

FALL 2006  
JS 105 Section 1.  
Mon-Wed 10:30-11:45am

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## JS105

### RESEARCH METHODS IN JUSTICE STUDIES

#### Course Description

Introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods used in Justice Studies. Includes relationship of theory to empirical evidence; logic underlying methods of inquiry; ethics in conducting empirical research; and methodological design, operationalization, and data analysis.

**Prerequisite:** Bus 90 or Stat 95 or SocS 15 or Soci 102 (or equivalent) or instructor consent.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students will develop the knowledge and skills to:

1. Identify the role of theory, ethics and values in formulating research questions
2. Choose appropriate sampling methods and research designs
3. Select appropriate research methods for collecting the data (survey, observational and documentary research)
4. Apply appropriate statistical techniques to describe and analyze the data
5. Critically evaluate the strengths and limitations of research reports.

#### Required Texts:

Fitzgerald, Jack D., & Cox, Steven M. (2002). Research methods and statistics in criminal justice: An introduction. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Chicago, Nelson-Hall. [F&C]

#### Recommended Reading:

Fox, James A., & Levin, Jack (2005). Elementary statistics in criminal justice research: The essentials. Boston, Pearson Education Inc. [F&L]

#### Course Requirements and Grading:

To earn credit for this course, students must take a midterm and final exam, hand in regular homework exercises that are cumulative in nature, and write a final research paper.

The exams will be made up of a combination of multiple-choice, true/false, fill-ins, and short essays based upon a research report that students will have read one week prior to

the exam. The exams are open-book in that students can consult their notes and texts but not one another.

There will be five homework assignments during the semester, each of which prepares students to put together their final research proposal paper. In these assignments, students will take progressive steps to 1) define a research problem that is of interest to them 2) research and write a literature review, 3) develop a research design and sampling method; 4) describe methods of collecting data and measures used, and 5) plan the data analysis for the research proposal. (*See separate handouts for instructions on each of these homework assignments*).

The final research paper involves re-writing the five homework assignments into a cohesive research proposal on the topic of the student's choice, using the feedback from the instructor.

The final grade will be made up as follows: Midterm Exam – 25%; Final Exam – 25%; homework assignments – 25%; and final research proposal – 25%. Final grades will be assigned according to the following scales:

A+ = 95%+, A = 90%+, A- = 85%+, B+ = 80%+, B = 75%+, B- = 70%+, C+ = 65%+, C = 60%+, C- = 55%+, D+ = 50%+, D = 45%+, D- = 40%+, F = <40%.

### **Teaching Philosophy**

This class is a mix of lectures, class discussion and group problem-solving, and some field exercises, wherein there is an attempt to apply the principles of research methods to specific problems of interest to students. Students are warmly welcomed to scheduled office hours or to make special appointments when necessary. Students who participate in class and who attend office hours will be given specific detailed help on how they can achieve a good grade in this class. Those who don't make these kinds of efforts to get help will not be given much sympathy or consideration.

Late submissions: In accord with departmental policy, homework assignments and final research papers (including drafts of papers) submitted after the due date will be considered for full credit only in extreme cases and only where appropriate documentation is provided. The instructor has the discretion to deduct ½ grade for each day late OR refuse to accept the late assignment altogether. Make-up or re-takes of the mid-term exam can only be done at the time of the final exam.

### **Course Add/Drop Statement**

Instructors are permitted to drop students who fail to attend the first scheduled class meeting and who fail to inform the instructor prior to the second class meeting of the reason for any absence and their intention to continue in the class. Some instructors will drop students who do not meet the stated course prerequisites. However, instructors are not required to drop a student from their course. *It is the student's responsibility to make sure classes are dropped.*

**You, the student,** are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, withdrawal, etc. found at: [http://sa.sjsu.edu/student\\_conduct](http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct)

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

Academic integrity is essential to the mission of San José State University. As such, students are expected to perform their own work (except when collaboration is expressly permitted by the course instructor) without the use of any outside resources. Students are not permitted to use old tests, quizzes when preparing for exams, nor may they consult with students who have already taken the exam. When practiced, academic integrity ensures that all students are fairly graded. Violations to the Academic Integrity Policy undermine the educational process and will not be tolerated. It also demonstrates a lack of respect for oneself, fellow students and the course instructor and can ruin the university's reputation and the value of the degrees it offers. We all share the obligation to maintain an environment which practices academic integrity. Violators of the Academic Integrity Policy will be subject to failing this course and being reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Ethical Development for disciplinary action which could result in suspension or expulsion from San José State University. The policy on academic integrity can be found at: [http://sa.sjsu.edu/student\\_conduct](http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct)

