

CRIM3370 - Research Methods in Criminology
Syllabus for Spring 2024
In-Person



Course Instructor: Dr. Caitlin S. Ducate
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Office: CAB 349A
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11am-12pm and **by appointment**
Sign up via [Calendly](#)

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to social science research methods used in criminological and criminal justice research. Through this course, you will learn the steps that a researcher takes to develop an idea from choosing a research question to designing a study using an appropriate method to assess that question.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. **Describe** the scientific process
2. **Explain** the advantages and disadvantages of multiple research methodologies
3. **Identify** an appropriate method for a given research question
4. **Write** a complete research proposal to answer a scientific research question

Required texts:

Bachman, Ronet, and Russell K. Schutt (2020). *Fundamentals of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice (5th Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Requirements & Grading:

Points for the course are allocated as follows:

Exams:	200 points
Assignments:	200 points
In-Class Activities	100 points
Final Project:	200 points
<u>Attendance:</u>	<u>100 points</u>
Total:	800 points

Exams

- This class will have 2 semi-cumulative exams worth 100 points each.
- Exams will be administered via Blackboard using Respondus.

Assignments

- There will be ten assignments worth 10-30 points each.
- These assignments are designed to provide opportunities to practice components of research methods. Some assignments will also facilitate progress on your final project.
- **Students are expected to read and incorporate feedback on these assignments for their final project.**

In-Class Activities

- There will be 100 points worth of in-class activities.
- Students with an unexcused absence may turn in a missed activity within 1 week for late credit

Final Project

- In lieu of a final exam, you will submit a final project in the form of a research proposal worth 200 points.
- The research proposal will consist of a short literature review, a hypothesis or research question, a proposed sample, and a proposed method of testing. Further details, along with a rubric, can be found on Blackboard.

Attendance

- Attendance will be taken at each class period. The purpose is to both encourage and reward regular attendance
- Because life happens, students can miss up to 3 classes (10% of our meeting times) for any reason without penalty.
- Students who wish to have their absence excused must get in touch with the instructor within 24 hours of the missed class. It is up to instructor discretion which absences are ultimately excused.
- Students will receive points based on the number of unexcused absences as follows:

Days Missed	Points Earned
0-3	100
4	90
5	80
6	70
7	60
8+	50 & dropped from the class

Late Work.

- Work will be penalized 10% of the total point value for every day that it is late.
- Late work can only be submitted within one week of the due date (except in extenuating circumstances as determined by the instructor)

Extra Credit.

- No extra credit opportunities will be provided, and students should not ask for them. Those students wishing to improve their grade should see the section above on Revisions.

Table 1. Letter grade ranges and descriptions

Letter Grade	Grade Range	Description
A	90-100	Excellent
B	80-89	Good
C	70-79	Average
D	60-69	Passing
F	> 60	Failure
FN	> 60	Failure (Non-Attendance)

Course Policies and Procedures

Blackboard. I make heavy use of Blackboard in this class for both uploading material and communicating information and reminders. **Most communication from me will be through Blackboard Announcements.** You are responsible for keeping up with Blackboard notifications, so please **check it daily**.

Contacting Me. To get in touch with me, email me at cducate@tamusa.edu. **Please include the course number (CRIM 5305) at the beginning of the subject** of the email and use [proper email etiquette](#). **Do not use Blackboard messages.** I usually check my email twice a day between 10am and 4pm on weekdays and do not check email on the weekends. If I have not responded to your e-mail within 24 hours (excluding Sat and Sun), **please send another e-mail with a reminder.**

Students who do not send professional emails will receive a **form email** in response encouraging them to revise their email to be more appropriate. This is not because I'm a jerk—it is because it is good professional development and makes it easier for me to answer your question quickly.

Before you send an email, please see the following checklist. Have you...

