



**SAN JOSÉ STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**Research Methods in Justice Studies, JS 114  
Fall 2014: Online  
JS Competency Area: B**

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| <b>Instructor:</b>    | Megan Schlegel, PhD  |
| <b>Email:</b>         | megan.schlegel530@gmail.com  |
| <b>Office Hours:</b>  | Online, by appointment only (I am very happy to meet with you, please just email me and we can set up a mutually agreeable time) |
| <b>Prerequisites:</b> | Upper division standing; Completion of JS 100W   |

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

*Catalog's Narrative:* 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: Upper division standing; Completion of JS 100W

Note: A grade of "C" or better is required for graduation. Students have only two opportunities to pass JS 114 with a C or better. Any student with a final grade that is C- or lower on the first attempt will be placed on administrative probation with a registration hold. Any repeating student with a final grade that is C- or lower will be disqualified from the Justice Studies degree program.

*Instructor's Narrative:* This is a course on how to collect and properly evaluate information that criminologists and other social researchers use to discover facts about, and patterns of activity in societies. Special focus is on using large survey data sets--the dominant paradigm in our field. This course encourages and facilitates learning some of the methods and skills that are required to make discoveries and test knowledge in justice studies.

Social research covers a complex topic: human behavior in groups. Determining why people act and think as they do, both individually and collectively, is not easy. It requires being disciplined and systematic in ways that are not instinctive. The skills required must be learned from a mentor. Indeed, the quality of research in a given society is the product of the quality of scientific education its citizens received. To become skilled researchers, students must participate in multiple research methods and statistics courses--like JS 114--and they must have practice actually doing research in methodical ways.

This course provides students a chance to learn the scientific process by engaging in it—students are responsible for generating a primary research paper that includes statistical analysis of real data. Students learn *how* researchers generate the kind of information that is the centerpiece of JS topics courses. After learning about this process, students should see that what they are taught in their curriculum has merit. For example, when professors teach that persons who kill white Americans are more likely to be sentenced to death than those who kill nonwhites, the claim is valid because it was generated by rigorous scientific research.

After completing the course, students should be able to intelligently discuss the research process, understand and be critical of others' research, and carry out research on their own. In addition, students should be capable of determining when commentators, politicians, preachers, “know-it-alls,” pseudo-scientists, journalists, and others are making things up out of ignorance or to fool others. Finally, students will have learned skills that will be very attractive to graduate programs and/or future employers.

### *Department's Student Learning Objectives for JS 114:*

1. Demonstrate a detailed understanding of the qualitative and quantitative research methods commonly utilized to conduct empirical research in the areas of social and criminal justice.
2. Write a research report in the area of social or criminal justice that applies proper research methodology.
3. Understand core concepts and competencies in criminological and justice research including ethical research, empiricism, problem identification, hypothesis formation and testing, sampling, observation, measurement, data analysis, causality, and report writing.

### **JUSTICE STUDIES READING AND WRITING PHILOSOPHY**

The Department of Justice Studies is committed to scholarly excellence. Therefore, the Department promotes academic, critical, and creative engagement with language (i.e., reading and writing) throughout its curriculum. A sustained and intensive exploration of language prepares students to think critically and to act meaningfully in interrelated areas of their lives—personal, professional, economic, social, political, ethical, and cultural. Graduates of the Department of Justice Studies leave San José State University prepared to enter a range of careers and for advanced study in a variety of fields; they are prepared to more effectively identify and ameliorate injustice in their personal, professional and civic lives. Indeed, the impact of literacy is evident not only within the span of a specific course, semester, or academic program but also over the span of a lifetime.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES**

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Learning in this online section of JS 114 is accomplished primarily through reading assigned material and PowerPoint presentations, and by writing a research paper. Everything except the textbook and SPSS is acquired and/or turned in via the course website on Canvas.

Work in this course is centered on two things: 1) Lessons about data collection strategies and data analysis, and 2) A research paper that is written incrementally over the semester. The first focus is assessed primarily through quizzes and exams. The second is assessed by grades for written assignments. To be successful, students should balance their work between these two substantially different course foci.

### Required Texts/Readings/Computer Software/Website:

- *Making Sense of the Social World, Fourth Edition*, by Daniel F. Chambliss and Russell K. Schutt (ISBN 978-1-4522-1771-0)
- Online readings from the course website
- SPSS—it is a statistics software package. A copy of this software may be purchased at the Student Success Center in Clark Hall
- Course website is accessed via Canvas

Canvas Website: This course is located on Canvas—enrolled students automatically have access through their SJSUOne account. All course material except the book and SPSS will be acquired and/or turned in via that website. Class participation (Discussion Boards), timed quizzes, exams, and all work and feedback on the projects and course papers will be located on that medium.

