought papers and exercises that will require students to correctly interpret and apply the core concepts covered in the assigned weekly chapters. Assignments will **generally** be graded in terms of: **1)** the clarity of the student's response (i.e., whether the student clearly articulates their point using proper punctuation and grammar), **2)** the correct identification and application of core methodological concepts, **3)** the quality of the justifications offered for why a specific approach or methodology addresses the problem, and **4)** the overall thoughtfulness of the student's response. Additional grading expectations may be included in the instructions for online assignments. **Assignment instructions will be posted on Blackboard on Mondays, and assignments will be due the following Monday by MIDNIGHT, unless otherwise noted.** If students complete all eleven assignments, the lowest assignment grade will be dropped.

**Make-up Policy and Late Assignments:** Make-up exams or the acceptance of late assignments will only be given/accepted in emergency situations and only when the student has received permission from me prior to the due date. If an emergency situation should arise, please contact me via email before the assignment/exam/paper scheduled due date. **Students who fail to notify me before the due date will not be allowed to make up the course work. Students will also be required to provide documentation regarding their absence.**

**The grading scale for this class is as follows:**

A	= 90% - 100%
B	= 80% - 89%
C	= 70% - 79%
D	= 60% - 69%
F	= Below 60%

### **Course Policies and Expectations**

**Attending lectures is strongly suggested if you expect to perform well in this class. In order to properly prepare for in-class meetings, students are expected to have completed the assigned chapter(s) for the week, reviewed the lecture notes posted online, and come to class ready to discuss the material.** Given the importance of attending lectures and preparing for class discussions, the weekly quizzes and assignments are designed to ensure that students regularly attend classes and stay up to date with the assigned readings.

**Lecture notes in the form of PowerPoints will be made available online before the class in which the topic is scheduled to be discussed.** These lecture notes are designed to highlight the key concepts covered in every chapter and to assist students with their preparation for in-class lectures, online assignments, quizzes, and exams. If you are unable to attend a class, please contact another student for their notes on the material that you missed.

**Students are also responsible for ensuring their ability to access and complete all of the requirements associated with the online component of this course.** In order to perform well in this aspect of the class, students will likely need to access Blackboard on a daily basis. **It is the responsibility of the student to make sure they will be able to frequently access a computer with Internet capabilities throughout the semester.** Furthermore, if technical difficulties should arise when using the online component of this class, students will be expected to actively address these issues by contacting the **help desk (417-836-5891)** and myself (either in-class, via email, or during office hours) for assistance with these problems. **Missing submission dates for online assignments based on either of these issues will rarely be excused.**

It is also expected that students will demonstrate respect for their fellow classmates' views and opinions. This means avoiding the use of abusive, harassing, or insulting language toward other students both online and in class. One of the goals of this class is to create a collaborative environment in which students are able to communicate with one another to increase their knowledge of the course material. In order to attain this goal, we must all strive to be respectful of each other and to create an atmosphere that encourages student participation and discussion. **If a student is found to be in violation of these expectations, the minimum**

**sanction will consist of either being excused from class or receiving a zero for the online assignment in which the violation occurred.**

Finally, as a member of the learning community, each student has a responsibility to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones or pagers ring and students respond in class or leave class to respond, it disrupts the class. Therefore, the [Office of the Provost](#) prohibits the use by students of cell phones, pagers, PDAs, or similar communication devices during scheduled classes. All such devices must be turned off or put in a silent (vibrate) mode and ordinarily should not be taken out during class. Given the fact that these same communication devices are an integral part of the University's emergency notification system, an exception to this policy would occur when numerous devices activate simultaneously. When this occurs, students may consult their devices to determine if a university emergency exists. If that is not the case, the devices should be immediately returned to silent mode and put away. Other exceptions to this policy may be granted at the discretion of the professor.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Missouri State University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution and maintains a grievance procedure available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries or concerns about possible discrimination to the [Office for Equity and Diversity](#), Park Central Office Building, 117 Park Central Square, Suite 111, (417) 836-4252. Other types of concerns (i.e., concerns of an academic nature) should be discussed directly with your instructor and can also be brought to the attention of your professor's Department Head. Please visit the OED website at [www.missouristate.edu/equity/](http://www.missouristate.edu/equity/).

### **Students with Disabilities**

To request academic accommodations for a disability, contact the Director of the [Disability Resource Center](#), Plaster Student Union, Suite 405, (417) 836-4192 or (417) 836-6792 (TTY), [www.missouristate.edu/disability](http://www.missouristate.edu/disability). Students are required to provide documentation of disability to the Disability Resource Center prior to receiving accommodations. The Disability Resource Center refers some types of accommodation requests to the [Learning Diagnostic Clinic](#), which also provides diagnostic testing for learning and psychological disabilities. For information about testing, contact the Director of the [Learning Diagnostic Clinic](#), (417) 836-4787, <http://psychology.missouristate.edu/ldc>.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Missouri State University is a community of scholars committed to developing educated persons who accept the responsibility to practice personal and academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing and following the university's student honor code, *Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures*, available at [www.missouristate.edu/assets/provost/AcademicIntegrityPolicyRev-1-08.pdf](http://www.missouristate.edu/assets/provost/AcademicIntegrityPolicyRev-1-08.pdf) and also available at the Reserves Desk in Meyer Library. Any student participating in any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to sanctions as described in this policy. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive zero points for the assignment.

## **Emergency Response Statement**

At the first class meeting, students should become familiar with a basic emergency response plan through a dialogue with the instructor that includes a review and awareness of exits specific to the classroom and the location of evacuation centers for the building. All instructors are provided this information specific to their classroom and/or lab assignments in an e-mail prior to the beginning of the fall semester from the Office of the Provost and Safety and Transportation. Students with disabilities impacting mobility should discuss the approved accommodations for emergency situations and additional options when applicable with the professor.

For more information go to <http://www.missouristate.edu/safetran/51597.htm> and <http://www.missouristate.edu/safetran/erp.htm>.

## **Course Outline**

- WEEK 1 (1/17):**     **Introduction to the Course**
- WEEK 1 (1/19):**     **Criminal Justice and Scientific Inquiry (Chapter 1)**  
QUIZ # 1
- WEEK 2 (1/24):**     **Ethics and Criminal Justice Research (Chapter 2)**  
QUIZ # 2
- WEEK 2 (1/26):**     **Ethics and Criminal Justice Research Cont.**  
ASSIGNMENT # 1
- WEEK 3 (1/31):**     **General Issues in Research Design (Chapter 3)**  
QUIZ # 3
- WEEK 3 (2/2):**      **General Issues in Research Design Cont.**  
ASSIGNMENT # 2
- WEEK 4 (2/7):**     **Concepts, Operationalization and Measurement (Chapter 4)**  
QUIZ # 4
- WEEK 4 (2/9):**     **Concepts, Operationalization and Measurement Cont.**  
ASSIGNMENT # 3
- WEEK 5 (2/14):**    **Review for Exam # 1**
- WEEK 5 (2/16):**    **Exam # 1**
- WEEK 6 (2/21):**    **Review of Criminological Theories**

- WEEK 6 (2/23): Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Theoretical Constructs**  
ASSIGNMENT # 4
- WEEK 7 (2/28): Survey Research (Chapter 7)**  
QUIZ # 5
- WEEK 7 (3/2): Survey Research Cont.**  
ASSIGNMENT # 5
- WEEK 8 (3/7): Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs (Chapter 5)**  
QUIZ # 6
- WEEK 8 (3/9): Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs Cont.**  
ASSIGNMENT # 6
- WEEK 9 (3/14 & 3/16): NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**
- WEEK 10 (3/21): Sampling (Chapter 6)**  
QUIZ # 7
- WEEK 10 (3/23): Sampling Cont.**  
ASSIGNMENT # 7
- WEEK 11 (3/28): Review for Exam # 2**
- WEEK 11 (3/30): Exam # 2**
- WEEK 12 (4/4): How to Find Scholarly Journal Articles**
- WEEK 12 (4/6): How to Interpret Scholarly Articles & Write a Literature Review**  
ASSIGNMENT # 8
- WEEK 13 (4/11): Field Research (Chapter 8)**  
**HARDCOPY OF PAPER SUMMARY DUE IN CLASS ON**  
**TUESDAY, APRIL 11<sup>TH</sup>**  
QUIZ # 8  
Sterk, Claire E. 2007. “Tricking and Tripping: Fieldwork on Prostitution in the Era of AIDS.”
- WEEK 13 (4/13): NO CLASS – SPRING HOLIDAY**
- WEEK 14 (4/18): Agency Records, Content Analysis and Secondary Data (Chapter 9)**  
QUIZ # 9  
Eschholtz, Sarah, Matthew Mallard, & Stacey Flynn. 2004. “Images of Prime Time Justice: A Content Analysis of ‘NYPD Blue’ and ‘Law and Order’.”

- WEEK 14 (4/20):** Agency Records, Content Analysis and Secondary Data Cont.  
ASSIGNMENT # 9
- WEEK 15 (4/25):** Evaluation Research & Problem Analysis (Chapter 10)  
QUIZ # 10  
Esbensen, Finn-Aage et al. 2002. "National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) Program"
- WEEK 15 (4/27):** Evaluation Research & Problem Analysis Cont.  
ASSIGNMENT # 10
- WEEK 16 (5/2):** Introduction to Statistics (Chapter 11)  
QUIZ # 11
- WEEK 16 (5/4):** Introduction to Statistics Cont.  
ASSIGNMENT # 11
- WEEK 17 (5/9):** Review for Exam # 3
- WEEK 17 (5/11):** Exam # 3  
**FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS ON THURSDAY, MAY 11<sup>TH</sup>**
- WEEK 18 (5/16):** FINAL EXAM (1:15 – 3:15 PM)