

## Applied Research Methods

### 1 INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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### 2 COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an examination of the techniques and resources of applied social research. Emphasis is placed on quantitative research techniques, survey research, program evaluation, and the ways in which research informs social and public policy.

### 3 COURSE GOALS

Upon successful completion of this course students will:

- Have an understanding of the scientific process and its application to sociology and criminal justice
- Acquire skills necessary to access and interpret existing research as a prelude to decision-making for current research
- Understand what it means to apply evidence based programs and practices
- Have knowledge of social science research procedures and practices
- Be able to conceptualize a problem, formulate hypotheses, and design research methodology, collect, analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative data, including commonly encountered statistical procedures such as frequencies, chisquare, ttests, correlation, regression, and nonparametric statistics
- Have a good grasp of SPSS
- Be familiar with data sources available on the Internet, particularly the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)
- Be able to recognize common sources of error and bias in research
- Understand and apply principles of community needs assessment to design, implement and evaluate community counseling interventions, treatment and other programs
- Be able to apply the ASA code of ethics to research
- Use the computer to perform data analysis, locate and evaluate information on the Internet, and write effectively using scientific concepts and theories.

### 4 TEACHING METHOD

The course is structured to examine various approaches to applied research methods in social sciences. We will draw from the textbook, as well as from research articles in criminal justice, criminology, and related fields. Research has shown that students learn best when they actively participate in class discussion and projects. I believe that the role of an instructor is to facilitate an active learning environment through a combination of brief lectures, productive classroom discourse, teamwork, and creative thinking. As such, the course will engage in a variety of activities in addition to lectures, including writing exercises, group work, class discussions, practical exercises, et cetera. I value your opinions about the course, and will solicit feedback periodically. To be successful in

the course, you are required to read all assignments, come to class prepared, and engage fully in discussions and other course activities.

## 5 COURSE EXPECTATIONS, REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

### 5.1 ASSESSMENT

**Attendance and Participation (20%):** You are expected to attend and participate in class. You should thoroughly read all assigned material and bring a thoughtful question for each piece of reading. Points will be distributed for active participation in discussions and class activities. See attendance policy for more details.

**In-Class Assignments (20%):** As an inquiry course, the in-class work is critical to your understanding the research methods and will be essential for completion of your final project. Assignments must be completed in class and submitted to Blackboard by the end of the class period in which they are assigned. In the event of an absence, you have one week to turn in the assignment for full credit if excused and half-credit if unexcused.

**Midterm (15%):** There will be one midterm exam. The test has multiple choice, matching, and short answer questions designed to apply course materials to questions posed from each weeks readings and class activities.

**Final Project:** The goal of this project is to build your writings skills and produce an original research project that can be used as a writing sample in the future. You must submit each component of this project to Blackboard before the class for which it is due even if no grade is given, each component is MANDATORY. You MUST get my approval on the Paper Proposal before collecting data. I will provide comments on your Presentation that should be incorporated in the final paper. The grading rubrics can be found on Blackboard.

**Paper Proposal (15%):** The research project is designed to apply research methods to an original project. You are required to submit a written proposal for your final project that will receive comments from other classmates and will require my approval. The proposal should include an abstract, introduction, research question, literature review, hypotheses, proposed methodology, how you will collect the survey data, what variables are important, how you will operationalize them, how you will measure them, and your questionnaire.

**Data Collection (5%):** You will collect your own SURVEY data for this project. On the day that the data collection is due, you are expected to have all of your data collected and put into SPSS. Bring your SPSS file and the hard copies of your surveys with you to class that day.

**Oral Presentation (10%):** You will give a 5-8 minute presentation on your project and respond to questions about your research. If you would like to make a Power Point presentation or Power Point poster, you are welcome to do so for extra credit, but it not required.

**Final Paper (15%):** You will take the paper proposal and add: results and discussion sections, tables and figures, a codebook, and your SPSS output file. The paper should be: in APA style; 10-15 pages (excluding the title, abstract, codebook, output file, or reference pages).

