

San José State University
Department of Justice Studies
JS 117–02: Qualitative Research Methods
Spring 2021

COURSE AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: Jackson Sargent, MPA
Office Hours: By Appointment
Office Location: Virtual
Email: jackson.sargent@sjsu.edu
Class Day & Time: N/A
Classroom: Online

COURSE FORMAT

Online: The Canvas Learning Management System will be used as a means for distributing course materials such as the syllabus, handouts, lecture slides, assignment instructions, and communications about changes to the course. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of updates.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Introduction to qualitative research methods used in Justice Studies. Includes relationship of empirical evidence to theory, ethics in conducting empirical research, methodological design, interviewing techniques, field methods, participant observation, and content analysis.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with research techniques necessary for systematic analysis of the criminal justice system, offender behavior, crime trends, and program effectiveness. Students will learn to critically evaluate existing research, and will become familiar with existing sources of criminal justice data and will learn to assess the quality of that data.

COURSE GOALS

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.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- ✓ Demonstrate knowledge of the different methodologies used in criminal justice research;
- ✓ Understand why knowledge of research methods is valuable to criminal justice professionals;
- ✓ Understand how to consume and produce social science research;
- ✓ Design a research project;
- ✓ Effectively conduct a review of research literature; and
- ✓ Articulate course concepts in both written and verbal form.

Many of the elements of this course will help students improve skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and constructing an argument. These important skills can be carried over into the non-research aspects of everyday life.

REQUIRED TEXTS / READINGS

Textbook

Maxfield, M. & Babbie, E. (2018). *Research methods for criminal justice and criminology* (8th Edition). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning. ISBN: 9781337091824

Other Readings

Supplied electronically via Canvas

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Online Discussion (20%): Active participation in discussions is a necessary and integral part of the course. Readings will be routinely assigned from the selected course textbook and outside articles and other materials will be assigned to supplement the textbook. Discussion questions pertaining to these readings and other course concepts will regularly be assigned throughout course.

Assignment 1 – Creating a Bibliography (5%): Students will create a bibliography for citing journal articles in a referencing software (i.e., EndNote or Zotero). Detailed instructions for this assignment are available on Canvas. **This assignment is due Sunday March 7th.**

Assignment 2 – Using Secondary Data (5%): This assignment will require students to access and present crime data that have been collected and reported by government agencies (e.g., the Federal Bureau of Investigation). Detailed instructions for this assignment are available on Canvas. **This assignment is due Sunday April 11th.**

Assignment 3 – Peer Review (5%): Prior to submitting their own research, students will critically evaluate the research of one classmate and provide constructive feedback. Detailed instructions for this assignment are available on Canvas. **This assignment is due Sunday May 2nd.**

Assignment 4 – Research Paper (50%): Each student will conduct and report original research, accounting for the most significant portion his/her course grade. Detailed instructions pertaining to this assignment are available on Canvas. Draft sections of the research paper will be submitted throughout the semester (see the Course Schedule), **with the final paper due Sunday May 9th**.

Quizzes (15%): Students will complete three quizzes during the semester, each worth 5% (totaling 15%) of their final grade. Each quiz will cover material from the lectures (including all media presented) and the assigned readings. The quizzes will be comprised of multiple choice, true/false, and short-answer questions. The date of each quiz is indicated in the Course Schedule.

GRADING INFORMATION

To receive a grade for this course, all course requirements must be met, and every assignment must be completed. *At the discretion of the course instructor, late assignments/papers may be subject to a deduction of 10 percent for every calendar day that they are late, including weekend days.*

Grade Scale

A	=	94-100%	A-	=	90-93%
B+	=	87-89%	B	=	83-86%
B-	=	80-82%	C+	=	77-79%
C	=	73-76%	C-	=	70-72%
D+	=	67-69%	D	=	63-66%
D-	=	60-62%	F	=	Below 60%

Extra Credit

Extra credit is not available for this course. I am very happy to review assignments and provide feedback before they are submitted (with ample time for review) to ensure you receive the highest grade possible. This is the best way to raise your score.

Academic Dishonesty

Please do not cheat. