

**Course Syllabus: Crm 602.1 Advanced Research Methods**  
**Saint Mary's University: Department of Sociology and Criminology**  
**Halifax, Nova Scotia**

**Revised Syllabus (January 12, 2005)**

**Term:** Winter 2004  
**Time:** Mondays 4:30 – 7:00  
(changed from Wednesday)  
**Place:** SB152

**Instructor:** Diane Crocker  
**Office:** MS 408  
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**Office Hours:** Monday 2:30 – 4:30, Wednesdays 10:00 – 12:00, Fridays 2:30 – 4:30

**Introduction to the Course:**

In this course you will learn about various research methods used in criminology. There are two broad objectives. First, you will learn about how to collect and analyse different types of data. This is the *how to* aspect of the course. Second, you will become familiar with some of the critiques of various methods. These critiques may be methodologically based but they may also draw from epistemological questions that surround empirical research.

Not all of the readings or in-class discussions draw from the criminological literature. While many unique issues arise in criminological research (and we will delve into some of them) the best literature on how to do research is more general. It is useful, therefore, to read and discuss works by people who are experts in research methods but who are not necessarily criminologists. The empirical examples of research that you read will be drawn from the criminological literature and I have also included many readings in which criminologists grapple with methodological issues.

You will complete several small assignments over the course of the semester, rather than writing one large paper at the end. This should enable you to become familiar with a wider range of methods that you can choose from for your thesis research.

**General Overview of Topics and Themes:**

Research Design and Measurement	Ethics
General Issues	Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis
Experimental Design	Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis
Survey Research	Data Analysis: Using a Computer to Help
Ethnography	Critical Theoretical Approaches
In-Depth Interviews	
Analysis of available data	
Focus Groups	

**Required Texts:**

*Methods: Sex and Madness* Julia O'Connell Davidson and Derek Layder (2001) New York: Routledge.

*Doing Research on Crime and Justice* Roy D. King and Emma Wincup, Eds. (2000) London: Oxford UP.

*Elementary Statistics In Criminal Justice Research* James Fox and Jack Levin (2005) Toronto: Pearson.

**Evaluation Components:**

Class Participation	15%
Ethics Review Form/ Tutorial	10%
Reading Presentation	15%
Qualitative Data Collection Assignment	10%
Qualitative Data Analysis Assignment	10%
Reading Summaries	30% (2 at 15% each)
Quantitative Data Assignment	10%

**Acknowledgments:**

I have drawn parts of the assignments from K. Bishchoping at York University.

**Detailed Schedule of Readings, In-Class Activities and Assignments/Evaluation:****WEEK ONE**

- \$ Introduction to the course, decisions of evaluation
- \$ Discussion of your research interests
- \$ Discussion of next week-s assignment/selection of readings

**WEEK TWO Wednesday, January 12**

Research Design and Measurement: General Issues

Readings

- *Sex and Madness* chapters 1 and 2
- *Crime and Justice* chapters 1 and 2

Activities

- \$ Introduction to the course, decisions of evaluation
- \$ Discussion of your research interests
- \$ Discussion of readings
- \$ Discussion of next week-s assignment/selection of readings

Evaluation

- \$ Class participation
- \$ Reading summary/critique of two of the four chapters (due in class)

**WEEK THREE Monday, January 24**

Research Ethics

Readings:

- Tri-Council Policy Statement AEthical conduct for research involving humans@B download from the SMU Research Ethics Board web page
- *Crime and Justice* chapter 17

Activities

- \$ In-class discussion of readings
- \$ Choose which qualitative data collection assignment to be done
- \$ Select Aempirical examples@for next weeks= presentations
- \$ Instruction on the Saint Mary-s Research Ethics Board requirements

Evaluation

- Ethics Review Forms/Tutorial due next week
- \$ Class participation

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## **WEEK FOUR Monday, January 31**

Research Design and Measurement: Surveys and Statistics

### Readings

- *Sex and Madness* chapters 3 and 4
- *Crime and Justice* chapter 18

### Activities

- General discussion/instruction
- \$ Discussion of readings
- \$ Presentation of readings

### Evaluation

- Class participation and presentations (by Alanna and Olena)

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## **WEEK FIVE Monday, February 7**

Research Design and Measurement: Interviewing and Available Data

### Readings:

- *Sex and Madness* chapters 5 and 8

### Activities

- \$ General discussion/instruction
- \$ Discussion of readings
- \$ Presentation or readings

### Evaluation

- \$ Class participation and presentations (Nicole and Sonya on interviewing and Sherman and John on Available Data)

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## **WEEK SIX: Monday, February 14**

Research Design and Measurement: Experiments and Ethnographies

### Readings

- *Sex and Madness* Chapters 6 and 7
- *Crime and Justice* Chapter 11

### Activities

- \$ General discussion/instruction
- \$ Discussion of readings
- \$ Presentation of readings

