

**Introduction to Research Methods in Criminology  
CRM 2303A**

**Professor Holly Johnson  
Fall Semester 2014**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

<b>Class schedule:</b>	Tuesday 11:30-1:00 Friday 1:00-2:30 FSS 1007
<b>Professor's office hours:</b>	Wednesday 10:00-12:00 (or by appointment) Room 13042, Faculty of Social Science Building 120 University
<b>Phone:</b>	613-562-5800 ext. 1805
<b>E-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:hjohnson@uottawa.ca">hjohnson@uottawa.ca</a>
<b>Teaching assistant:</b>	TBD
<b>E-mail:</b>	

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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This course provides an introduction to criminological research. It is designed to provide a foundation for the further development of research and analytical skills required to interpret and conduct research studies. The course will focus on methods of inquiry, research design, ethics in criminological research, strengths and limitations of a wide range of criminological research practices, data gathering techniques, interpreting and analyzing data, and reporting results. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be discussed. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and come to class prepared to work with classmates and participate in class discussions.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify fundamental differences in the various approaches to conducting research in the field of criminology
  - Assess the strengths and limitations of different methodologies and apply appropriate methodological decisions to a variety of research questions
  - Translate ideas into research
  - Understand sampling techniques
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- Prepare a research proposal that includes formulating a research question, operationalizing concepts, selecting an appropriate methodology and method of analysis, and identifying ethical issues.

## METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Students will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

1. A mid-term exam covering readings and lecture material (30%)
2. A content analysis assignment (10%)
3. A research proposal, 10 pages double-spaced (25%)
4. Final exam covering readings and lecture material. The exam format and topics covered will be communicated to students well before the exam date (35%)

**NOTE: ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE COMPLETED IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE**

### Components of Final Mark

Evaluation format	Weight	Date
Midterm exam	30%	Oct 28
Content analysis assignment	10%	Nov 25
Research proposal	25%	Dec 12
Final exam	35%	TBA

## REQUIRED READING

The following text is required reading for this course and is available through the University bookstore. Students will also be required to retrieve research articles and publications via various websites as indicated on the course schedule.

Neuman, W.L. (2009). *Understanding Research*. (4<sup>th</sup> Ed) Toronto: Pearson

## CLASS SCHEDULE

DATE	READINGS
Sept 5 Introduction to the course	
Sept 9 Basics of quantitative and qualitative approaches	Chapter 1
Sept 12 Translating ideas into research	Chapter 2
Sept 16 Interactive methods: surveys and interviews	Chapter 6
Sept 19 Measuring social phenomena	Chapter 5
Sept 23 Sampling	Chapter 4
Sept 26 Victimization and self-report surveys	Two articles to be retrieved: Perreault & Brennan. (2010). Criminal Victimization in Canada, 2009. <i>Juristat</i> , 30(2). Statistics Canada. <a href="http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010002/article/11340-eng.pdf">http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010002/article/11340-eng.pdf</a> Savoie, J. (2007). Youth Self- Reported

	Delinquency, Toronto, 2006. <i>Juristat</i> . 27 (6). Statistics Canada. <a href="http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/85-002-x2007006-eng.pdf">http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/85-002-x2007006-eng.pdf</a> □
<b>Sept 30</b> Class survey - developing survey questions	
<b>Oct 3</b> Interviewing for quantitative surveys	
<b>Oct 7</b> Quantitative data analysis - part I	Chapter 9
<b>Oct 10</b> Quantitative analysis - part II	Chapter 9
<b>Oct. 13-17 STUDY WEEK - NO CLASSES</b>	
<b>Oct 21</b> Archival research: Uniform Crime Reporting Survey	Chapter 8, pp. 216-226 Article to be retrieved: Dauvergne, M. (2008). Motor Vehicle Theft in Canada. <i>Juristat</i> . 28(10). Statistics Canada. <a href="http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2008010/article/10744-eng.pdf">http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2008010/article/10744-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Oct 24</b> Mid-term exam review	
<b>Oct 28 MID-TERM EXAM</b>	
<b>Oct 31</b> Library resources and access to research literature	Chapter 2
<b>Nov 4</b> Preparing a research proposal	Chapter 2 and Appendix A
<b>Nov 7</b> Ethics in social research	Chapter 3
<b>Nov 11</b> Experimental designs	Chapter 7
<b>Nov 14</b> Quasi- experimental approaches	Article to be retrieved: Taylor-Butts, A. & Brennan, A. (2008). Youth Crime in Canada. <i>Juristat</i> . 28(3). <a href="http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/85-002-x2008003-eng.pdf">http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/85-002-x2008003-eng.pdf</a>
<b>Nov 18</b> Content analysis	Chapter 8, pp. 204-216
<b>Nov 21</b> Content analysis assignment - <b>DUE NOV 25</b>	
<b>Nov 25</b> Observation and ethnography	Chapter 10
<b>Nov 28</b> Evaluation research	Ottawa Police Services. (2001). <i>You Can Do It: A Practical Tool Kit to Evaluating Police and Community Crime Prevention Programs</i> . Chapters 1 and 2, pp 12-42. <a href="http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/J2-180-2001E.pdf">http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/J2-180-2001E.pdf</a>
<b>Dec 2</b> Exam review	
<b>RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE DEC 12 at 5:00 pm</b>	
<b>EXAM PERIOD Dec 4-17</b>	

### **Policy on language quality and late submissions**

Class attendance is necessary to successfully complete this course.