## 5.2 COMMUNICATION

### Email

I will send emails on a regular basis to remind students about upcoming events, due dates, important news, et cetera. These messages will come to your official university email. Students are responsible for the contents of these messages. I will respond to email within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours on the weekend unless otherwise specified in advance.

### Skype

I will hold office hours once a week online at a mutually agreed upon time. If you cannot make this time, I can also be on Skype by appointment. If multiple students would like to speak with me simultaneously, we can use Google Hangout. If students have questions about class, they will be encouraged to ask them via the class discussion board on Piazza, as other students may have the same question and would benefit from the answers.

### Professionalism

Recently, my colleagues and I have noticed that some (by no means all) students email us using language and format more appropriate for friendly emails, not professional ones. I will only respond to emails that include: a subject, a salutation (Dear, Hello, etc.), a closing (at least your name), and proper grammar (no text speak). Additionally, if your question is about a due date, what the reading is for next week, or something else that is found in the syllabus or grading rubrics, I will not respond to your email. This is not to be harsh, but I want to make sure that all students are in the habit of corresponding professionally, which is what will be required of you in your future careers or in graduate school.

## 5.3 COURSE POLICIES

### Course Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend class, to arrive on time, to remain for the entire class period, and to be prepared. Attendance will be taken weekly. You must sign YOUR OWN NAME on the sign in sheet to be counted present. Signing for another student will be considered a violation of the University's Honor code. Only those absences that result from extraordinary circumstances, and can be supported by documentation, will be excused.

### The Miscellaneous Calamity Clause

As you may know, each class is required to meet for a specified number of hours in a semester. When class is cancelled due to snow/ice/hurricane/plague/zombies, these hours need to be made up. Instead making up hours at the end of the semester when you are very busy, we will simply hold class online for any week in which class is cancelled. If this happens, I will upload a voice-over PowerPoint and the class discussion will move to Blackboard. Everything else will proceed as normal, and you will be graded on your contributions to the Blackboard discussion plus whatever class participation activity was assigned for that week. If this happens on an exam day (as it almost did in 2013), the exam will switch to a short essay, timed format that you will do from home and turn in 2 hours and 45 minutes after the exam is emailed out. Additionally, I am occasionally required to be out of town for professional conferences. I will give you as much advanced notice as possible and we will simply move the class online for that week.

### Make-up Exams, Assignments, and Notes

Copies of the PowerPoints will be available on Blackboard AFTER class. Handouts and returned assignments will be brought to class and distributed only once. Students who miss such items must schedule a time to pick them up. If you are absent, you will need to get the notes from a classmate, so find a reliable source now.

All assignments are due by the beginning of class on the date indicated and will receive a 0 if not provided at that time. I WILL NOT accept late papers or papers submitted in hard copy or email. Papers MUST be submitted to Blackboard. Make hard copies of your papers as you go! No excuses will be accepted.

In an extraordinary circumstance, a make-up test can be scheduled. To qualify for a make-up, the student must notify me by email in advance of the absence and provide documentation. The make-up exam must be schedule within a week of the original test date. You will receive a 0 for unexcused absence from an exam. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include, but are not limited to: medical problems that require bed care or surgery (including yourself and immediate family members), subpoena for court or jury duty, or in-service training. Oversleeping and other personal events do not qualify. The instructor reserves the right to exercise discretion in this matter so that individual predicaments may be considered.

### Grading

A = 95-100	A- = 90-94	
B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79	C = 73-76	C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69	D = 63-66	D- = 60-62
F = 59 or below		

If you have questions or concerns about a grade(s) and believe I should review them, you should submit a written request over email to me describing your concern in detail. You must take 24 hours to reflect on the grade before contacting me, but you must submit the request within one week of the date that grades for that assignment are disseminated. The exception is an addition error, which should be pointed out immediately.

Unless otherwise stated in class, there are no extra credit assignments for this class. Assignments will be graded on accuracy, depth of expression, grammar, neatness, punctuation, quality, spelling, and thoroughness. Rubrics are available on BlackBoard for all graded assignments. Please note that Blackboard shows unweighted grades.

As per the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA), grades will not be posted, given out over the phone or email, or released to anyone other than the student.