- ⇒ Ensured that the answer to your question cannot be found in the syllabus or supporting documents?
- ⇒ Put “CRIM 3370:” followed by a simple summary in the subject line (e.g., **CRIM 3370: Question about Rubric for Final Project**)?
- ⇒ Opened your email with a salutation (e.g., **Hello Dr. Ducate**)?
- ⇒ Began your opening paragraph on a new line?
- ⇒ Ensured that your question is clear and to the point?
- ⇒ Ended your email with a closing (e.g., **Thank you,**)?
- ⇒ Put your signature (i.e., your name) on the line below the closing?

Office (i.e. Student) Hours. I hold weekly office hours to allow students to come ask questions about material they are struggling with. My office hours for students are on **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11am-12pm** and by appointment. You can book meetings with me via Calendly. My Calendly link is: <https://calendly.com/cducate/office-hour-appointment>. To book a meeting, simply follow the link and select a day and time. If you choose to meet online, it will then provide you with a personalized Zoom link to use for the meeting. If you choose to meet in person, then come see me in my office on the day and time you select.

You must **book your appointment at least 16 hours in advance**. If none of the available times work with your schedule, email me to work out a time. I do my best to work with students to find a mutually beneficial time, but it is the student's responsibility to ensure they have some availability during normal working hours (i.e., 8am-5pm).

This is a difficult course, so **I encourage you to attend office hours**. However, I expect you to come prepared. This means you should **come with *clear* questions** about the material you do not understand. If you have questions about the assignments, you must have the assignment open and with the work you've already tried available for me to review.

Work and Submission Policies

Academic Integrity. As a TAMUSA student, I expect you to follow the Student Code of Conduct (see Section 14 of the [Student Handbook](#)). **When you submit an assignment with your name on it, you are signifying that the work contained therein is yours and only yours** unless otherwise cited or referenced. This includes both online assignments and exams.

Note that you may use AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, only **in the form of a tutor**. In other words, you can use it as a resource the same way you would use me as a resource. You **cannot**, therefore, ask it to answer specific assignment questions for you or submit any of its answers as your own. If you aren't sure whether you are violating this rule, I recommend not using it. You may also study together with fellow classmates, but the final submitted work **must be your own**.

This means that **I assume that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves**, working individually or in groups (as specified in the assignment). **Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT.** Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

To ensure academic honesty, you will be expected to be able to **defend your work**. This means that you need to be able to explain your answer live and in your own words. If I suspect plagiarism or cheating of any kind, I reserve the right to question you about your knowledge of your submitted work. When a student is suspected of plagiarism or cheating, they will receive a **temporary 0** on the assignment until they arrange a meeting with the professor to discuss the assignment.

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will fail the assignment on the first strike and fail the class on the second strike. Students will also be reported to the university on the first strike in accordance with TAMUSA policies.

Disability Accommodation. Students with disability accommodations should **set up a one-on-one meeting with me ASAP** to discuss the specifics of their accommodations. This meeting ensures that I understand exactly what it is you need, and we can agree on guidelines. Students who suspect they need accommodations can visit the [DSS website](#) to discuss their options. Students who need extra time can also arrange exam proctoring via that website.

Missed Work. I realize that you may be living in a situation un conducive to studying, you may have care obligations, you may be working, etc. Although I expect you to try to manage **known** problems, some problems are hard to predict in advance. If you miss an assignment due to an unforeseen problem and would like accommodations, you need to let me know **within 24 hours** of the missed assignment unless you are physically unable to. In many cases, I may allow you to make up the work without a penalty, but you *must* let me know the reason for the missed work first. If you do not, the standard late work policy will apply.

Contesting grades. Students will have **1 week** to contest grades beginning on the day they are released. After that time, all grades are final.

