**CRIM 3600 – 01 CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH METHODS**  
*School of Criminology and Criminal Justice*  
Northeastern University  
Spring 2016 Semester  
128 Forsyth  
Monday, Thursday 11:45am–1:25pm

**Professor:** Gregory M. Zimmerman, PhD  
**Email:** g.zimmerman@neu.edu  
**Office:** Churchill Hall 417  
**Office Hours:** Monday 2:00pm–4:00pm

**Introduction**

In contemporary society, we have access to an abundance of information. This information often conflicts and comes from a variety of sources. How do we know what information to trust? How do we know which sources of information to trust?

This course uses readily available (and often conflicting) information from an array of sources to facilitate discussion and to provide accessibility to students with a wide variety of criminal justice-related interests and goals. For students interested in criminology, this class will provide a framework for rigorously studying the causes of crime. For students interested in criminal justice and legal policy issues, the course will provide a framework for understanding the methods used to evaluate social interventions. For all students, this course will provide a foundation for: critically evaluating criminal justice research, linking theory and research to policy, and digesting research on crime and crime policy.

**Course Description**

A “research methods” course focuses on understanding the structured and purposeful attempt to gain knowledge about a specific phenomenon. This course will examine the basic methods of research design, measurement, and data collection in criminology and criminal justice. The following components, in particular, will be discussed in depth: research design, data collection methods, sampling procedures, reliability and validity, and elementary data analysis. Students will be submitting research assignments related to each of these components of research methods. Through the submission (and re-submission) of these research assignments, students will learn the writing conventions of the profession.

**Course Learning Goals**

During the semester, course readings and discussions will provide you with an understanding of:

- How to formulate a viable research question  
- How to measure key concepts  
- How to collect and analyze data to answer a viable research question  
- How to interpret findings and form opinions from the accumulated research
Course Readings


Additional course readings will be available on Blackboard and via weblinks through the course syllabus.

Course Expectations and Requirements
This course requires your constant attention and active participation. This course will utilize a variety of written and oral learning techniques: I will teach you; you will teach me; and you will teach each other.

A number of different graded assignments will be utilized to fulfill the course goals. Graded assignments include quizzes, group exercises, and numerous components of a semester-long research project. These assignments are based on assigned readings (which must be completed prior to class), material (not included in the readings) presented in class, and class discussions. Note: if I do not feel that a large enough portion of the class is regularly contributing, or if I suspect that a large portion of students have not been completing the readings, I reserve the right to institute “pop” quizzes. If instituted, these additional quizzes would count for up to 15% of the final grade (with the contributions of the other graded assignments diminishing accordingly). Graded assignments, along with the course grade distribution, are detailed below.

You will also receive a class and group participation grade, as discussed below. While attendance will not count directly toward your course grade, it will count indirectly through the class participation grade. In addition, much of the material included in the quizzes is not directly covered by the readings but instead covered in class; attendance will therefore impact your ability to perform well on the quizzes. Finally, class provides an opportunity to clarify the course readings.

Blackboard
You can access the main Northeastern blackboard site at [http://blackboard.neu.edu](http://blackboard.neu.edu). You are responsible for checking this site regularly as course information will be added to the site. Blackboard training courses are offered for free through the University. See a representation from the “Help Desk” at the Info Commons in Snell Library.

Communication
Students are expected to check Blackboard as well as their email on a regular basis. Important information such as assignments, class cancellations, and changes in course material may be relayed via Blackboard and email.
Class Policies

Extended Absences

In the rare instance where a student expects to miss class for an extended period of time (i.e., serious illness) or multiple classes regarding the same issue, he or she must contact me as soon as possible. Students must provide a documented reason for an extended absence in order to make any arrangements regarding missed work. All circumstances will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Laptops, Cell Phones, and Pagers

You are not permitted to use the internet in the classroom; laptops should only be used for taking notes. Please turn off your cell phones and pagers before coming to class. This includes text messaging! If I suspect you of using technology for purposes unrelated to the course, I reserve the right to disallow the use of technology in the classroom.

Personal Responsibility and Extra Credit

I do not “give out” grades – you earn them. When a grade is earned by you, I will not change it. If you need help, ask for it; do not wait until it is too late to seek help. Absolutely no extra credit will be given or accepted. Arrive to class on time, come prepared, respect others’ views, and turn in assignments on time.

