

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018**

### **I. The Annual Assessment Meeting**

Professors Renfrow and Karbhari met periodically throughout the 2017-2018 to conduct the business of the Criminal Justice Program. The report that follows assesses the four Measurable Learning Outcomes associated with Student Learning Objectives 2C (i.e., "Students should be able to formulate research questions and effectively use the research tools to analyze data in response to these questions") in Program Goal 2 (i.e., "Approach Criminal Justice as a critical social science"). We also briefly analyze data from senior exit surveys that provide a more holistic approach to program assessment and student learning.

### **II. Closing the Loop**

Continuing the work started last year, CRIM faculty revised additional course syllabi to incorporate material from the Program Goals and Learning Objectives identified in the Assessment Plan. Nevertheless, additional work is needed to ensure that each course syllabus includes separate sections for Program Goals, Learning Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes. We understand the importance in providing this information to our students so that they understand what each course contributes to the CRIM major.

We spent the year conducting a search for a full-time tenure track Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice. Once again, this search failed to produce a new faculty member to take on this program. However, the search process was useful in that it identified three key challenges for CRIM as it evolves into a more rigorous, self-sustaining program: revising major requirements to better align with local community colleges (e.g., change in course sequence and levels, creation of new courses, etc.), developing a transfer process for students completing two-year degrees at these schools, and building relationships with community agencies to increase internship opportunities for our current and future students. We should note that the issue regarding course sequence reiterates a need raised by a senior student in last year's assessment.

### **III. Examination of Assessment Data**

We determined that the schedule for assessment identified in our Assessment Plan is far too ambitious. Rather than assess all of Program Goal 2 this year, we decided to limit our focus to the four Measurable Learning Outcomes associated with Student Learning Objective 2C (i.e., "Students should be able to formulate research questions and effectively use the research tools to analyze data in response to these questions"). We will assess the other aspects of Program Goal 2 next year.

The data in this report come from the five members of the graduating class of 2018 regardless of when they enrolled in SS 294: Research Methods for the Social Sciences (previously known

as SOC 294) which is a major requirement and the primary site for the assessment of these Measurable Learning Outcomes. The senior exit survey, detailed later in this report, was completed by four of the five members of the graduating class during senior week.

As stated in the SS 294 course description on the syllabus (see appendix), the primary focus of this course is to help students "learn how social scientists study the world around them and to gain practice applying these principles in an empirical research project of our own." Students spend the semester designing a study, collecting and analyzing data, and writing a research report. Course assignments are designed to help students "learn the logic of social inquiry," "apply abstract principles in a specific study," "formulate researchable questions," "understand the costs and benefits of specific methodological choices," and "write research reports and/or reports."

*Measurable Learning Outcome 2c1: Students will know the assumptions of positivist epistemology.*

This Learning Outcome is assessed in Short Assignment 1, which asks students to write a first draft of the "Introduction" section of their research report (see appendix) and to make a brief oral presentation to the class. Based on Short Assignment 1 scores for seniors graduating this year (i.e., 84, 79, 75, 79, and 75 out of 100 points), students appear to understand the three purposes of empirical research in the social sciences and mastered the ability to formulate research questions guided by a positivist epistemology. All students meet our stated assessment goal of earning 75% or better on this assignment. Based on observations during the oral portion of the assignment, it appears that students generally understand the key assumptions of positivism and are able to address questions from the instructor during their presentations.

*Measurable Learning Outcome 2c2: Students will be able to develop theoretical and operational definitions for criminal justice variables.*

This Learning Outcome is assessed through Short Assignment 4, which asks students to write a first draft of the "Sample and Methods" section of their research report (see appendix). Based on Short Assignment 4 scores for seniors graduating this year (i.e., 0, 92, 80, 86, and 75 out of 100 points), students who submitted a paper appear to understand how to develop theoretical and operational definitions for their measures. Students generally develop instrumentation that reflects the concepts they intend to measure in their studies. Closer examination of the feedback on these assignments reveals, however, that students appear to confuse independent and dependent variables in their writing. This pattern indicates a need to spend more time discussing these concepts and helping students in discussion to identify each for their study.