### Classroom Courtesy

Classroom courtesy is essential for learning. All students have the right to learn without unneeded distractions such as: cell phones, talking out of turn, reading, falling asleep, entering and leaving the classroom, etc. If you need cell phone for emergency purposes, it must remain on vibrate. All other use of cell phones is prohibited. Laptop and tablet use is restricted. Laptops and tablets may only be used if you have a documented learning need. It is your responsibility to arrive on time and stay for the entire class period. If you need to leave early, tell the instructor beforehand. Repeated

disruptions will lead to a reduction in your final grade. Most importantly, please remember that class discussion must be respectful and scholarly at all times.

Scholarly Comments:

- are respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement
- are related to class and/or the course material
- are focused on advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs
- are delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner

Unacceptable Comments:

- are personal in nature (this includes attacks on a persons appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs)
- include interrupting the instructor or other students
- often use the discussion to argue for political positions and/or beliefs. If political discussions arise in the context of the research discussed, they must be discussed in a scholarly way
- may include using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students and being threatening in any manner
- include ignoring the instructor's authority to maintain the integrity of the classroom

## 6 REQUIRED TEXTS

### REQUIRED BOOK

Babbie, E. (2013). *The Practice of Social Research* (13th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

\*available at the bookstore and other retailers - the 12th edition will also be acceptable for our class, but do note that Chapter 15 is different and we will be basing discussion off of the 13th edition version

Cronk, B. C. (2012). *How to use SPSS*. (7th Ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

### ADDITIONAL READINGS

Mandatory supplemental readings will be posted to Blackboard. Students are required to do all the assigned reading.

### HELPFUL RESOURCES

You are not required to buy the APA Publication Manual. Purdue University has an excellent online guide that should be consulted for all written materials that are submitted for this course.

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

If you are having trouble with SPSS and the in-class assignments/the book are not helping, UCLA has a thorough online guide that should be the first place you look for additional help. If your issue is still not resolved, look on Google or YouTube for tutorials. For the most part, the information on the web is very useful.

<http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/spss/>

## 7 COURSE SCHEDULE

This syllabus is a guide for the course. It is subject to change with advanced notice. Changes may come in class or may come via e-mail. You are responsible for all such communications.

Week	Topic	Assignments
1	Introduction to Research, Human Inquiry, Paradigms and Theory	Babbie, Chapter 1 & 2; Cronk, Chapter 1
2	Ethics of Social Science Research and Research Design	Babbie, Chapters 3 & 4; Milgram (1963) <i>In-Class Assignment 1</i> <b>Topic, Article Review &amp; Integrity Quiz Due</b>
3	Conceptualizing, Operationalization, Measurement, and Sampling	Babbie, Chapters 5 & 7; Cronk, Chapter 2
4	Experiments and Survey Research	Babbie, Chapters 8 & 9; Nordgren et al. (2011) <i>In-Class Assignment 2</i> <b>Writing Workshop 1: Proposal Outline</b>
5	Reading & Writing Social Research Indexes, Scales, and Typologies	Babbie, Chapter 6 & 17; Cronk, Chapter 3 <i>In-Class Assignment 3</i>
6	Quantitative Research and Analysis	Babbie, Chapters 14 & 16 <b>Writing Workshop 2: Proposal Paper</b>  <b>Midterm Exam</b>
7	Qualitative Research and Analysis	Babbie, Chapters 10 & 13 <b>Paper Proposal Due</b>
8	Presenting Research	Cronk, Chapter 4 <i>In-Class Assignment 4</i>
9	Analysis: TTests & ChiSquare	Cronk, Chapter 6, p. 57-69 & Chapter 7, p. 93-100 <i>In-Class Assignment 5</i>
10	Analysis: ANOVA & Regression	Cronk, Chapter 6, p 69-81 & Chapter 5 <i>In-Class Assignment 6</i>
11	Your SPSS files & Analysis	<b>Data Collection Due</b> <i>In-Class Assignment 7</i>
12	Your Analysis, continued	<i>In-Class Assignment 8</i>
13	Research Project Presentations	<b>Presentations In Class &amp; Papers Due</b>