



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
**SAN ANTONIO**

## **Research Design & Methods**

CRIM 5304-600

3 Credits

Fall 2025

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Instructor: Dr. Danielle Fenimore  
Office: CAB 351-D  
Office Hours: Virtual, by appointment

Email: [dfenimore@tamusa.edu](mailto:dfenimore@tamusa.edu)  
Classroom: Online  
Meeting Time: Asynchronous

### **Course Description:**

This course is ultimately a review of methods from your undergraduate curriculum. However, we will be going more in depth with this material, focusing on developing high quality research methodologies that are appropriate for a given research question. Additional materials to be discussed include appropriate statistical models, measurement validity, and causality, among others.

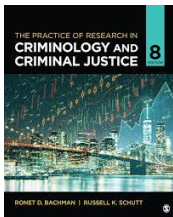
### **Course Learning Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Formulate research questions and test hypotheses.
2. Evaluate methodological strengths and weaknesses.
3. Identify appropriate statistical models and qualitative techniques for research questions.
4. Understand the logic of causal order and measurement validity.

### **Course Materials:**

Recommended text:



*The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice (8<sup>th</sup> ed.)*

Ronet D. Bachman & Russell K. Schutt

SAGE Publications

ISBN: 978-1071857793

Additional articles as assigned (on Blackboard and Perusall)

### **Class Format:**

This course will consist of reading research articles, policy labs, and a final policy analysis paper. You are expected to complete each of these assignments by the given deadlines. Because you have already a base knowledge of research methods from your undergraduate education, I will only be posting PowerPoints to guide your review of the textbook material.

**There will be no lectures for this material.** We are expanding on undergraduate materials, and will focus on how to conduct research. This does not mean that the information in the

textbook is not valuable; you should use it as a guidebook or a sort of research manual to help guide your decisions about your own research. As such, it is still a required book, but you will not be graded on the material. The chapters that are listed in the syllabus are to help you orient yourself to the information that will be useful for that week's topic.

### **Assignments & Learning Activities**

1. Perusall Reading Assignments: Every week, you will be assigned approximately 2-3 articles to read via Perusall. The point of using Perusall is to allow me to see your thought process as you read and, more importantly, allow you to discuss the readings with your classmates. See complete instructions on Blackboard.
2. Scaffold Assignments: You will complete five scaffolded assignments that build sequentially toward the final paper. These assignments are designed to support the development of a strong research proposal. Each assignment is designed to reinforce core research skills and prepare you to synthesize their work into a comprehensive final proposal. The assignments are as follow:
  - a. Topic Justification & Research Question
  - b. Theoretical Framework & Hypotheses
  - c. Literature Review
  - d. Research Design & Sampling Plan
  - e. Measurement & Future Data Analysis Plan
3. Research Proposal: In the final assignment, you will synthesize scaffolded elements into a polished research proposal that demonstrates methodological rigor, theoretical grounding, and a clear plan for future analysis.

### **Grading Information:**

Assignments will be submitted via Blackboard or Perusall. I anticipate grading and returning assignments within two weeks of their submission. If you have questions about the assignment, please email me no later than Friday at 5:00 PM before the assignment deadline. I will not be answering emails over the weekend unless it's an emergency.

If you have questions about your grade on any assignment, you have ONE WEEK after the grade is posted in which to come to me to question your grade (that is, to ask for point changes based on justifiable criteria— except for the last week, because grades are due within a few days, in which case you have 48 hours). After that time period, the grade stands (even if you did not check the grade until after that time period).

Should you raise serious questions about how something was graded, I reserve the right to re-grade your entire assignment (meaning your grade may go up or down). I recommend waiting 24 hours after a grade is posted to email with a question; often, initial emails are reactionary, and waiting 24 hours allows sufficient time to process. If you do choose to email me regarding a grade within 24 hours of its posting, be sure to use professional language in your email.

I do not bump grades or provide extra credit to raise grades at the end of the semester because I believe in being as fair and transparent in grading as possible. Please ensure you do your best work on each assignment and ask for help as needed throughout the semester.

As a rule, I do not speak with parents regarding grades or assignments. As college students, you are adults, and capable of managing your own academic affairs. If you have questions about your grade, please email me yourself or come to office hours to discuss things.

| Graded Activities            |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Perusall Reading Assignments | 25% |
| Scaffold Assignments         | 35% |
| Research Proposal            | 40% |

These are weighted grades; you will not be able to calculate a straight average of your grades to determine your current grade. Your final grades will be categorized into a five-point scale. Texas A&M University, San Antonio uses a five-point scale to submit final grades:

| Grade Point Value |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| A                 | 90-100      |
| B                 | 80-89       |
| C                 | 70-79       |
| D                 | 60-69       |
| F                 | 60 or below |

### Course Policies

**Attendance & Census Day Requirements:** For this online, asynchronous course, attendance will be measured by completing all assignments from Week 1, since we do not meet in person.