*Measurable Learning Outcome 2c3: Students will know the strengths and weaknesses of experiments, social surveys, content analysis, and qualitative interviewing.*

This Learning Outcome is assessed through Short Assignment 4, which asks students to write a first draft of the "Sample and Methods" section of their paper, and the Final Research Report. Based on Short Assignment 4 scores for seniors graduating this year (i.e., 0, 92, 80, 86, and 75 out of 100 points), students who submitted a paper appear to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the method they are using in their particular study. However, students are not assessed on their ability to evaluate every method. Closer examination of the feedback on these assignments reveals a weakness in students' ability to explain these strengths and weaknesses in the case of their specific study. Their discussions tend to be general critiques of the method rather than evaluations of the method in their specific case. We need to determine which interpretation of the Learning Outcome we hope to achieve and revise instruction as needed.

*Measurable Learning Outcome 2c4: Students will write research reports appropriate for the social sciences.*

This Learning Outcomes is assessed through Final Research Report, which asks students to compile and revise their Short Assignments into a complete research paper (see appendix). Based on the Final Research Report scores for seniors graduating this year (i.e., 87, 92, 77, 85, and 65), student appear to know how to write research report appropriate for the social sciences. Most students incorporated feedback from the instructor and peers in this final version of the paper. Closer examination of feedback reveals that students struggle to justify the choices they are making in research design. While they can explain their approach, they do not adequately (as whole cohort) justify their choices and then discuss how the resulting data are appropriate and sufficient for their study goals. Moreover, their "Findings" sections are particularly weak. We may want to consider whether this assignment is too ambitious for one semester. Writing proposals may be more appropriate for this amount of time given so much content must be covered in this course. Another option would be to separate methods into a design course and an analysis course. *Senior Exit Survey*

We asked graduating seniors to complete an exit survey covering questions related to our Program Goals as a way to help us understand how students view the program as a whole. Four of the five seniors provided data. A full table of these findings are provided in the appendix.

Three of four students suggest the program meets each goal (i.e., agrees or strongly agrees). One student, however, is undecided, disagrees or strongly disagrees that the program meets our goals (i.e., takes an interdisciplinary approach to CRIM, helps students see how social science research can actually hinder social justice, etc.). We would like to

have a deeper understanding of why this is the case. In the future, we may utilize a focus group during senior week to seek this type of data with future cohorts.

### Summary

Taken together, these data suggest that students have generally met our Learning Goals. As we continue to refine our work regarding Student Learning Objective 2C, we will consider the points identified here:

- Devote more class time to discussing independent and dependent variables
- Help students learn to justify methodological choices
- Devote more attention to instruction in data analysis
- Continue to explore methods of collecting senior exit data

### **IV. Program Changes**

CRIM faculty do not propose any substantive changes to the program requirements at this time. It is clear that CRIM faculty need to ensure that all of their courses collect the necessary data in order to assess the program. We will be sure to check in with each other at the beginning of each semester to make certain that syllabi include Program Goals, Student Learning Objectives, and Outcomes, and that assignments will enable us to assess these learning outcomes.

### **V. Action Plan for the Coming Year**

| Program Goal                                  | Learning Outcome   | Data  | When  |         |
|---|--|---|---|---------|
| Approach criminal Justice as a social Science | Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of major criminological /sociological theories. | 1)Pre-test quizzes and post-test. Quizzes<br><br>2)Essay, students will present papers analyzing criminal behavior and identify key concepts and theories in keeping with our program goals throughout the semester | 1)At the beginning and end of CRIM 115 during the Fall semester<br><br>2) CRIM 301: Fall Semester |         |
|   | Describe the strengths and weaknesses of   | Quizzes   | CRIM 115: Fall midterm  | Faculty |

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|--|---|--|--|--|
|  | major crime datasets (example UCR, NCVS etc). |  |  |  |
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During the 2018-2019 academic year, CRIM faculty will continue to collect longitudinal and meaningful data that will yield stronger and robust data; and revise the curriculum and pedagogy to meet with the needs of our students. These changes will enable us to finish our assessment of Program Goal 2. We will continue to make sure that all course syllabi include Program Goals and Student Learning Objectives. There is a need to restructure the program and evaluate the criminal justice major. We will work on the specific action items (listed above) within the research methods course and criminal justice courses. We will experiment with ways of gathering holistic assessment data from seniors.