### Evaluation

- \$ Class participation and presentations (Jennifer and Augusto on experiments, Mark and Lynore on Ethnography)

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**FEBRUARY 21 --- NO CLASS – WINTER BREAK**

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## **WEEK SEVEN Monday, February 28**

Data Collection: Qualitative Data

### Readings

- \$ Emerson et al. ch 1 AFieldnotes in ethnographic research@
- \$ Emerson et al. ch 2 AIn the field: Participating, observing, and jotting notes@
- \$ *Crime and Justice* Chpater 4

### Activities

- \$ In-class discussion of readings
- \$ Discussion of ethical considerations

### Evaluation

- \$ Qualitative Data Collection Assignment due in two weeks
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## **WEEK EIGHT Monday, March 7**

Data Collection: Quantitative Data

### Readings

- \$ *Crime and Justice* Chapter 3
- \$ *Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire*

### Evaluation

- \$ Statistics Assignment due at end of term
  - \$ Class participation
- 

## **WEEK NINE Monday, March 14**

Data Analysis: Qualitative Data

### Readings

- \$ Wolcott ch 2 ADescription, analysis, and interpretation in qualitative inquiry@
- \$ Kirby and McKenna ch 6 APreparing for and doing analysis@

### Evaluation

- \$ Qualitative Data Analysis Assignment due in two weeks
  - \$ Class participation
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## **WEEK TEN Monday, March 21**

Data Analysis: Descriptive Statistics

### Readings

- \$ *Elementary Statistics* Chapters 2, 3 and 4

### Activities

- \$ Lecture/Demonstration

### Evaluation

- \$ Statistics Assignment due at end of term
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**WEEK ELEVEN Monday, March 28**

Data Analysis: Inferential Statistics

Readings

\$ *Elementary Statistics* Chapters 5, 6 & 7

Activities

\$ Lecture/Demonstration

Evaluation

\$ Statistics Assignment due at end of term

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**WEEK TWELVE Monday, April 4**

Data Analysis: Inferential Statistics

Readings

\$ *Elementary Statistics* Chapters 8, 9, 10

Activities

\$ Demonstration

Evaluation

\$ Class participation

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**WEEK THIRTEEN Monday, April 11**

Critical Theoretical Approaches to Empirical Data – selected readings

\$ Denzin *A*Postmodernism and deconstruction@

\$ Morris and Gelsthorpe *A*Feminist perspectives in criminology@

\$ Guba and Lincoln *A*Competing paradigms in qualitative research

\$ Strauss and Corbin *A*Grounded theory methodology: An overview@

\$ van Dijk, Teun A. *A*Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis@

Evaluation

\$ Reading Summary

\$ Class participation

## Description of Assignments:

### ✓ **Ethics Review/Tutorial**

Due: January 31

Value: 10%

The Qualitative Data Collection Assignment that is due at the end of February, requires you to have human subjects so you will have to submit a request to the Research Ethics Board. It is necessary for graduate students to submit these forms to the Board for any research that they undertake involving humans. See the description of that assignment to guide your completion of the forms. The Ethics Review will also provide me with the specific details of the study that you design for the Qualitative Data Collection Assignment.

You can get the forms on the SMU Research Ethics Board Web Page.

You must also complete an on-line tutorial on ethical research (<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/tutorial>). This is the same tutorial that members of the Research Ethics Board are required to complete.

Submit to me:

- two copies of a completed Saint Mary's Ethics Review Board Form
- certificate of having completed the tutorial

### ✓ **Presentation of Readings / Debates**

Due: Dates as assigned in class

Value: 15%

Two people will present on a particular method, one will give the advantages and the other will give the disadvantages. You can focus attention on how well the method would be suited to answer the question "what is the cause of crime" as well as make general comments. Try to draw your points out of the readings or other sources on research methods where relevant. Address both practical and epistemological issues in your presentation. We will then run a short "debate" between the two presenters and others in the class.

### ✓ **Qualitative Data Collection Assignment**

Due: 10%

Value: March 14

You may choose either to complete an in-depth interview or a field/observation study. You will submit some written work but the submission need not be formal B it is meant to guide our in-class discussion of your experiences collecting qualitative data.

► If you choose the interview . . .

Choose two respondents whom you do not know well, but know well enough to ask them to be interviewed. Decide on a topic to pursue with them in the interview. The topic may be related to the people you choose e.g., you can interview them about their work or some other aspect of their lives. The interviews should last at least 20 minutes but no more than one hour.