You will also be judged on your writing abilities. It is recommended to take the appropriate measures to avoid mistakes such as spelling, syntax, punctuation, inappropriate use of terms, etc. You may be penalized up to 15%, to the professor's discretion.

Late submissions are not tolerated and will be penalized 5% for each day. Exceptions are made only for illness or other serious situations deemed as such by the professor. *There will be a penalty for late submissions.* University regulations require all absences from exams and all late submissions due to illness to be supported by a medical certificate.

Absence for any other serious reason must be justified in writing, to the academic assistants of the Faculty, within five business days following the date of the exam or submission of an assignment. The Faculty reserves the right to accept or refuse the reason. Reasons such as travel, jobs, or any misreading of the examination timetable are not acceptable. It is your responsibility to advise your professor as early as possible if a religious holiday or a religious event will force you to be absent during an evaluation.

### **Resources for you**

#### ***Mentoring Centre - <http://www.sciencessociales.uottawa.ca/mentor/fra/>***

The goal of the Mentoring Centre is to help students with their academic and social wellbeing during their time at the University of Ottawa. Regardless of where a student stands academically, or how far along they are in completing their degree, the mentoring centre is there to help students continue on their path to success.

A student may choose to visit the mentoring centre for very different reasons. Younger students may wish to talk to their older peers to gain insight into programs and services offered by the University, while older student may simply want to brush up on study and time management skills or learn about programs and services for students nearing the end of their degree.

In all, the Mentoring Centre offers a place for students to talk about concerns and problems that they might have in any facet of their lives. While students are able to voice their concerns and problems without fear of judgment, mentors can garner further insight in issues unique to students and find a more practical solution to better improve the services that the Faculty of Social Sciences offers, as well as the services offered by the University of Ottawa.

#### ***Academic Writing Help Centre - <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/writing/>***

At the AWHC you will learn how to identify, correct and ultimately avoid errors in your writing and become an autonomous writer. In working with our Writing Advisors, you will be able to acquire the abilities, strategies and writing tools that will enable you to:

- Master the written language of your choice
- Expand your critical thinking abilities
- Develop your argumentation skills
- Learn what the expectations are for academic writing

#### ***Career Services - <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/careers/>***

Career Services offers various services and a career development program to enable you to recognize and enhance the employability skills you need in today's world of work.

#### ***Counselling Service- <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/personal/>***

There are many reasons to take advantage of the Counselling Service. We offer:

- Personal counselling
- Career counselling
- Study skills counselling

**Access Service** - <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/acces/>

The Access Service contributes to the creation of an inclusive environment by developing strategies and implementing measures that aim to reduce the barriers to learning for students who have learning disabilities, health, psychiatric or physical conditions.

**Student Resources Centres** - <http://www.communitylife.uottawa.ca/en/resources.php>

The Student Resources Centres aim to fulfill all sorts of students' needs.

### ***Beware of Academic Fraud!***

Academic fraud is an act committed by a student to distort the marking of assignments, tests, examinations, and other forms of academic evaluation. Academic fraud is neither accepted nor tolerated by the University. Anyone found guilty of academic fraud is liable to severe academic sanctions.

Here are a few examples of academic fraud:

- engaging in any form of plagiarism or cheating;
- presenting falsified research data;
- handing in an assignment that was not authored, in whole or in part, by the student;
- submitting the same assignment in more than one course, without the written consent of the professors concerned.

In recent years, the development of the Internet has made it much easier to identify academic plagiarism. The tools available to your professors allow them to trace the exact origin of a text on the Web, using just a few words.

In cases where students are unsure whether they are at fault, it is their responsibility to consult the University's Web site at the following address:

[http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/eng/writing\\_tools.asp](http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/eng/writing_tools.asp) « *Tools for Writing Papers and Assignments* ».

Persons who have committed or attempted to commit (or have been accomplices to) academic fraud will be penalized. Here are some examples of the academic sanctions, which can be imposed:

- a grade of « F » for the assignment or course in question;
- an additional program requirement of between 3 and 30 credits;
- suspension or expulsion from the Faculty.

Last session, most of the students found guilty of fraud were given an « F » for the course and had between three and twelve credits added to their program requirement.

For more information, refer to:

[http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/info/newsletter/fraud\\_e.html](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/info/newsletter/fraud_e.html)

## INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

It is up to each student to choose a research topic and suitable method to present in a research proposal. Similar research topics may utilize different methodologies depending on the particular research question. There is more than one way to do a “good” project, just as there is more than one way to do a poor one. The professor and TA will respond to your questions and give you advice, but each student is expected to decide how to meet the course requirement. In making your choice, keep in mind that the chief purpose of the project is to demonstrate what you’ve learned about research methods.