#### **VI. The Updated Assessment Plan**

We do not see a need to revise our assessment plan at this point. We will continue to use it in the next academic year and will consider revisions based on that year's assessment. However, we believe our assessment schedule needs revision in order to be manageable for faculty. We will modify our schedule for assessment to the following:

- 2018-2019 Continue assessing Program Goal 2
- 2019-2020 Begin assessing Program Goal 3
- 2020-2021 Continue assessing Program Goal 3
- 2021-2022 Begin assessing Program Goal 4



**Appendix: SS 294 Syllabus, Short Assignments 1 and 4, Final Research Report Assignment, Senior Exit Survey Table**



Wells College

SS 294: RESEARCH METHODS FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SPRING 2018  
ZAB 306  
TH 1:00-2:15

Professor: Daniel Renfrow, PhD  
Office: Zabriskie Hall 008  
Email: drenfrow@wells.edu

Office Hours: TH 2:30pm - 4:00pm and  
by appointment  
Phone: (315) 364-3340

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our goal is to learn how social scientists study the world around them and to gain practice applying these principles in an empirical research project of our own. We will discuss the characteristics that make a research question "researchable." We will examine data collection, measurement, and data analysis strategies that will enhance the likelihood that we can answer our research question. We will address a number of the problems scholars confront when planning and conducting research: how to choose a problem important enough to be worthwhile but modest enough to be addressed effectively, and how to define the goal of one's research so as to maximize its substantive contribution. Along the way, we will discuss how to learn about new fields most efficiently and how to evaluate existing evidence.

This one-semester course cannot provide you with all the tools needed to conduct your own research. However, it ought to provide you with a foundation in key principles and issues sufficient to guide an initial foray into original scholarship.

The task of the course is inherently a difficult one. The creative process is necessarily disorderly. However, the research process must be orderly enough so that you can report it and others can replicate it. Nevertheless, it can never be as orderly as it is seemingly reported to be. A couple of remarks by Nobel prizewinners are apropos:

If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?  
--Albert Einstein

We have a habit in writing articles published in scientific journals to make the work as finished as possible, to cover up all the tracks, to not worry about the blind alleys or describe how you had the wrong idea first, and so on. So there isn't any place to publish, in a dignified manner, what you actually did in order to get to do the work.  
--Richard P. Feynman

In sum, we will learn about what social scientists *actually do* while trying to figure out *what they should be doing*, all with the goal of advancing our understanding of how society works. (4 semester hours)

### STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Throughout the semester, we will work towards several goals. All of the assignments will help students:

- Learn the logic of social inquiry
- Apply abstract principles in a specific study
- Formulate researchable questions



- Evaluate and synthesize existing literatures
- Write research proposals and/or reports
- Understand the costs and benefits of specific methodological choices
- Develop ethical and socially responsible research agendas
- Give, receive, and respond to constructive criticism

## REQUIRED TEXTS

The course will use the text:

Carr, Deborah, et al. 2018. The Art and Science of Social Research. New York: WW Norton & Co. ISBN: 9780393911589

We will also have online reserve readings (denoted with an \* on the Syllabus) stored on our Moodle. In addition to these readings, we will view (either together or on your own) several films this semester. Please note that you should approach these films as if they are another required text.

## PREREQUISITES

One course in the social sciences AND sophomore standing OR POI.

*Although it is not required, I strongly suggest that students have had or concurrently take MATH 151 or MATH 251.*

## REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

I prepared this statement so that you will understand my expectations for students in this course. Read it carefully. Mark the important parts. Ask questions about any parts that are unclear to you. Refer back to the syllabus when you have questions later in the semester.

I may modify course requirements and the schedule as needed. ***You are responsible for the deadlines specified in this syllabus AND any changes announced in class.***

*I expect you to bring your knowledge and experience into the classroom and to constructively share your insights. As your instructor, I will primarily serve as facilitator, co-learner, and guide in this process.*

## General Course Guidelines

*a. Your written work.* Unless instructions are given to the contrary, all work completed outside of class must be typed, 12 font, double-spaced on 8 1/2 and 11 inch white unlined paper. I will **not** accept work turned in via email. Your work should be printed and turned in during class on the scheduled day/time, or as I otherwise instruct. Written work should follow ASA Style and Guidelines (see our Moodle for an abbreviated style guide).

