This course provides an introduction to basic methods of criminological research. Major topics include the logic of social inquiry, causality, and conceptualization; sampling theory; data collection and measurement; and research design. The primary objectives of the course are: 1) to help students be informed consumers of contemporary criminological research, and 2) to enable students to initiate and execute worthwhile research projects of their own.

**Required Texts and Readings:**


4. Selected Readings noted with "*". These are available on UMD Canvas at [http://ng.elms.umd.edu/](http://ng.elms.umd.edu/)

Also, you may want to look at the Sage Publications list. Sage offers a series of excellent and inexpensive introductions to various aspects of research methods. We will be using some of their publications, but I want to bring them to your attention as a resource for the future. You can browse their website at: [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com).
COURSE GRADE:

A. **Term Paper (60% of Grade):** The term paper is to be a research proposal on a topic of your choice. The proposal can be a study that you may never perform, or it can be an investigation that you plan to conduct in the future. It cannot be work that you have already performed, e.g., your senior thesis or M.A. thesis, nor can it be a secondary analysis of existing data. The proposal should cover all segments of the research process, even though the proposed data collection and analysis will not actually be performed.

The proposal will be built incrementally. As each major segment of the course is completed, the section of the proposal that deals with that topic will be submitted and graded. As each additional section is added, the previous section(s) should be revised based on the instructor’s comments and additional methodological issues raised by the new section. This process will be discussed in class.

**SCHEDULE OF TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. **January 31:** Topics No Grade

   Please submit a brief paragraph on three possible research topics.

2. **February 21:** Introduction 10%

   In no more than five double-spaced pages, please clearly identify the research topic you will work on for the remainder of the semester. The introduction should state the topic and the theoretical and practical importance of studying it.

   Also, identify and review the major studies that have examined this issue in the past. What are their methodological strengths and weaknesses? State the major hypotheses that your study will test. Identify the major independent and dependent variables and the unit of analysis.

3. **March 28:** Revised Introduction; Sampling Plan; 10%

   Please begin this assignment with a revision of your introduction, the hypotheses and independent and dependent variables. Revision should be modified based on my comments and to ensure consistency with your sampling design.

   Then, in no more than five double-spaced pages, indicate clearly the type of sampling design you will use and your rationale for selecting this type of sample. Focus your discussion on sample selection, not sample estimation. In your discussion, clearly indicate the population to which your hypothesis applies and how you will select a probability sample from it. Pay particular attention to practical issues, such as sample size, the sampling frame or list, and slippage between the population and the elements on the frame. Provide a justification for the decisions you make.

4. **April 18:** Revised Introduction and Sampling Plan; Research Design; 10%

   Please start with a revision of your hypothesis and your sampling design, if necessary.
Then, in no more than five double-spaced pages, clearly indicate the type of research design you will use to test your hypothesis. You should also indicate how this design allows you to test your hypothesis; that is, present a brief rationale for your selection.

In presenting your design, don’t be vague – e.g., experiment or survey. Be specific – e.g., pretest-posttest equivalent group design, panel study with four annual data collection points, etc. You should also provide enough detail about the design – for instance the age at Time 1, the length of the treatment program, the lag between interviews, and so forth – so that a clear description of what you plan to do emerges. You should also present a brief rationale for each of these decisions.

Simply list the independent and dependent variables, as well as the major control variables.

5. May 9: Measurement Only 10%

In no more than five double-spaced pages, discuss your measurement plan. What are the key variables you need to measure in order to test your hypothesis? Indicate precisely how you will measure the ones I noted in the last assignment. Start with the concept and end with the exact measure. Also, discuss how you will assess the reliability and validity of your measures. You do not need to revise the previous sections at this time.

6. May 16: Complete Proposal 20%

Please revise all four sections of the proposal so that your final proposal attends to prior comments and presents a coherent and coordinated research proposal.

Term papers must be typed double-spaced, using the format and style of Criminology. All references must be complete and conform to the Criminology style. Be sure to use spell-check!

At this stage the page limit – no more than 20 double-spaced pages – will be strictly enforced. This is standard practice at funding agencies. Please use: Times Roman size 12 font, 1 inch margins.

B. Mid-Term Exam (15% of Grade): There will be an hour-long, in-class mid-term exam.

C. Final Exam (15% of Grade): There will be an hour-long, in-class, cumulative final exam covering all of the material in the course.

D. Attendance and Participation (10% of Grade): Each enrolled student is expected to attend every seminar session and to participate in class discussions. Class discussions will include an evaluation and critique of the methodological adequacy of several assigned papers. The schedule for these discussion pieces will be determined during the semester.

Before any assignment is considered complete, an oral examination may be scheduled at the discretion of the instructor. Also, read the Maryland Code of Academic Integrity at http://www.shc.umd.edu.
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Bibliography


Sample Proposal I. The effects of maltreatment on adolescent intimate relationships and sexuality.

Sample Proposal II. Revisiting the influence of delinquent peers: Perception vs. actual peer behavior.


Smith, Herbert L. Notes on sample size. Department of Sociology, University of Pennsylvania. (pp. 1-4)