Our interest is primarily in the methodological issues you encountered, how they were addressed, and the research choices you made and why. We will be discussing these components throughout the course. All research consists of a series of decisions made by the researcher; sometimes these decisions are dictated by practical factors while other decisions belong solely to the researcher. The methods section of your proposal will include discussions of how you arrived at these decisions.

### Your Research Proposal

Your research proposal will address *who/what/where/when /how* and *why* questions. *Who* or *what* you will be studying, *where* and *when* this will take place, and *how* you plan to conduct the research. Finally, you will need to consider the *why* or *so what* questions important to research. Your proposal will address these questions by providing the following information:

#### 1. Objective

Consider the following questions: What exactly do you want to study and why it is worth studying? How does it contribute to our general understanding of crime or policy responses to crime? Does it have practical significance?

#### 2. Literature Review

Begin with a brief section that introduces your topic and contextualizes it within the broader literature, before you outline your research question. It should provide a useful framework to your research study. The literature review should be based on a minimum of 5 academic texts or articles relating to your research topic. Remember, a literature review is NOT simply an annotated bibliography.

#### 3. Research question

Be specific about the research question you plan to address, as you will be marked on how well your research decisions serve to actually answer that question. Given what others have found, as stated in your literature review, what new information will your proposed project contribute? Whether you create one or a series of research questions will depend on which project you have selected and whether you are employing a quantitative or qualitative approach.

#### 4. Method

Identify the method you propose to use which could be experimental, quasi-experimental, surveys or interviews, archival, or ethnographic observation. In addition, specify:

#### **a. Data sources**

Identify the source of data for your project. Be specific here. For example, don't simply say that you would be doing content analysis of magazines or newspapers, or that you would be interviewing people about their perceptions of youth gangs. Identify the specific data sources: which magazines or newspapers and where will you select your sample to interview about youth gangs. Specify the data source, when you will collect data, how big your sample will be, and where and how data collection will take place.

You may propose that you collect data for your study or you may propose conducting analysis of data that has already been collected, for example by Statistics Canada, Correctional Service Canada, Ottawa Police, or other agency. If you plan to conduct secondary data analysis, specify the source of the data, the sample size, and how the data were collected by the original data collectors.

#### **b. Sampling technique**

Identify which sampling method you will use and how you will select the cases you are studying. For example, do you propose to use purposive sampling, convenient, random, or something else? You may simply use a sample of convenience or you may choose a more systematic method of sampling, depending on your research objectives. If you are using data that has already been collected (as in secondary data analysis), describe how the participants or records were sampled. Remember that not all data sources use samples; some are a census and contain data on all criminal incidents that come to the attention of the police or all inmates in prison, for example.

#### **c. Measurement**

List the key concepts in your study and how you will define and operationalize them by giving examples of specific variables you propose to use. State whether your measurement duplicates or differs from previous research. You do not need to elaborate a complete data collection tool (such as a questionnaire), but you need to show that you have considered what is necessary for you to collect your data and analyze the results. If you are using data that has already been collected, specify how concepts were operationalized by the original data collectors.

The key here is to explain your methods well enough so that it is clear to the reader what you did and why. The link between your research question and your methods should be clear, i.e., you are describing how you operationalized your research question and why.

### **5. Analysis**

Briefly describe the kinds of analysis you plan to conduct. Will you conduct statistical analysis or qualitative analysis of open-ended interviews or spoken or written text? Describe what steps will be necessary so that you can "make sense" of your data. Include at least one skeleton (blank) data table or graph that shows how you plan to present your analysis.

### **6. Threats to validity**

Identify the factors that can affect the internal and external validity of your study. Be sure to demonstrate that you are aware of potential strengths and weaknesses of the method and the research process, including for example, how far your results can be generalized.

## **7. Ethical considerations**

All research requires consideration of the ethical issues involved. At a minimum, research projects are considered “low risk” when there is no harm that can come to participants because the research does not involve direct contact with humans. Specify the ethical considerations you would present to the Research Ethics Board of the University.

## **8. References**

Be sure to include a list of all materials you consulted and cited in your proposal. Choose a referencing style and stick to it.

### **General Criteria for Grading Research Proposals**

1. Understanding and incorporating course material
2. Appropriate use of outside material
3. Meets project guidelines
4. Coherent and internally consistent
5. Grammar, syntax, spelling, organization
6. Proper referencing and citations

### **Marking Grid**

The research proposal will be 10 pages double-spaced and will be graded as follows:

- |                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Objective              | ½ p/ 2 marks        |
| 2. Literature review      | 1 - 2 p/ 5 marks    |
| 3. Research question      | ½ p or less/ 1 mark |
| 4. Method                 | 4 p/ 10 marks       |
| • Data sources            |                     |
| • Sampling technique      |                     |
| • Measurement             |                     |
| 5. Analysis               | ½ - 1 p/ 2 marks    |
| 6. Threats to validity    | ½ p/ 2 marks        |
| 7. Ethical considerations | ½ - 1 p/ 2 marks    |
| 8. References             | ½ p/ 1 mark         |