*b. The language we use.* Please let me know your preferred name and pronouns, and I will do my best to see that everyone in class uses them.

*c. Class discussions.* Much of our time will be devoted to discussion. I ask that we abide by discussion guidelines developed by renowned psychologist, Lynn Weber. These include the following:

- 1) Acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, and other institutionalized forms of oppression exist.
- 2) Acknowledge that one mechanism of institutionalized racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, etc. is that we are all systematically taught misinformation about our own

group and about members of other groups. This is true for members of privileged and oppressed groups.

- 3) Agree not to blame ourselves and others for the misinformation we have learned, but to accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
- 4) Assume that people—both the people we study and members of the class—always do the best they can.
- 5) Actively pursue information about our own groups and those of others.
- 6) Share information about our groups with other members of the class, and we will never demean, devalue, or in any way “put down” people for their experiences.
- 7) Agree to combat actively the myths and stereotypes about our own groups and other groups so that we can break down the walls, which prohibit group cooperation and group gain.
- 8) Create a safe atmosphere for open discussion. If members of the class wish to make comments that they do not want repeated outside of the classroom, they can preface their remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat the remarks.

d. *Scheduled days and times.* I expect you to be in class and on time. In order to pass this course, you must complete all assignments by their specified deadlines. Late work will receive comments but a zero score.

e. *Office Hours.* Appointment times are posted on my office door. Be sure to sign-up for an appointment, and speak with me if you can't make regularly scheduled office hours. I **do not** schedule appointments via email. Throughout the semester, I occasionally may have a committee meeting that conflicts with my office hours.

f. *Late work.* I will not accept late work for a grade. All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade for the course. All work, no matter how late, **must** be completed.

***You should always make a duplicate copy of your work. Be sure that you have one reliable electronic copy as back up. Computer or disk failure is never an acceptable excuse for late work.***

g. *Course Adaptations/Accommodations.* If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, let me know as soon as possible. Adaptations and accommodations must be authorized by the Coordinator for Learning Support Services, ext. 3432.

h. *Academic Integrity.* We will follow the academic honesty policy described in the Wells Student Honor Code (regarding student misconduct, cheating, and dishonesty) and enforce this policy as necessary. Any suspected infractions (including plagiarism, intended or not) will result in severe penalties, including a failing grade on the assignment and/or the course **AND** additional sanctions from community court to repair the harm done to the community.

i. *Technology in the Classroom.* Please keep classroom distractions to a minimum. Cell phones should be switched off or silenced, **AND** kept out of sight. Computers, while useful for keeping notes, should only be used for class-related activities. ***If your use of technology becomes a disturbance, I will dismiss you for the day and your technological device for the rest of the semester.***

j. *Inclement Weather.* Please register for Wells Express Alert, which will notify you by email and/or text if the college is closed due to inclement weather. There may be times when the college remains open,

but I feel that the roads are too dangerous for travel. In these cases, I will send an email notification, so long as my internet connection allows.

k. *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.* It is against federal policy for me to distribute information about my students to unauthorized third parties. Parents or guardians will need to contact the Registrar and Director of Academic Advising and Success at 315-364-3240 for questions about your academic standing in this class or in general; Coordinator of Learning Support Services at 315-364-3432 for questions about disabilities and accommodations; or the Dean of Students at 315-364-3312 for all other issues.

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

*Writing Assignments.* To help you through the process of designing an independent research project, each student will complete five writing assignments asking them to draft individual components of the larger project (100 points each). These assignments will allow students the opportunity to get feedback on their ideas before turning in a completed research report.

*Writing Workshops, Peer Critiques, and Discussion.* Students will discuss their projects with their peers. They will share drafts of their work and receive feedback from the instructor and their peers. These workshop-style sessions are designed to challenge your ideas and advance your scholarship through constructive criticism (100 points).

*Individual Meetings.* We will hold individual meetings throughout the semester. These will be your opportunity to get personalized feedback on your project and to get extra help. Please come to these meetings prepared and ready to discuss your project. Failure to show up for a meeting will result in a 10% deduction from your overall course grade.