Technology Expectations

Tools. Students are expected to have the following technological tools:

- A paper notebook & working pen or pencil
- A functional and reliable laptop or desktop
- A web camera (for office hour meetings if using Zoom)
- An email client
- A PDF reader (e.g., Adobe Acrobat)
- Microsoft Office 365 (especially Microsoft Word)
 - Note: TAMUSA students can use MS365 for free. [Log in to their online portal here.](#)

Skills. Students are also expected to have the following technological & digital literacy proficiencies:

- Using Blackboard
- Using email
- Creating and submitting documents using .doc or .docx formats
- Downloading and reading PDFs from Blackboard
- Using web conferencing tools and software (e.g., Zoom)

Technology Use. Students **may not use phones or laptops** in this class **except for designated activities and disability accommodations**. Though I recognize this will cause some initial inconvenience and frustration, I have implemented this policy after many years of watching phones and laptops cause distraction and disruption in the classroom. Furthermore, students pay more attention and learn more when taking notes via hand (even if you feel like you don't!).

Therefore, students **MAY** use tablets so long as they are using them to take notes with a stylus in a notetaking app (i.e., if they are using the tablet like digital paper rather than like a mini-laptop).

Students who are expecting a phone call (e.g., daycare, sick parent, etc.) may keep their phones on vibrate in their pocket and step outside to take the call if necessary. If the student wishes to leave their phone on the desk in such a situation, they must get prior approval from me.

Technical issues. Technical and logistical problems, such as being unable to access a computer, computer failure, problems with internet connections (such as speed or quality of the connection) or browser, failure to check that your assignments have properly uploaded, etc., will not automatically result in remedies favorable to students. Even if the technical or logistical problem is not your fault, you are not guaranteed a retake or “do-over” for the assignment. Any such issues are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Further, *to avoid last minute problems*, it is highly recommended that you complete readings, videos, and assignments as *early as possible* during each module.

If you have a question about using Blackboard as a student, **please check the help page first:** <https://tinyurl.com/tamusastudentbbhelp>. If you have difficulty accessing Blackboard or using, please contact IT here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/information-technology-services/index.html>. You can also **call them** at (210) 784-4357.

Tentative Schedule:

This course schedule is tentative and subject to change. All substantive changes will be announced via Blackboard (e.g., changes in due dates).

Chapters listed refer to the required book, *Fundamentals of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice* (5th Ed.).

Additional required materials (e.g., readings, lectures, videos) will be posted on Blackboard.

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	READING	WORK DUE MONDAY
1	01.16 - 01.22	T: Introduction R: Why This Matters Activity: Career Application	Chapter 1	Syllabus Quiz
2	01.23 - 01.29	T: Ethics R: Ethics Activity	Chapter 3	Library Tutorial
3	01.30 – 02.05	T: The Research Process 1 Activity: Writing Good RQs R: The Research Process 2 Activity: Writing Good Hypotheses	Chapter 2	Research Question (v1)
4	02.06 – 02.12	T: Literature Reviews/Writing 101 R: Activity: Annotated Bibliography	Appendices A & B (on BB)	Annotated Bibliography
5	02.13 – 02.19	T: Conceptualization R: Operationalization Activity: Designing a Measure	Chapter 4	
6	02.20 – 02.26	T: Sampling R: Activity: Choosing a Sample Exam Review	Chapter 5	Research Question (v2)
7	02.27 – 03.04	T: Exam 1 R: Activity: Lit Review Workshop		
8	03.05 – 03.10	T: Surveys R: Activity: Design a Survey	Chapter 7	Literature Review
9	03.11 – 03.18	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK		
10	03.19 – 03.25	T: Causation & Experiments R: Activity: Designing an Experiment	Chapter 6	Variables
11	03.26 – 04.01	T: Qualitative Interviews R: Activity: Design an Interview Guide	Chapter 8	Survey Design
12	04.02 – 04.08	T: Field Research & Content Analysis R: Secondary Data Lecture & Activity	Chapter 9	Experiment Design
13	04.09 – 04.15	T: Mixed Methods R: Activity: The Right Method for the Job	Chapter 11	Methods Outline
14	04.16 – 04.22	T: Policy Analysis Exam Review R: Exam 2	Chapter 10	
15	04.23 – 04.29	T: Final Project Workshop 1 R: Final Project Workshop 2		Final Project due April 29 at 11:59pm