

Instructor: Tracy Lafontaine
AJ 105: W 5:30-8:15 PM, BBC 201
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**Justice Systems Research
AJ 105, Fall 2003**

Course Description:

Interaction of theory, research and practice in the justice process; purpose and limits of research; introduction to basic research design and methods of inquiry, social statistics, sampling and ethical issues in preparation of research reports. Prerequisite: AJ 10, Bus 90 or Stat 95 or SocS 15 or Soci 102 (or equivalent) or instructor consent.

This course will cover the basic elements of social science research methodology. Students will learn about the necessary components of research methods to understand, critique, design, and carry out sound research. Students will critically read research on justice issues, conceive a workable research question, select an appropriate method for the research question, and design a research study. An examination of ethical issues faced when conducting social science research and how to interpret research findings will be provided.

This course is not only required for completion of a BS in Criminal Justice Administration, but also is a prerequisite for the required Administration of Justice masters level classes AJ 202 and 203.

Course Objectives:

The objectives of the course are to:

- 1) Encourage students to appreciate the need for knowledge based on scientific research data in the field of criminal justice.
- 2) Enable students to understand the logic and principles of research methods.
- 3) Educate students about the strengths and limitations of various research methods to become an intelligent and critical reader of research reports.
- 4) Enable students to develop a basic competency in research design, sampling, data collection and analysis to provide empirical data for reports, planning, interventions and innovations in the field of criminal justice.

Upon completion of this course, students will have a strong command of research methods, providing the necessary foundation for all graduate level classes and application to any career in the criminal justice field.

Required Text:

Maxfield, M., & Babbie, E. (2001). *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology*. (3rd ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Course Requirements

1) Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend class and participate actively and constructively in class discussions. Assigned materials should be read prior to each class meeting. Discussion should indicate knowledge of the subject matter, familiarity with the readings and ability to ask and answer probing questions. Students are encouraged to keep informed about current issues, and bring such issues to the class discussion. Obviously, attendance is necessary for getting credit for participation. Attendance and participation will be recorded for each class meeting. Students who miss a class meeting may submit a 1 page summary of the assigned readings to receive up to 5 points toward their class participation grade (see Grade Evaluation section).

Do not hesitate to ask questions either in class or during my office hours.

2) Examinations

One in-class quiz, midterm and final exam, which cover the readings and lecture materials, will be given.

The department policy for make-up examinations will be followed. ONE make-up examination is allowed under extreme circumstances, only for students who have legitimate reasons. Students must request permission to take a make-up examination prior to that exam and provide the proper documentation. Only under extreme and unavoidable emergency circumstances will students be able to make up a quiz or exam for a legitimate reason that was not given advance notice. Legitimate reasons include the following: your own serious illness or injury (documented by a physician); a documented death in your immediate family; unavoidable, documented, schedule conflict for SCHOOL related purposes (i.e., required by athletic team to travel). If you miss more than ONE scheduled exam, you will receive zero points for additional missed exams. Missed exams will be taken on the final scheduled day of class (Dec. 17) during the class period. Make-up exams may be in a different format than the originals. The missed final exam will be arranged if necessary, and may also be in a different format than the original final.

3) Course Assignments

Required readings must be completed prior to the class for which they are assigned. Students are required to complete a cumulative research project proposal that will be the compilation

of several interrelated assignments completed throughout the semester. There will also be several in-class exercises including a library written assignment.

The project assignment deadlines are FIRM deadlines. NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED unless there is a documented emergency which prevents you from turning them in. The final project will be graded down 10% for each CALENDAR day late. You are also responsible for knowing any schedule changes for exams or assignment due dates that were announced in class, even if you were not in attendance.

Grade Evaluation

Grading will conform to university regulations. Two thirds of the course must be completed and permission from the instructor must be obtained in advance to receive an Incomplete ("I"). A "U" will be given for unauthorized withdrawal; this will count as an F in the GPA. A "U" is given when a student stops attending the class, without filing the necessary drop papers. An automatic "F" is given for plagiarism or cheating.