*Research Ethics Certification.* Each student must successfully complete the CitiProgram online training (100 points).

*Lab Exercises.* You will receive 4 credits for completing this course. This requires that we spend an additional hour each week working on course material. Rather than meeting as a group, I include weekly assignments for students to complete on their own. These assignments will be discussed in class.

*Research Report.* Students will write a research report based in the short assignments and makes use of prior feedback from peers and the professor. This paper will include an introduction; literature review; data and methods; findings; and conclusion sections. (200 points).

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

*Everything counts.* Your overall grade for SS 294 will come from the following:

|                               |     |   |               |
|-------------------------------|-----|---|---------------|
| Research Report               | 200 | A | 810+          |
| Research Ethics Certification | 100 | B | 720-809       |
| Discussion & Workshops        | 100 | C | 630-719       |
| Short Writing Assignments     | 500 | D | 540-629       |
|                               |     | F | 539 and below |
| <hr/> TOTAL                   |     |   | 900           |

### Tentative Schedule

|   | Tuesday   | Thursday   | Weekly Lab Assignment  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <i>Week One:<br/>Positivism and the<br/>Logic of Inquiry</i>              | Jan 23<br><br>Introductions and Syllabus.   | Jan 25<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 1</i><br><br>Green and Lageson, <i>How the Sociological Sausage is Made*</i>  | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>View <i>Introduction to SPSS Online Tutorial</i> <a href="#">here</a> and Getting Up and Started with NVivo <a href="#">here</a> . |
| <i>Week Two:<br/>Developing<br/>Research Questions</i>                    | Jan 30<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 2</i><br><br>Cole, <i>Why Most of the Articles in Sociology Journals are Boring and What Could be Done About It*</i> | Feb 1<br><br>Merton, <i>Three Fragments from a Sociologist's Notebooks*</i>  | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>Find and read the Code of Ethics for your discipline's professional organization (e.g. ASA, APA, etc.)                             |
| <i>Week Three:<br/>The Ethics and<br/>Politics of Social<br/>Research</i> | Feb 6<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 3</i><br><br><u>Film:</u> <i>The Deadly Deception</i><br><br><u>Writing Assignment 1:</u> Topic and Introduction Due  | Feb 8<br><br>Goode, <i>Sex with Informants as Deviant Behavior*</i><br><br>Carpenter, <i>A "reality check" for Regnerus*</i><br><br><i>Guatemalans Deliberately Infected with STDs sue Johns Hopkins University for \$1bn*</i> | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>Read Adler and Clark, <i>Appendix A*</i> & Begin CitiProgram online training for Behavioral Scientists <a href="#">here</a>        |
| <i>Week Four</i>  | <b><i>Individual Meetings to Discuss Writing Assignment:<br/>No Class</i></b>   |  | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>Continue CitiProgram online training   |

|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <i>Week Five:<br/>Sampling</i>                                  | Feb 20<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 6</i>  | Feb 22  | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>Continue CitiProgram online training & View Using NVivo for Literature Reviews <a href="#">here</a> .  |
| <i>Week Six:<br/>Conceptualization &amp; Operationalization</i> | Feb 27<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 4</i><br><br>Wildeman, <i>Counting Things in New Ways*</i>         | Mar 1<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 5</i><br><br><i>Writing Assignment 2:</i><br>Annotated Bibliography Due   | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>Continue CitiProgram online training   |
| <i>Week Seven:<br/>The Experiment</i>                           | Mar 6<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 8</i>   | Mar 8<br><br>Webster, <i>Beauty as Status*</i><br><br>Pager, <i>Field Effects in Experimental Audits*</i> | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>CitiProgram online training must be complete by March 6 at noon.                                       |
| <b>**Spring Break: No Class**</b>                               |   |   |  |
| <i>Week Eight:<br/>Structured Questioning</i>                   | Mar 20<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 7</i><br><br>Pickett, <i>Online Surveys*</i>                       | Mar 22<br><br><u>Writing Assignment 3:</u><br>Literature Review Due                                       | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>View SPSS online tutorial <a href="#">here</a> and peruse General Social Survey <a href="#">here</a> . |
| <i>Week Nine:<br/>Open-Ended Questioning</i>                    | Mar 27<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 11</i><br><br>Schalet, <i>Interviews and Telling a Good Story*</i> | Mar 29<br><br>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 10</i><br><br>Pascoe, <i>Negotiating the Ethnographic Hallways*</i>      | <u>Lab Assignment:</u><br>View SPSS online tutorials <a href="#">here</a> .  |