**Email:** You will need to be looking for communications from me through your TAMUSA email. I regularly send messages out to my courses to keep them updated with course. If you are not reading these or checking your school email, you will miss out on vital information for the course.

When you need to contact me, you **must** use an email through Outlook. My email address is at the top of this syllabus. I do not see messages from Blackboard until much later; please do not use that platform feature. Your emails should be written formally and include an appropriate subject line that includes your course number and section, and a brief description about the subject of your email (e.g., CRIM 5302-600: Conflict with Due Date). The email itself must include a proper greeting, a fully constructed body of the message using proper grammar and sentence structure, and a formal sign off. Without these features, I will not respond to your email.

**Make-up and Late Work Policy:** If you miss a submission deadline because of participation in university-sanctioned activities, arrangements to make-up missed work can be made by contacting the course instructor. Makeup work requires documentation. If you experience technological difficulties that prohibit you from completing assignments, you must document this via a screenshot or another comparable method.

All assignments are to be submitted on the due date. In cases of planned excused absences, late work will be accepted by an agreed upon alternate due date. Late work will otherwise not be accepted.

**Academic Honesty:** Students are expected to adhere to university policies regarding academic honesty. If you violate these policies, you will be reported and subject to the appropriate sanction which may include expulsion from the University.

**Citation Style** –Because this is a criminology and criminal justice course, students are required to use the citation style and format of the American Psychological Association (APA). It is acceptable to cite legal materials (cases, statutes, regulations, etc.) in accordance with the style specified in The Bluebook.

**Avoiding Plagiarism** – Some students truly do not understand what plagiarism is, and therefore plagiarize unwittingly or unintentionally. But ignorance is not an excuse for unethical academic conduct. To combat such ignorance, here are rules and resources to help you avoid any problems with plagiarism. Of course, these rules apply regardless of the citation form or style you may be using. Any instances of plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment, and other sanctions as appropriate.

- a. **Direct Quotations** – Whenever you directly quote someone else, you must provide a citation to the source of the material from which you are quoting. Moreover, you must put the material in quotation marks or otherwise set it off in an indented quote so the reader knows what words are yours and what words are quoted. It is unacceptable to use the words of others and only partially quote the original source. This is true even if you provide citation to the source both in text and in your references section!
- b. **Paraphrasing/Indirect Quotations** – Whenever you indirectly quote someone else (i.e., you paraphrase the work of another), you must provide a citation to the source of the material from which you are paraphrasing. Simply changing the structure of a sentence, or a few words in a sentence so that the sentence you write is not an exact quote from the original source does not mean a citation is not needed. This is because the idea you are expressing is not your own, but rather someone else's.
- c. **Using Other's Ideas** – Even if you compose an entire paragraph of writing in your own words (i.e., neither quoted nor paraphrased), if the idea you are expressing in that paragraph is not your own, original idea, you must provide a citation to the source from which you obtained this idea.
- d. **Collaborative Work** – If you collaborate on any work with someone else and fail to acknowledge that collaboration, you are guilty of plagiarism. If you have received permission from you professor to collaborate on some assignment, be sure that all of the contributor's names appear on the submission.
- e. **Altering or Revising Another's Work** – If you alter or revise the work done by someone and submit that work as your own, you have plagiarized. Similarly, if you allow someone else to alter or revise work that you have done and then allow that person to submit it as his or her own work, you are both guilty of plagiarism. Work that is not entirely your own must be credited by citation, both in text and in your references page.

- f. **Altering or Revising Your Own Prior Work** – You should also be aware that altering or revising your own work that was prepared for another class or another professor, and not bringing it to the attention of the professor to whom you are submitting the revised work is also academic dishonesty. If, for example, you have two classes that require a term paper, and you can write one paper that meets the requirements of both classes, you may not submit that paper to both professors unless you get permission to do so in advance from both professors. Similarly, if you wrote a paper several semesters ago that can be revised and submitted in satisfaction of a paper requirement for a course in which you are currently enrolled, doing so is academic dishonesty unless you get the advanced permission of your professor to do so. The reason this is dishonest is that it is not an original work prepared in satisfaction for the requirements on the course you are currently taking.

### **SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY:**

The syllabus is subject to change with reasonable advanced notice as course needs arise. It will and can change based on the instructors' judgment or the evaluation of the class progress throughout the semester. When a change is made in the schedule, you will be notified via Blackboard Announcement tab.

### **IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

**Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/Disability-Support-Services/index.html> or email us at [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto:dss@tamusa.edu). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services as soon as possible.

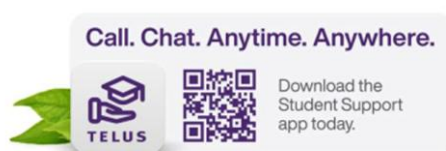
**Academic Learning Center:** The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing [tutoring@tamusa.edu](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu), calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

**Counseling/Mental Health Resources:** As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are **free and confidential** (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information on SCC services visit <http://tamusa.edu/studentcounseling>

***Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331.***

Additionally, the TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including support for in the moment distress, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com>

More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/emergency-management/>

Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non- Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments.