Please familiarize yourself with the university's policy on academic dishonesty, available in pdf format at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/academic.html> and published in the print catalog. Use those rules and definitions to guide your conduct in this class.

Your final grade for the course will be based upon your performance on the in-class exams, the assignments, and class participation as follows:

Quiz:	50 points maximum
Midterm:	200 points maximum
Final:	200 points maximum
Assignments:	200 points maximum (5 assignments x 40 pts.)
Class participation:	150 points maximum (10 points for attendance and participation x 12 class meetings = 120; library assignment = 30)
Total possible:	800 points
A range =	720 points or above
B range =	640-719 points
C range =	560-639 points
D range =	480-559 points
F =	479 points or below

AJ 105, Fall 2003
COURSE SCHEDULE
(subject to change if necessary)

- Aug. 27 **Overview of course and explanation of course mechanics**
Introduction to asking and answering research questions
Readings assigned: Chapter 1: Crime, Criminal Justice and Scientific Inquiry; Chapter 2: Theory and Criminal Justice Research; and Chapter 3: Causation and Validity
- Sept. 3 **Theory and causation; reading criminal justice research**
Readings due: Chapter 1-3
Readings assigned: Chapter 4: General Issues in Research Design and Chapter 5: Concepts, Operationalization, and Measurement
- Sept.10 **Introduction to research design; from concepts to measures**
Readings Due: Chapters 4-5
- Sept. 17 **Quiz (chapters 1-5)**
Reading assigned: Chapter 6: Measuring Crime
- Sept. 24 **Measurement issues in criminal justice research**
Reading due: Chapter 6
Guidelines for research methods assignments and final project announced
Assignment #1: Research question of interest (due Oct. 8)
- Oct. 1 **Library orientation with Reference Librarian Susana Liu (King Library, 2nd floor, Room 213) and assignment**
- Oct. 8 **Ethics and research**
Reading due: Chapter 8 (note switch in chapter order): Ethics and Criminal Justice Research
Assignment #1 due
Readings assigned: Chapter 9 up to page 204 (sources of data; issues in data collection) and Chapter 7 (note switch in chapter order): Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs
Assignment: Research article and summary (due 10/15)

- Oct. 15 **Introduction to data collection and experimental designs**
Readings due: Chapter 9 up to page 204 and Chapter 7
Research article and summary due
Readings assigned: Chapter 9, pgs 205-225 (probability sampling) and
Chapter 10: Survey Research and Other Ways of Asking Questions
Assignment #2: Article summaries and reference list (due October 29)
- Oct. 22 **MIDTERM (chapters 1-8, and chapter 9 up to page 204)**
- Oct. 29 **Probability sampling; survey research**
Readings due: Chapter 9, pgs 205-225 and Chapter 10.
Assignment #2 due
Readings assigned: Chapter 9, pages 225-230 (nonprobability sampling) and
Chapter 11: Field Research
- Nov. 5: **Nonprobability sampling; field research**
Readings due: Chapter 9, pages 225-230 and Chapter 11.
Reading assigned: Chapter 12: Agency Records, Content Analysis, and
Secondary Data
Assignment #3: Literature synthesis and summary (due Nov. 12)
- Nov. 12 **Unobtrusive methods**
Assignment #3 due
Reading due: Chapter 12
Readings Assigned: Chapter 13: Evaluation Research and Policy Analysis
and Chapter 14: Interpreting Data
Assignment #4: Research methodology and design (due Nov. 19)
- Nov. 19 **Program evaluation and policy analysis; making sense and
communicating research findings**
Readings due: Chapter 13 and 14
Assignment #4 due
Assignment #5: Final project synthesis (due Dec. 17)
- Nov. 26 **Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)**

- Dec. 3 **Final project presentations**
- Dec.10 **No class**
- Dec. 17 **Final exam (chapters 7, 9-14) (5:15 – 7:30 PM) and make-up exams**
Assignment #5 due