|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <i>Week Ten:<br/>Materials-Based<br/>Data &amp; Mixed<br/>Methods</i> | <p>Apr 3</p> <p>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 12</i></p> <p>Van Oort and Green,<br/><i>Analyzing Commercials*</i></p> <p>Polletta, <i>Online Forums and<br/>Deliberative Storytelling*</i></p> | <p>Apr 5</p> <p>Roscigno, <i>Mixing Methods to<br/>See Bigger Pictures*</i></p> <p><u>Writing Assignment 4:</u> Data<br/>and Methods Due</p> | <p><u>Lab<br/>Assignment:</u><br/>View SPSS<br/>online<br/>tutorials <u>one</u><br/>and <u>two</u> and<br/><u>three</u></p> |
| <i>Week Eleven: Data<br/>Analysis</i>                                 | <p>Apr 10</p> <p>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 14</i></p>  | <p>Apr 12</p> <p>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 16</i></p> <p><u>Writing Assignment 5:</u> IRB<br/>Materials Due (to me)</p>                             |   |
| <i>Week Twelve</i>  | <p><b><i>Individual Meetings to Discuss Writing Assignment:<br/>No Class</i></b></p>  |  |   |
| <i>Week Thirteen:<br/>Writing Research</i>                            | <p>Apr 24</p> <p>Carr et al, <i>Ch. 17</i></p> <p>Workshop Revised<br/>Introduction (Bring 1 copy)</p>  | <p>Apr 26</p> <p>Workshop Revised Literature<br/>Reviews (Bring 1 copy)</p>  |   |
| <i>Week Fourteen:<br/>Writing Research</i>                            | <p>May 1</p> <p>Workshop Revised Data and<br/>Methods (Bring 1 copy)</p>  | <p>May 3</p> <p>Workshop Findings and<br/>Conclusions (Bring 1 copy)</p>   |   |

**Research Report and Presentation Due: Wednesday, May 9 from 2:00pm-5:00pm. No late work will be accepted.**

## SS 294: Research Methods for the Social Sciences

### Written and Oral Assignment 1: Selecting and Introducing a Researchable Question

Throughout this semester you will be working on a research project on a topic of your choosing. For this assignment you are asked to write a brief introduction of your topic and to specify your research question. Choose a feasible and appropriate (for your field) research question. Keep your focus sufficiently narrow so that you are able to effectively and efficiently research it. In this paper, you should:

- *write an introduction to your topic*

This should be a paragraph that introduces what it is you are planning to study. Usually you would begin your paper with an introduction that defines and provides context for your topic.

- *fully discuss what it is you want to study about that topic*

This is the bulk of your assignment. What specifically will you research? State your research question clearly and precisely, and without bias. Here is also where you should begin to formulate your ideas on how you might study your question, although you need not be very specific because we will deal with specifics in future assignments. Is this study exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory?

- *explain to the reader why it is important to study this question*

Here is where you answer the "So what?" question. That is, you plan to study XYZ. So what? Why it is important to study this topic? What is the intrinsic sociological/political/psychological/educational importance of this research? Why should your colleagues care about the project? What can society gain by your having researched this question?

- *put your topic into a larger context of broad disciplinary areas of interest*

Remembering the advice given by Cole (1993), this is your opportunity to be broad and general in your thinking. How does your research map onto enduring questions within your discipline?

#### General Guidelines:

Your paper does not need to be longer than three pages; indeed, parsimony and succinctness are good, but you must do the assignment in a thorough and complete manner. Remember that the quality of written expression is very important to research, and how you say something as well as what you say is important.