To better understand plagiarism and to aid you in making sure that you are not plagiarizing, please see me and/or visit: <http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/plagiarism/index.htm>

### **American with Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with DRC to establish a record of their disability.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS**

Aug 23 Introduction to research in criminal justice [F&C chpt.1]  
▪ Overview of course  
▪ Basic, applied & evaluation research

Aug 28,30, Sep 6 The role of theory, ethics & values in research  
• Formulating a research question [F&C Chpt 2]  
• Preliminary library search for background literature

**Assignment 1:** Select a research topic and formulate it in terms of a theoretical proposition, definitions, scope conditions, hypothesis, and variables (independent, dependent and background). **Due date: Sep 11**

Sep 11,13,18,20 Planning your research study  
• What does the previous research say?  
• Sampling and research design [Chpts 3 & 4]

**Assignment 2** Draft the preliminary literature review for your research paper. **Due date: Sep 18.**

**Assignment 3** Choose a preliminary sampling strategy and research designs to test your hypothesis (an ideal one and a more pragmatic one). **Due date: Sep 25.**

Sep 25, 27, Oct 2, 4 Research methods [F&C Chpts 5 & 6]

- Survey, observation and documentary collection of data
- Reliability & validity of measures

**Assignment 4:** Describe your research methods for your individual study.  
**Due date: Oct 9**

Oct 9, 11      Review and practice mid-term

**Oct 16      Mid-term exam**

Oct 18, 23, 25, 30, Nov 1      Basic statistical techniques

- Descriptive [F&C Chpt 7]
- Measuring relationships (bivariate) [F&C Chpt 8 & 9]
- Inferential statistics & hypothesis testing. [F&C Chpt 10 & 11]

**Assignment 5:** Prepare a data analysis plan for your study  
**Due date: Nov 6**

Nov 6,8,13,15,20      Preparing research reports and proposals [F&C Chpt 12 & 13]  
 Critiquing research

Nov 22      NO CLASS

Nov 27, 29      Revisions & rewrites of final paper

Dec 4 & 6      Review for final exam

**Your Final Research Proposal Paper is due Dec 6<sup>th</sup>.**

**Dec 11      FINAL EXAM 9:45AM – 12 NOON.**

## JS105 ASSIGNMENTS

### Assignment 1. Due September 11, 2006.

In about one page, answer the following in outline form, using the headings provided:

#### **1. Statement of Research Topic**

In two or three sentences, describe a problem you wish to research and explain why it is important to study. (For example, “The effectiveness of law enforcement in decreasing crime is important to evaluate. It is commonly believed that police presence alone is sufficient to *deter* people from breaking the law. However, a contrary argument is that more crime will be *detected* when there is closer scrutiny by police officers. It is important to provide data to show which of these entirely different effects is more likely).

#### **2. Proposition:**

State your main theoretical proposition using general, abstract law-like statements (For example, “Law enforcement surveillance decreases crime”).)

#### **3. Definitions:**

Define the important terms in your theoretical proposition. (For example, “Law enforcement surveillance is defined as public monitoring by authorities. Crime is defined as behaviors that are violations of law e.g. prostitution, drug dealing).

#### **4. Scope:**

Suggest the conditions under which this proposition is more likely to be true and when it is unlikely to be true. (For example, the above proposition is more likely to be valid for crimes committed in public places and less likely for crimes committed in private places (like personal homes.)

#### **5. Hypothesis:**

State one specific hypothesis i.e. an instance of your more general proposition. (For example, “police cruise-bys on a random but frequent basis are likely to decrease the extent to which prostitutes solicit in the streets.”)

#### **7. Variables:**

Propose specific indicators or measures of the dependent and independent variables. (e.g. For the independent variables, # of police cruise-bys and the time lapse between cruise-bys. For the dependent variable, # of arrests for prostitution and # of solicitations for prostitution by a research stooge would be valid indicators).

**Assignment 2: Due September 18, 2006.** Draft a brief literature review on the topic that you wish to study (maximum 2 double spaced typed pages). Use a minimum of 2-3 peer-reviewed research articles that are relevant to your hypothesis.

The literature review provides a survey of previous research studies that have investigated this topic, often presented historically. It should briefly summarize prior researchers' subjects, method and findings, as shown in the following fictitious example.

In an interview study of 300 police officers in the inner city area of Chicago, Rosenbaum and Levy (1993) found that women officers were more likely to use force than men." Another study of 55 police officers in urban precincts , (Baker, Ribera and Jones, 1994) found that smaller male police officers tended to use more force than large one. A series of other studies, have linked competence in police response, including the judicious use of force to the amount of training they have undertaken (Billings, 1985; Smith & Little, 1986, Zeehan, 1979).

