Goals and purpose of the course
This course introduces graduate students to the methods of doing research in the social sciences, with a focus on research in the field of criminology. Research methods provide models for the collection, organization and analysis of data to help make decisions that will help solve social problems and contribute to our knowledge base about critical issues facing the criminal justice system. By the end of the course, the student will understand the fundamentals of social science research, know how to design research and conduct ethical research studies, write a research proposal and present research results in a professional manner. To be able to fulfill these goals, students will learn how to formulate research questions and hypotheses, choose research methods and designs to most appropriately answer these questions, understand the relationship between theory and research and explain the meaning of and differences between inductive and deductive approaches to research, discuss sampling techniques, collect data, and design research surveys. Students will also be able to explain potential problems and common errors associated with research design, the analysis of data, and the interpretation of results and develop tools to avoid these errors.

Course format
This course builds upon a basic working knowledge of social science research methods to strengthen your ability to digest and evaluate criminal justice research and lay a solid foundation for your own research inquiries. Class meetings will generally start with a brief lecture that presents and summarizes a methodological issue. The lecture will be followed by a discussion of research articles assigned for the week.

The lab time will be devoted to small group projects involving the collection and use of primary data to demonstrate various methodological approaches to answering questions. Additional lab time will be devoted to cooperative work on the final group project.

There is a basic textbook for the course that will be used as a reference document for understanding the basics of methodological issues. In addition to the textbook, research articles are assigned each week that relate to the topic being discussed in class. Students will be expected to provide a critical assessment of each of the assigned research articles.
Course textbook


Additional required readings posted on the course Blackboard site.

**Course Assignments**

1. **Class / Lab Participation** (10% of final grade):
   Class participation will be evaluated based upon your contributions in class and/or lab assignments and active participation in class discussions.

2. **Written and Lab Assignments** (10% of final grade)
   a. Written and lab assignments will rotate throughout course.
   b. Written assignments should generally be no longer than 1-2 single spaced pages and must be typed and turned in through blackboard by NOON on the day the assignment is due.
   c. Written and lab assignments will be graded on an excellent basis (+), satisfactory (√) or unacceptable (-) basis. “Excellent” means your answers or work reflect mastery of concepts. “Satisfactory” means that you adequately answered the question and that your answer reflects the reading assignment and class discussion. “Unacceptable” work is work that simply lists answers without any explanation your answers or shows little effort or understanding of the concepts in the assigned materials.

3. **Exams** (40% of final grade – each is worth 20%) note, exam #2 is cumulative

4. **Research Proposal Project** (40% of final grade):
   a. Description of research topic and preliminary research questions (*due September 22nd*) and annotated bibliography of literature on topic (*due October 20th*) (5%)
   b. Written proposal (*due December 1st*) (20%)
   c. Presentation of final proposal (5%)
   d. Class peer evaluation of presentation and proposal (5%)
   e. Group peer evaluation

For all assignments, including the class project, grades will be reduced for late work.
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Lab</th>
<th>Hagan</th>
<th>Fowler</th>
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| Week 5: 10/6 | Experimental design and quasi-experimental variants | Experiment article discussion   | 3     | -      | **Assigned to review one of six experiments:**  
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<td>Week 9: 11/3</td>
<td>Non-probability sampling</td>
<td>Survey project – questionnaire design</td>
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<td>Week 10: 11/10</td>
<td>Levels of measurement, scaling and indices</td>
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<td>Week 11: 11/17</td>
<td>Interpretive methodologies and ethnography</td>
<td>Questionnaire data collection</td>
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<td>Week 12: 11/24</td>
<td>Conducting qualitative interviews</td>
<td>Survey data entry</td>
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<td>Week 13: 12/1</td>
<td>Program evaluation – strengths and challenges <strong>Exam 2 Take Home</strong></td>
<td>Survey data analysis</td>
<td>8, 11</td>
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<td>Week 14: 12/8</td>
<td>Final project presentations</td>
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Written Assignments
Written assignments should be no longer than 1-2 single spaced pages. Well written and succinct answers are superior to longer, disorganized answers. In some cases the assignment structure will be different (e.g. the description of research topic and annotated bibliography). All assignments are due at NOON on the day of class in which they are assigned.

**Week 1: (Due 09/8)** What is the Sociological Imagination as described by C. Wright Mills? Why is the Sociological Imagination important for the social study of problems such as crime? What is one of the most important questions that social science researchers need to address about crime and/or justice? What cautions would you offer about the use of social science research to inform policymaking about this question?