Online courses typically restrict contact between students and with the instructor. That is problematic because **research methods are best learned through discussion, practice, and learning from inevitable mistakes.** One way that this course prompts contact is by providing practice, feedback, and opportunities to learn from mistakes through its paper-writing exercises. Students must get approval for their work at two points, and each assigned project and the final paper must be turned in as drafts prior to being submitted as finalized documents.

Online Discussions: Another way to get information, insight, and feedback in this course is by participating in discussions in the course website's Discussions section. On the website, students are encouraged to post in the preset appropriate topic area for each question or comment that they have. If an appropriate topic is not available, they are encouraged to create a new one.

In addition, students are encouraged to answer other students' questions, or to add to the questions in previous students' posts. The instructor monitors the Discussions section and provides guidance over the course of the semester. Discussions sometimes prompt the creation of new documents that better explain course material to students.

**Posting to the discussion board should be the first step taken by students when they have questions about course matters.** This will be the most effective way for students to get answers about the course as the instructor will monitor the discussions and provide guidance over the course of the semester.

The instructor also has virtual office hours, but students should first attempt to get answers via discussion. **The value of the discussion platform is so immense that students may be rewarded with up to five (5) extra credit points on the final grade for the quality of their engagement there.** The instructor will assign extra credit by subjectively evaluating the overall quality of each student's contributions to the board.

Timed Quizzes: Course reading materials (book, online, and PPT) form the cornerstone of this online course. Reading should be completed in a timely manner by the dates indicated on the course schedule (page 7). To encourage students to read and keep up with the course, there will be **10 short timed quizzes (the two lowest scores will be dropped when grading). The top-7-quiz average will be 20% of the final grade.**

The quizzes will consist of questions that are intended to gauge whether students understand key aspects of the readings that precede them on the syllabus. Poor performance on a quiz is an indicator that more studying is needed for the topics that the quiz covered.

Quizzes will open a day before they are due, and they should be completed before midnight of the date assigned on the course schedule. **Read all book, online, and PowerPoint material before starting a quiz.** *Quiz time*

*limits were established to prevent students from looking up answers in the book and the notes. This is because the quizzes are intended to encourage students to read at a proper pace. Nonetheless, the amount of time given to take the quiz is about three times as long as the typical student will need.*

*CAUTION: Students who do not check in with this course on a daily basis often do poorly on or miss quizzes because they forget the assigned dates. The resulting low scores that result from rushing to take a quiz before the deadline or getting a zero from missing the quiz (one cannot make them up) can severely lower the final grade.*

***Projects and Research Paper:*** Research is an active process that is learned through “doing,” and that culminates in a written document. For this reason, students will create a research paper over the term. The paper-writing process includes completing two (2) “approval forms” and two (2) written projects. The approval forms must be completed and approved prior to writing the projects. This structure is literally intended to help students out--It prevents them from doing futile work that cannot be used in the paper.

**Project 1:** Project 1 helps students understand ways to build a research-based argument that results in hypotheses. It leads to writing an introduction, literature review, and references. The Variable Approval Form must be completed prior to doing this project.

**Project 2:** The second project helps students conduct statistical tests of their hypotheses. This work leads to writing methods, results, and conclusions. The Analysis Approval Form must be completed prior to doing this project.

**Final Paper:** When doing the projects, students are also writing the final paper. Pieced together and revised according to feedback, the two projects form the final paper.

The projects and paper form an integral strand of the learning process in this course. The instructor has learned over the years that to do well, students must approach the projects and paper with a determined and untiring attitude. Students should expect to work on the projects and paper for a few hours each day, even when the course schedule (p. 7) does not prompt it.

Approval form, project, and ungraded project draft due dates are on the course schedule. **Each project will be worth 10% of the final grade and the final paper will be worth 30% of the final grade.** The assigned grade for each of these may be affected by quality demonstrated in approval forms and drafts. Forms, projects, and the research paper must be turned in using the online “submit” function associated with each one.

**Students may work in groups of two or three persons on the projects and paper.** Students are allowed to change group membership (or work alone) at any point in the semester. Group members are required to send a pledge of equitable contribution, and consent to take the assigned grade, each time an assignment is turned in. **Substantiated complaints against a group member for violating the pledge will result in a grade reduction for the violator.** Each group member will receive a grade based on each product turned in. That grade is final, except for those deemed violators; their grade will be reduced.