You must vary one aspect of the interviews. Some suggestions for aspects of the interview that you could vary (we can discuss others in class):

B take notes by hand in one and type directly into a computer for the other,

B choose different settings,

B use short, snappy questions in one interview and lengthy, wordy questions in the other,  
or,

B give one respondent the questions in advance.

Before you conduct either interview, write down which aspect you will vary and some thoughts on

what you expect to be the effects of these differences. Also, list how you expect the person to respond to some of the central questions. After conducting each interview, reflect on the interview and your expectations, drawing on the readings where relevant.

Submit two copies of: the interview schedule, a transcript or notes from the interview, the list of expectations and your thoughts after the interview is completed. The latter two should not exceed 5 pages and may be written in point form.

► If you choose the field/observational study . . .

Choose two settings **B** one that is very familiar and one that is not. Choose a time and date to conduct field research in the settings for one hour in each place.

Before conducting the research, list your expectations for each setting. What types of people do you expect to see? What will they be doing? What types of social interactions do you expect to observe? Reflect on how your choice of time and date may affect what is observable in the setting and any effects that your presence may have.

Conduct one hour of observation in each setting and take detailed fieldnotes. When you return from the field revisit your expectations.

Submit two copies of: your expectations, your fieldnotes (yes, they will be messy **B** don't worry about that!) and your reflections on your expectations. You should not submit more than 5 pages and you may write in point form. (The 5 pages do not include your fieldnotes which will be whatever length they end up being)



### **Qualitative Data Analysis Assignment**

Due: March 28

Value: 10%

For this assignment you will code and analyze data either from Canadian Judicial Decisions or media sources. We will discuss the sources and their availability in detail in class.

Choose a crime topic and select the 5 most recent discussions of the crime from whichever source you've chosen.

Code these data using the suggestions from the readings. You may apply one their methods directly or modify them in some manner.

Submit two copies of: the data, the codes and descriptions of them, illustrative quotations for each code.

We will circulate and discuss your codes in class so come prepared to make suggestions for how you would develop codes differently and what sociologically interesting issues arose from your analysis.



### **Reading Summaries**

Due: January 12 and April 11

Value: 15% each

Choose two of the readings assigned for the week and write a five page summary/critique of each. You should include a summary of the major points of the readings and also a comparison of the central premises from each article.



### **Quantitative Data Analysis Assignment**

Due: April 18

Value: 10%

This assignment will involve the analysis of some real data using SPSS. We will have to discuss individually the source of data that you'd like to use. I have several data sets but there are other ways to access data that we could explore, depending on your individual interests.

Choose two variables from the dataset and write a hypothesis about the relationship between them. Present a univariate table for each variable and state any relevant descriptive statistics. You may have to collapse categories of the variables.

Prepare a bi-variate percentage table. Using relevant statistics, conduct an analysis of the relationship between the variables and write a paragraph interpreting these statistics. (Include both descriptive and inferential statistics in your analysis) Decide on a graphical representation that would be illustrate the data.

Based on the results of this analysis, describe (in a paragraph) a research direction that would be interesting to pursue. Draft a one page questionnaire that addresses this topic. Write a paragraph that describes the type of sample that would be best if you were going to conduct this research.

Submit to me: statement of hypothesis, univariate and bivariate tables, statistics and one paragraph interpretation of them, a paragraph describing a new research direction, a graph, a one page questionnaire, a paragraph describing the ideal sample.

✓ Class Participation  
**Value: 15%**

See "Class Participation Assessment Rubric" attached



	High	Medium	Low
<b>Academic Skills</b>			
Textual Understanding	formulates questions	understands generally	sketchy understanding
Speaking	clear/articulate with complex ideas	difficulty communicating	inaudible, incomprehensible
Listening	exhibits understandings of ideas expressed by others	no obvious errors in hearing what others have said	misunderstand others' points, parrots others
Critical Thinking	critiques assumptions with debunking	understands critiques	debunks without analysis
<b>Social Skills</b>			
Teamwork	provides constructive feedback to others	to much focus on his/her ideas	dismisses, undermines class efforts
Good Manners & Sensitively	polite, respectful, even when critiquing others	occasionally rude or harsh but generally not	generally inconsiderate
<b>Personal Skills</b>			
Honesty/Integrity	admits fault for wrongdoing or when argument is not winning	attempts to adhere to high standards	cannot be trusted, does not follow through on commitments
Willingness to Accept Criticism	never defensive	usually not defensive	defensive
Responsibility and Initiative	punctual, gets work done, does readings etc.	generally does work as requires	unreliable, shows no initiative, passive

(modified from *The National Teaching and Learning Forum* vol 13, no. 6, Supplemental Materials, Appendix A "Socratic Practice/Ready for Work: Class Participation Assessment Rubric" at <http://www.ntlf.com/html/lin/suppat/1306a.htm> accessed January 4, 2005)

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**THE END!!!**