Missing Assignments

I must be notified in advance if you will be missing a class session when a group exercise is to be presented or when an assignment is due. Acceptable “excuses” relate to serious emergencies such as a death in the family and serious illness. Documentation may be requested and I reserve the right to approve or deny any such requests. Assignments cannot be made up because of an unexcused class absence. Other instances will be handled on a case-by-case basis (and if allowed will incur a 25% point deduction for each day late).

Contacting Me

If you need to contact me, use the email provided above. Please put “RESEARCH METHODS” in the subject line of the email.

Academic Integrity

All students enrolled in this course must adhere to Northeastern University’s policy on “Academic Honesty and Integrity.” Those of you who are unfamiliar with this policy are expected to read it online at: http://www.neu.edu/osccr/academichonesty.html. Violations of the academic honesty and integrity policy will not be tolerated, and will be reported to university officials. I take this policy very seriously and will make every effort to ensure it is strictly followed. If you are caught cheating, you will receive a failing grade for the course – no exceptions. If you are in any way unclear about this policy, please come speak to me.
Plagiarism

Plagiarism of any kind is unacceptable. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, be sure to ask me. In general, to avoid plagiarism: if you directly quote OR paraphrase OR use specific information (e.g., statistics) from ANY source (one of your previous papers, another student, an internet site, an academic article, a book, etc.), you must give credit to that source via a properly formatted citation/reference. Quotation marks must surround any written passage (sentence, phrase, etc.) copied directly from another sources. I expect every student to understand plagiarism and to complete their own work.

For more information on this, Northeastern has an Academic Integrity Policy outlined on pages 36 and 37 of the Student Handbook: www.northeastern.edu/admissions/pdfs/UndergradHandbook.pdf). I encourage all students to review this policy and to contact me with any questions.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who may require special accommodations for this course should notify me as soon as possible. You may need to register with the university’s Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC can provide students with services such as note-takers and extended time for taking exams. The DRC is located in 20 Dodge Hall and can be reached at 617-373-2675.

Course Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Point Allocation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (3)</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Exercises (3)</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Assignments (6)</td>
<td>435</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>1000</td>
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Quizzes

There will be 3 quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes will be taken on Blackboard on students’ own time during a specified time period. Quizzes will range from 30 to 35 multiple choice (typically 4 or 5 answer choices) and true/false questions, and each question will be worth 3 points. Each quiz is therefore worth between 90 (9%) and 105 (10.5%) of 1000 possible class points. Students will have roughly 40–45 minutes to complete each quiz. This variation is accounted for by difficulty of material and number of questions on the quiz. The quizzes are based on assigned readings (which must be completed prior to class), material (some not included in the readings) presented in class, and class discussions.
Group Exercises

There will be 3 group exercises throughout the semester. Each group exercise is worth 60 points or 6% of your final course grade. These exercises will be assigned and discussed in class. I will provide clear guidelines for working on these projects. Grading rubrics will be made clear when the exercises are assigned.

Research Assignments

There will be 6 written and oral research assignments assigned throughout the semester. These assignments, in total, will be worth 435 points (or 43.5% of your final course grade). The purpose of the combined assignments is to: (1) identify and discuss critical issues facing the criminal justice system today; (2) demonstrate how a research paper on a criminal justice-related topic is crafted; and (3) become well-versed in writing for the discipline. For the written assignments, students will write a draft (e.g., of an introduction or literature review), receive feedback on their written work, and rewrite. Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due via Blackboard by 11:45am on their due date. Clear instructions, expectations, and grading rubrics will be discussed in class.

Class Participation

The class participation grade (100 points or 10% of your final course grade) assesses each student’s willingness to answer questions, ability to raise thoughtful questions related to course material, and capacity to respond thoughtfully to course topics and class readings. Missing class limits your ability to participate in class discussions. Attendance will therefore impact your class participation grade, as follows. There are 21 class sessions during the fall semester. You are afforded 1 free unexcused class absence, leaving 20 total class sessions for grading purposes. Your unweighted class participation grade will be multiplied by the percentage of classes that you attend. For example, if you achieve a score of 90 on the unweighted class participation grade but only attend 14 of the 20 class sessions, you will receive a weighted class participation grade of 63 (90 x 14/20). Note that excused class absences do not factor into this calculation. Please make sure to ask me about this policy if you have questions.