**Week 3: (Due 09/22)** Provide a short description of the topic your group intends to address in your proposed research study. Why is this topic important to the development of theory, policy or other general knowledge? Preliminarily, what research questions will your group address in this proposed study?

**Week 5: (Due 10/6):** Each class member will be assigned to read and review one of the six experiments listed in the syllabus. Experiment reviews should outline the research question and hypotheses, describe the experimental design, including the assignment of subjects, and describe the findings and strengths and limitations of the experiment. The assigned experiments can be found on blackboard.

**Week 7: (Due: 10/13)** Each group member will turn in an annotated bibliography of at least five studies related to the topic of the proposed research proposal. This assignment should provide students with the main studies upon which to base the literature review assigned in the group proposal. The annotated bibliography should include full citations for at least five books, articles or other documents that contain information about your research topic. A short descriptive paragraph that summarizes the source (including where relevant, the purpose of the research, theory being tested, design including sampling and data collection method, findings and limitations) and discusses its relevancy to your topic should follow each citation. Citations should follow APA style.

**Blackboard**
Login at: [http://blackboard.neu.edu/webapps/login](http://blackboard.neu.edu/webapps/login)
You can find the syllabus for this course on Blackboard. The articles listed as required reading are posted to the Blackboard site under the tab “Course Material.” I will also post any handouts for the class here as well.

**Policies**
- Your participation in class discussions is required. Part of the graduate student experience is learning how to express your opinions and points of view in an educated, factual, and professional manner.
- If you miss an exam without consulting with me first, you receive a grade of zero. At my discretion, exams may be rescheduled for those who have a dire reason for missing the exam and who have consulted with me before the exam. Any rescheduled exam will be different than the original exam.
• Class assignments are due by NOON on the day of the class where they are due. Class assignments should be turned in through blackboard. If you miss an in class assignment you will receive zero for that assignment. There is no opportunity to make up in class assignments.

• Grades will be reduced for late written or lab assignments.

• Please bring to my attention (as early as possible) any special educational needs you may have. You may wish to contact the Disability Resource Center that provides services to students needing special accommodations. (see http://www.access-disability-deaf.neu.edu/)

• Students are expected to adhere to the University’s standards of academic integrity. According to the Northeastern University student handbook “academic dishonesty violate the most fundamental values in an intellectual community and undermines the achievements of the entire University” (p. 36). You will be required to turn in required assignments and final projects through Turn It In, a blackboard based system that checks for plagiarism. For more information on Northeastern University’s Academic Integrity Policy please the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution: http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academichonesty.html.

• The content and requirements of the course may be altered throughout the semester depending on class progress or other issues that may arise.
Final Project Assignment
For the final project, you are expected to develop a proposal for a research study in coordination with two to three other group members. Your group will choose the topic and the questions you ask. You may adopt a qualitative or quantitative approach.

Early in the semester, we will discuss how to write a research proposal and learn about research resources available at Northeastern University. On September 22nd students will turn in a one paragraph description of the general topic of their group’s proposal assignment. On October 20th students will individually turn in an annotated bibliography of at least five studies related to the proposed research topic. The final proposal is due December 1st.

The final research proposal should specify:
- The nature of the problem to be addressed and a brief review the existing literature on the topic including theories that have been used to understand the problem
- A set of research questions that will guide the proposed research. Research questions should flow from a theory or group of theories.
- A description of the research methodology which outlines exactly what you would plan on doing for a research project
- A description of the steps that will be taken to protect human subjects and a completed human subjects application that should be appended to the proposal
- A brief discussion of the implications and contributions of the study
- A complete bibliography.

The final assignment may not exceed 20 pages in length, excluding figures, tables, and appendices. The final assignment must be typed, 12-point font, and double-spaced with one-inch margins. You must adhere to the APA style format. The final assignment will be submitted through Turn It In on the class blackboard site.

Student groups will each present their proposal to the class during the final weeks of the semester. Along with me, your peers will evaluate your group’s presentation and proposed research design. The class evaluations of your presentation and proposed research will be 5% of your grade.

During other presentations, your attendance is mandatory. Non-attendance at other presentations will result in marks deducted from your grade for the term assignment. Students should be prepared to answer questions about their proposed research projects from myself and their peers and class members should be prepared to ask questions the presenters.