Then you might add a critique as follows:

It is unclear, therefore, whether the use of police force is related to one or more of the following - gender of the officer, size of the officer, or the amount of training the officer has had.

The literature review should conclude with a summary of what has been found in past studies, what are the controversial or null findings, what are the gaps in knowledge, and/or what methodological flaws plague the prior work. This is a natural lead into your particular study and allows you to make a statement about the specific purpose of your research study - where your aim is to either replicate prior research findings, help clarify ambiguous findings, fill gaps in knowledge, and/or use a methodology that is superior to those used in past studies.

**Assignment 3: Due September 25, 2006**

*Before proceeding to this assignment, you will need to make corrections to Assignment 1 in response to the instructor's comments. If you are confused or unsure of how to make these corrections, please make an appointment to see the instructor.*

*You must attach your first assignment, and your re-written first assignment to the second assignment. Your paper will not be graded without these earlier drafts. Use diagrams and/or outline form.*

Outline a **sampling procedure and research design** to test the hypothesis developed in your first assignment. Begin with a statement of the hypothesis and go on to do the following:

1. Describe how you plan to obtain your sample. Specify how many subjects (or other units of observation) will be needed and how they will be selected from the population as a whole. How would you ensure your sample is representative of the population you wish to study (ensuring the external validity of your findings)?
2. Consider an ideal research design (e.g. an experimental study): What experimental comparison or control groups would be used, and over what time period would you collect data? (Remember: an experimental design usually

- includes a no-treatment control group and involves random assignment of subjects to the different groups or conditions).
3. It is usually not feasible or ethical to employ an experimental design. For this reason, describe how you would modify your research design by using one of the quasi-experimental designs. If you have a comparison sample, describe how you will try to ensure it is comparable to your research sample.
  4. State what background variables, independent variables, and dependent variables you will attempt to measure?

**Assignment 4: Due October 9, 2006.**

*(Remember to attach all drafts of Assignments 1, 2 and 3 to this assignment)*

Describe the research methods you will use for collecting data to test your hypothesis from Assignments 1 and 3. Summarize these methodology in outline form under the following headings:

**I. Methodology.**

**a) Recruitment of subjects and obtaining their “informed consent”:**

Following the guidelines for protection of human subjects, describe how you will obtain the informed consent of subjects, agencies or communities to provide you with data i.e. what will you tell them or do for them to persuade them to cooperate? How will you ensure a good response rate and minimize subject attrition, especially if you are collecting data from them over a period of time?

**b) Procedures:** Describe the method of collecting data for each of your background, independent and dependent variables. Data collection methods may involve one or more of the following:

- surveys (written, telephone, or in-person interviews);
- observation study (non-obtrusive, participatory, or use of confederates);
- document analysis (private documents, official statistics or public documents).

**c. Measures:**

- Construct a questionnaire (for a survey study) OR data coding forms (for an observation or document study) to measure your variables. Pre-code your forms by assigning numbers to all possible responses for each variable. Independent variables can be coded on any of the following levels of measurement: categorical, ordinal, interval or ratio. Dependent variables should be coded on the highest level of measurement possible i.e. preferably interval or ratio.
- Discuss how you might determine the validity and reliability of your dependent variable.

**Assignment 5: Due November 6, 2006.**

*(Attach all prior drafts of your assignments to this one.)*

Describe your plan for data analysis. Describe the sequence of statistical methods used to analyze and present your data. You can draw up some tables, pie charts or bar graphs to illustrate how the data will be displayed. Three kinds of data need to be presented:

- a) *Descriptive Statistics* for the background and independent variables. i.e. percentages, means, modes, medians, ranges, standard deviations.
- b) *Bi-variate analysis*: cross-tabulations and correlations.
- c) *Tests of the Hypotheses*: -e.g. using chi-square, t-tests, ANOVA, multiple regressions etc.

**AJ202 PREPARING YOUR FINAL RESEARCH PAPER. Due December 6, 2006.**

*For the purposes of this assignment, you should use APA style. Write in full sentences using the material developed in your assignments 1-5.*

**Format of the Paper:**

The research proposal should contain the following sections with the main headings: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Data Analysis Plan, References, and Appendix.

**Introduction-** is a non-technical discussion of the research problem to be studied with some justification as to why it is important to study. This should lead to a statement of your general theoretical proposition and scope conditions. (See Assignment 1).

**Literature Review:** (As in Assignment 2.)

**Sampling and Research Design.** (State your specific hypothesis and then continue as in Assignment 3)

**Methodology** of data collections and measures used (as in Assignment 4)

**Data Analysis Plan:** As in Assignment 5.

**References:** List your references to the literature that have been cited in your literature review. Remember to use APA style!

**Appendix:** The instrument you used to collect data in Assignment 4 should be placed here.