Extra Credit, Rounding, and Curving

Absolutely no extra credit will be given or accepted in this course: grades will be based strictly on the assignments above. Grades will not be rounded: you will receive the letter grade corresponding to your accumulated points during the semester in the grading scale below. The instructor reserves the right to curve the final course grades should the class distribution not achieve my desired level. This typically occurs if the average student grade is not at a level of B- or above.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>930–1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>900–929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>899–870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>869–830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>799–770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>729–700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>699–670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>629–600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Class Schedule

Part 1: Introduction to Criminal Justice Research Methods

M 1/11 Course Introduction
Assignments:
• Group Exercise 1 (assigned)
Readings:
• Syllabus (Blackboard)
• How to Read and Interpret Research (Blackboard)
• MB, Chapter 1, pages 4–9

TH 1/14 The Dilemma of Conflicting Information
Assignments:
• Group Exercise 1 (presented)
Readings:

M 1/18 No Class – MLK Jr. Birthday

TH 1/21 Foundational Issues in Criminal Justice Research
Readings:
• MB, Chapter 1, pages 10–28
Part 2: Theory and Measurement

M 1/25 Critical Thinking through Research and Writing
Assignments:
• Research Assignment 1: Choosing a Research Topic and Research Question (assigned)
Readings

TH 1/28 Theory and Causation
Readings:
• MB, Chapter 2
• MB, Chapter 4

M 2/1 No Class
Assignments:
• Research Assignment 1: Choosing a Research Topic and Research Question (due by 11:45am via Blackboard)

TH 2/4 Computer Lab – Place TBA
Assignments:
• Research Assignment 2: Introduction (assigned)

M 2/8 Measurement
Assignments:
• Group Exercise 2 (assigned)
Readings:
• MB, Chapter 5
• Sampson and Raudenbush (Blackboard)

TH 2/11 Measurement
Assignments:
• Group Exercise 2 (presented)
• Quiz 1 (opens at 1:25pm on Blackboard)

M 2/15 No Class – President’s Day
Part 3: Research Methods in Criminal Justice

TH  2/18  Sources of Existing Data
Assignments:
  • Research Assignment 2: Introduction (due by 11:45am via Blackboard)
  • Research Assignment 3: Research Statement (assigned)
  • Quiz 1 (closes at 11am on Blackboard)
Readings
  • MB, Chapters 6 and 12

M   2/22  Sampling
Readings
  • MB, Chapter 8

TH  2/25  Survey Research
Readings
  • MB, Chapter 9

M   2/29  Ethics in Criminal Justice: The Stanford Prison Experiment
Assignments:
  • Quiz 2 (opens at 1:25pm on Blackboard)
Readings
  • MB, Chapter 3

TH  3/3   Experiments and Quasi-Experimental Designs
Assignments:
  • Research Assignment 3: Research Statement (due by 11:45am via Blackboard)
Readings
  • MB, Chapter 7

M   3/7   No Class – Spring Break
Assignments:
  • Quiz 2 (closes at 11am on Blackboard)

TH  3/10  No Class – Spring Break
M 3/14  Evaluation Research  
Readings:
• MB, Chapter 13  

TH 3/17  Qualitative Research  
Assignments
• Research Assignment 4: Research Methods Outline (assigned)  
• Research Assignment 5: Group Oral Presentation (assigned)  
• Quiz 3 (opens at 1:25pm on Blackboard)  
Readings  
• MB, Chapter 10  

Part 4: Interpreting Data and Research Findings

M 3/21  Interpreting Data  
Assignments:
• Group Exercise 3 (assigned)  
Readings  
• MB, Chapter 14

TH 3/24  Computer Lab – Place TBA  
Interpreting Data  
Assignments:
• Assignment 4: Research Methods Outline (due by 11:45 am via Blackboard)  
• Research Assignment 6: Research Proposal (assigned)  
• Quiz 3 (closes at 11am on Blackboard)

M 3/28  TBD  
Assignments  
• Group Exercise 3 (due by 11:45am via Blackboard)

TH 3/31  Research Project Review; Manuscript Formatting

M 4/4  Assignments:
• Assignment 5: Group Oral Presentation (presented)

TH 4/7  No Class

M 4/11  Assignments:
• Assignment 5: Group Oral Presentation (presented)
TH 4/14

Assignments:

- Assignment 5: Group Oral Presentation (presented)
- Assignment 6: Research Proposal (due by 11:45 am via Blackboard)