***Exams:*** There will be two exams. **Each will contribute 15% of the final grade.** These will be completed online. *The second exam may not be taken early for any reason.*

***Final Grade:*** The final course grade will be based on weighted contributions for each section of grades: Projects, Paper, Quizzes, and Exams. The final scale adds to 100 points. Extra credit from participation will be

applied after calculating the final grade. The course grade is not curved, so it is theoretically possible for everyone to earn an A.

**The instructor will not assign ‘I’ grades except in the most extreme emergencies or grave unforeseen circumstances, and 75% of the graded material must have been turned in. Missing a quiz deadline results in a grade of zero regardless of the reason. Exams and papers may only be turned in late when there is a documented University or medical excuse. Otherwise, missing deadlines is severely penalized.** If students encounter a technological problem while submitting papers or taking quizzes or exams, they should contact the instructor immediately via email or some other channel of communication. While he cannot fix technical issues (contact Academic Technology), he can make adjustments to work around them.

The grading scale is:

|                       |            |            |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| A+ 100 - 97           | A 96 - 93  | A- 92 - 90 |
| B+ 89 - 87            | B 86 - 83  | B- 82 - 80 |
| C+ 79 - 77            | C 76 - 73  |            |
| Not acceptable in JS: | C- 72 - 70 |            |
| D+ 69 - 67            | D 66 - 63  | D- 62 - 60 |
| F 59 and below        |            |            |

Grades are based on:

|                   |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Project 1         | 10 points             |
| Project 2         | 10 points             |
| Final Paper       | 30 points             |
| Top 7 Quizzes     | 20 points             |
| Midterm Exam      | 15 points             |
| Final Exam        | 15 points             |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>100 points</b>     |
| <b>Discussion</b> | <b>+ 0 - 5 points</b> |

**CONDUCT**

Students are expected to behave in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. The university’s Academic Integrity Policy requires students to be honest in all academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. A few students get into trouble because they are unaware of what constitutes academic misconduct. Academic misconduct includes cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, interference (e.g., stealing another student’s work), violating course rules, and facilitating academic dishonesty. Academic misconduct could result in failure for an assignment (typically a grade of zero) or for the course or even in expulsion from the university. The academic integrity policy can be found at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct>. My punishments will be in accordance with university policies—I will not tolerate academic misconduct.

Students are also expected to respect the right of their fellow students to learn. In all course activities, students must maintain a respectful demeanor toward fellow students regardless of personal assessments of them. *Failure to act according to the standards set forth here will have consequences. For example, students may be dismissed from the course, and a complaint made to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.*

**DISABILITIES**

I believe strongly in the right of everyone to have equal access to learning. If you have a specific disability that may be addressed with academic accommodations, please notify me as soon as possible. I will work with you to ensure that you have a positive learning experience. You should inform me of necessary course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with AEC to establish a record of their disability. This office is located in Administration Building, Room 110. I am inclined, however, to address other needs that may not be verifiable disabilities. Therefore, if you are not registered with AEC, you should still discuss your issues to see

if I may help. Many disabilities require extended time for exams; my policy is to *always allow extended time for all students on all exams—this is why exams have ample time.*

## NOTES FROM THE UNIVERSITY

**Student Technology Resources:** Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Clark Hall and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Student Union. Computers are also available for checkout in the CASA Student Success Center and in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. It is my understanding that all of the computers listed above have SPSS installed on them. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens, monitors, and AV adapters for Mac computers.

**CASA Student Success Center:** The Student Success Center in the College of Applied Sciences and Arts (CASA) provides advising for undergraduate students majoring or wanting to major in programs offered in CASA Departments and Schools. All CASA students and students who would like to be in CASA are invited to stop by the Center for general education advising, help with changing majors, academic policy related questions, meeting with peer advisors, and/or attending various regularly scheduled presentations and workshops. Looking for academic advice or maybe just some tips about how to navigate around SJSU? Check out the CASA Student Success Center! It's also a great place to study, and students can check out laptops.

Location: MacQuarrie Hall (MH) 533 - top floor of MacQuarrie Hall. Contact information: [408.924.2910](tel:408.924.2910).  
Website: <http://www.sjsu.edu/casa/ssc/>.

**SJSU Writing Center:** The SJSU Writing Center is available to help students improve their writing. It is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the 7 SJSU colleges. The writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The Writing Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>.

**Peer Connections:** The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) and the Peer Mentor Program have merged to become Peer Connections. Peer Connections is the new campus-wide resource for mentoring and tutoring. Our staff is here to inspire students to develop their potential as independent learners while they learn to successfully navigate through their university experience. Students are encouraged to take advantage of our services which include course-content based tutoring, enhanced study and time management skills, more effective critical thinking strategies, decision making and problem-solving abilities, campus resource referrals, and to speak with a peer who has been trained to assist other students going through the college experience.