*The written assignment is due: Tuesday, February 6.*

**SS 294: Research Methods in the Social Sciences**  
**Assignment Four: Sample and Operationalization**

This assignment asks you to write up a methods section of your paper. You should focus primarily on sampling and operationalization. You may also revise your introductions and literature reviews and add them to this assignment for additional feedback. Continue to clarify your concepts and refine your research question(s) as needed.

Your methods section should include the following:

1. What type of sample will you use? What is the unit of analysis? Make certain that you have consistency among your theory (stated in your literature review), your stated expectations, and the level at which you plan to collect data. How many cases will you have? Why is this sample (and the number of cases utilized) *appropriate* and *sufficient* for your study?
2. What data collection technique do you expect to utilize? Is time a component of the design? Is this a cross-sectional or longitudinal project?
3. What are your key variables?

For deductive projects: what are the independent and dependent variables? How do you expect these to be related? You will need to specify hypotheses (as derived from your theory).

For inductive projects: what are the key concepts under investigation? While you may not have formal hypotheses, you should have an expectation or two. Tell your reader what you expect to find.

For ALL projects: what is the conceptual definition for each central concept? How will you be operationalizing each? Remember you can borrow from prior scholarship so long as you cite appropriately.

4. For each measure, how will you establish validity and reliability?
5. What are the ethical concerns associated with your design? You may want to revisit the readings on ethics.
6. What are the limitations of each of your decisions? You may embed these throughout the methods section, or you may choose to include a separate limitations section. Your statement must go beyond time and resources.

**DUE: This assignment is worth 100 points and is due to my office by Friday, April 6 at 5:00pm.**



## **SS 294: FINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

The following details should help you construct and organize your final research project.  
*Be sure to use your short assignments to help develop this paper.*

### **Title Page**

Should include running head, title, your name, department, and college.

### **Abstract (150 words)**

An abstract communicates what your paper accomplishes in very few words. Tell us what your research question is, what type of data you used to bear on this question, and what you found. Include 4 to 5 keywords.

### **Introduction (approximately 2 pages)**

As a sociologist/anthropologist/psychologist/economist/political scientist/etc. why did you pick this topic? Why is it relevant and important for scholars in your field? Pique your readers' interest by describing what is significant about the topic. In addition, you should clearly state your research question(s). Be sure to cite relevant literature where/when appropriate.

### **Literature Review (approximately 5-6 pages)**

What have others said about this topic? In writing this section of the paper, you need to become familiar with other studies on this topic, and to organize what others have found in a way that helps set up your research question. In essence, this section says the following: *this is what other people have found and this is how my research questions relate to and extend those findings*. Specific questions to think about include:

- How has this topic been defined, conceptualized or understood?
- Are there any controversies about this topic in the research arena?
- What kind of empirical research has been done on this topic? What are the major findings?
- How adequate has the research been (in terms of methods, questions asked, etc.)?

Please note that a literature review is *NOT* an annotated bibliography. Instead, the literature review should stand as a self-contained mini-essay about the questions people have asked, the findings they have revealed, and/or the questions that remain to be asked. The literature review should be based on the scholarly literature, including recent articles from professional sociological journals (or sources appropriate for your discipline). This portion of your paper should be academic in tone and content.

### **Methods (approximately 3-4 pages)**

This section of your paper describes how you conducted your research. You should explain and justify your choice of research methods (pre-collected data, survey research, content analysis, experiment, interview, etc.). Why did you select the method(s) you used? What is the goal of study (to explore, to describe, to explain)?

Is your approach deductive? If so, what are your hypotheses? What are your key variables (eg, dependent, independent, controls), and how are they conceptualized and

operationalized? Validity and reliability? Is your approach inductive? If so, what are your guiding questions?

Describe your sample. Who is included in the sample/sampling techniques? Why is this sample sufficient and appropriate? How are you analyzing the data? Any ethical issues you needed to consider in your research?

Are there any shortcomings or limitations to your methods that the reader should be aware of when evaluating your findings and discussion?

This section should give sufficient detail that another researcher could replicate your study based on these instructions.

**Findings** (*approximately 5+ pages*)

What did your analysis uncover? Please provide tables, figures, and/or actual quotes from individuals or field notes that help show the reader what patterns occur in the data. It may be useful to organize the findings using headings and subheadings. *Be sure to show evidence rather than just summarizing.*

**Conclusion** (*approximately 1 to 2 pages*)

This section provides the answer to your research question. It should tell us how your findings relate to and build upon the existing scholarship. You should note any major limitations of your study. You should conclude by pointing the way for future research.