More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics> .

Meeting Basic Needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE referral (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities/file-a-report.html>) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources.

Office Hours: All faculty with teaching assignments should include regularly scheduled office hours on each syllabus in addition to "by appointment." Please review your appointment letter for the number of weekly office hours you are expected to set. Regularly scheduled office hours should also be posted outside your office door (where applicable).

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at [military.va@tamusa.edu](mailto:military.va@tamusa.edu) or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided with an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or [titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu).

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-

San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu), 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students: Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable modifications to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence.

Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu); 210-784-2061; CAB 439K). Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Young Jaguars: can support parenting students with daycare who meet this criteria: Must be enrolled in classes at TAMUSA in the current semester. Must be Pell eligible or a single parent. They serve children ages 3 to 12-years-old. Children must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. [youngjaguars@tamusa.edu](mailto:youngjaguars@tamusa.edu) (210) 784-2636

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

### *Students' Rights*

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.



3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university students' rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

### *Students' Responsibilities*

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>) or visit the resources available in the OSRR website (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/academic-integrity.html>).

### Broader Use of Generative AI Permitted Within Guidelines

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, is permitted in this course for students who wish to use them, specifically for preparing your notes for the comprehensive exams. To adhere to our scholarly values, students must cite any AI-generated material that informed their work (this includes in-text citations and/or use of quotations, and in your reference list). Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity. Use of generative AI tools is otherwise prohibited.

NOTE: Guidance for how to cite AI-generators, like ChatGPT, can be found here <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

Important Dates: Fall 2025 Regular 16-Week Session

|                |                                          |
|----------------|------------------------------------------|
| October 14     | First Day of Class                       |
| October 21     | Census Date                              |
| November 21    | Last day to drop with an automatic "W"   |
| November 26    | Study Day – No classes                   |
| November 27-29 | Thanksgiving Holiday – No classes        |
| December 1     | Last day to withdraw from the University |
| December 4     | Last day of classes                      |
| December 5     | Study Day – No classes                   |
| December 6-12  | Final exams                              |
| December 16    | Commencement                             |

The complete academic calendar is available online:

<https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academic-calendar/index.html>

## Course Schedule

**NOTE: All assignments will be due by 11:59 PM Sunday before the following school week starts unless otherwise noted.** For example, assignments for Week 1 will be due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, October 19.

|                                                        | Topics                                              | Assignments                                                                    | Assigned Readings                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1<br>10/13 – 10/19                                | Foundations of Research & Scientific Inquiry        | Perusall How-To<br>Perusall Syllabus Assignment<br>Perusall Reading Assignment | Chapter 1-3<br>ASC Code of Ethics<br>ACJS Code of Ethics                             |
| Week 2<br>10/20 – 10/26                                | Conceptualization, Operationalization & Measurement | Scaffold Assignment 1<br>Persuall Reading Assignment                           | Chapter 4<br>Alwin (1992)<br>Jones & Roche (2025)<br>Roche et al (2024)              |
| Week 3<br>10/27 – 11/2                                 | Sampling Strategies                                 | Scaffold Assignment 2<br>Perusall Reading Assignment                           | Chapter 5<br>Ahmed (2024)<br>Gentles et al (2015)<br>Hossan et al (2023)             |
| Week 4<br>11/3 – 11/9                                  | Theory & Hypothesis Development                     | Scaffold Assignment 3                                                          | Chapter 6                                                                            |
| Week 5<br>11/10 – 11/16                                | Quantitative & Primary Research                     | Perusall Reading Assignment                                                    | Chapter 7-8<br>Pickett et al (2020)<br>Roche et al (2022)                            |
| <b>Dr. Fenimore potentially out of town 11/8-11/16</b> |                                                     |                                                                                |                                                                                      |
| Week 6<br>11/17 – 11/23                                | Qualitative & Secondary Research                    | Perusall Reading Assignment                                                    | Chapter 9-10<br>Copes et al (2011)<br>Eschholz et al (2003)                          |
| Week 7<br>11/24 – 11/30                                | Specialized Research Designs                        | Scaffold Assignment 4<br>Perusall Reading Assignment                           | Chapter 11-13<br>Engel et al (2022)<br>MacDonald et al (2016)<br>Wilkes et al (2022) |
| <b>Thanksgiving Holiday – 11/27-11/29</b>              |                                                     |                                                                                |                                                                                      |
| Week 8<br>12/1 – 12/5                                  | Data Analysis & Reporting                           | Scaffold Assignment 5                                                          | Chapter 14-16                                                                        |
| Final Exams<br>12/6 – 12/12                            |                                                     | Final Paper – Due December 10 by 11:59 PM                                      |                                                                                      |