Services: In addition to offering appointments for small group and individual tutoring (same day appointments are often available) for a number of undergraduate courses, consultation with mentors is available on a drop-in or by appointment basis. Workshops are offered on a wide variety of topics including preparing for the Writing Skills Test (WST), improving your learning and memory, alleviating procrastination, surviving your first semester at SJSU, and other college success related topics. A computer lab is also available for student use in Room 600 of the Student Services Center (SSC).

Locations: They are located in SSC 600 (the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Garage on the corner of 10th and San Fernando St.), at the 1<sup>st</sup> floor entrance of Clark Hall, and in the Living Learning Center (LLC) in Campus Village Housing Building B. The peer connections website is located at <http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu>.

### Accommodation to students' religious holidays

San José State University shall provide accommodation on any graded class work or activities for students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays before the add deadline at the start of each semester. If such holidays occur before the add deadline, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed.

Dropping and Adding: Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, and so forth. Students should also be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes. Policies for adding classes are available at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-1800.html>. Policies for dropping classes are found at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-1809.html>, and information about late drops is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/>. Finally, deadlines for adding and dropping classes are listed on the registration calendar available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/registrar/calendar/>.

## JS 114, Research Methods, Sec 02, Fall 2014

| Week | Date  | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines (PPT Lectures Online; C&S-Textbook; Assignments; Quizzes/Exams)              |
|------|-------|---|
| 1    | 08/25 | Introductions, Syllabus<br>C&S: Chapter 1, Chapter 12, and Appendix A; PPT: #1  |
| 2    | 09/02 | Introduction to Research and Ethics<br>C&S: Chapters 2-3; PPT: #2<br>Quiz #1**  |
| 3    | 09/08 | Experimental Design and Scientific Thinking<br>C&S: Chapter 6; PPT: #3<br>Variables Approval Form Due 9/10<br>Quiz #2 |
| 4    | 09/15 | Concepts and Measurement<br>C&S: Chapter 4; PPT: #4<br>Quiz #3  |
| 5    | 09/22 | All you ever wanted to know about surveys<br>C&S: Chapter 7; PPT: #5<br>Quiz #4                                       |
| 6    | 09/29 | Sampling<br>C&S: Chapter 5; PPT: #6<br>Project #1 Due   |
| 7    | 10/06 | Data Analysis Part 1 – Analysis, Tables and Writing Results<br>C&S: Chapter 8; PPT: #6<br>Quiz #5                     |
| 8    | 10/13 | Data Analysis Part 2 – Statistical Tests<br>C&S: None (can you believe it??); PPT: #7<br>Quiz #6                      |

| Week | Date  | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines (PPT Lectures Online; C&S-Textbook; Assignments; Quizzes/Exams)              |
|------|-------|---|
| 9    | 10/20 | <b>Midterm Exam***</b><br>Readings - Methods section in online GSS codebook   |
| 10   | 10/27 | Readings – Selected pages in GSS 2012 codebook (available on course website)<br>Analysis Approval Form due<br>Quiz #7 |
| 12   | 11/03 | Qualitative Methods<br>C&S: Chapter 9; PPT: #8<br>Quiz #8   |
| 13   | 11/10 | Qualitative Analysis<br>C&S: Chapter 10; PPT: #9<br>Quiz #9   |
| 14   | 11/17 | Evaluation Research<br>C&S: Chapter 11; PPT: #10<br>Quiz #10<br>Project #2 due  |
| 15   | 11/24 | <b>No Class – Enjoy the holiday!</b>  |
| 16   | 12/01 | <b>Final Exam</b>   |
| 17   | 12/08 | Final Paper due   |

\*Notes about the course schedule: I reserve the right to change the due dates listed above, but only in a manner that benefits students (e.g., due dates can only be pushed back, never moved forward). This is because I want to make sure everyone is understanding the material and is able to move forward with the class.

\*\*Notes about quizzes – Quizzes are based on the reading material that is due the week of the quiz. For example, Quiz #1 will be based on Chapters 2&3 and PPT #2. You will have approximately 2 days to complete a quiz (the quizzes will open every Wednesday at 8am and close on Thursday at 11:59pm). If you have an extenuating circumstance as to why you cannot make a quiz, it's okay. You get to drop your 3 lowest scores!

\*\*\*Notes about exams – The exams in this course are cumulative, meaning all of the material learned prior to the midterm is fair game for the exam. All material learned throughout the semester is fair game for the final. You will have 3 full days to complete an exam (the exam will open on a Tuesday at 8am and close on Thursday at 11:59pm). If you need any accommodations, please speak to me ASAP.