**References** (*length will vary*)

Use the style guide appropriate for your field. See the Moodle page for handouts.

**Appendices** (*length will vary*)

This section should include a copy of your instrumentation such as surveys, coding sheets, or interview guides. It should also include a clear, thorough, and precise copy of your IRB application (including relevant scripts, consent forms, and Citicourse certificate). The IRB application should be done well enough to have a high likelihood of being approved.

**Presentation** (*limited to 15 PPT slides*)

During our final exam period you will give a 11 minute presentation. Plan to speak for 9 to 10 minutes. The last 1 to 2 minutes will be devoted to questions. Prioritize the content of this presentation by emphasizing your study's major contributions.

**DUE DATES:** Be prepared to present and submit your paper (hardcopies only) on May 10 at 9:00 am to noon. No late work will be accepted. Your PPT presentation must be emailed to Professor Renfrow by noon on May 9. This assignment is worth 200 points.

## Q2 Mark the Best Answer

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0

|  | STRONGLY<br>AGREE | STRONGLY<br>AGREE | AGREE      | AGREE       | UNDECIDED  | UNDECIDED   | DISAGREE   | STRONGLY<br>DISAGREE | TOTAL<br>RESPOND |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| This major helped me learn about the historical and philosophical traditions that provide the foundation for the US criminal justice system.   | 0.00%<br>0        | 50.00%<br>2       | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0           |                  |
| This major helped me learn about criminological theories which explain the types and rates of criminal conduct that exist in society.  | 0.00%<br>0        | 50.00%<br>2       | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0           |                  |
| This major took an interdisciplinary approach to the criminal justice system and helped me understand how the work of criminal justice institutions intersects with that of other important social institutions. | 0.00%<br>0        | 75.00%<br>3       | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1          |                  |
| This major helped me understand how the criminal justice system operates at local, state, and federal levels.  | 0.00%<br>0        | 75.00%<br>3       | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0           |                  |
| This major helped me gain analytical and methodological skills that enable me to critically evaluate parts of the criminal justice system.   | 0.00%<br>0        | 25.00%<br>1       | 0.00%<br>0 | 75.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0           |                  |
| This major helped prepare me for a career in criminal justice and/or allied fields.  | 0.00%<br>0        | 50.00%<br>2       | 0.00%<br>0 | 50.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0           |                  |

## Crim Assessment Survey

SurveyMonkey

|   |            |             |            |             |            |             |            |             |
|---|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| This major helped me use a criminological vocabulary for the study of law, criminality, and punishment in my written and oral work.             | 0.00%<br>0 | 50.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  |
| This major required me to apply and critically evaluate criminological theories and concepts within written and oral work.                      | 0.00%<br>0 | 50.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 50.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  |
| This major helped me understand the social and psychological correlates of various crimes and their implications for social control.            | 0.00%<br>0 | 50.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 |
| This major helped me understand the way individuals move through the criminal justice system.   | 0.00%<br>0 | 75.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  |
| This major has helped me see criminology as a social science.   | 0.00%<br>0 | 75.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  |
| This major has helped me identify research questions in the area of criminal justice and enabled me to formulate strategies for answering them. | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 |
| This major has helped me see that traditional research methods can promote and, at times, hinder social justice.                                | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 50.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0  | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 |

|   |            |             |            |             |            |            |            |            |
|---|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| This major helped me understand the ways that crime definitions and social control policy reflect and, at times, can unintentionally reproduce inequalities associated with race, class, gender, and other social statuses. | 0.00%<br>0 | 25.00%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 75.00%<br>3 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 |
| This major has helped me become a critical consumer of crime data, media reports, and politicians' claims about crime and the (in)effectiveness of social control policies.   | 0.00%<br>0 | 50.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 50.00%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 |
| This major helped me be better able to write and present my ideas effectively.  | 0.00%<br>0 | 66.67%<br>2 | 0.00%<br>0 | 33.33%<br>1 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 | 0.00%<br>0 |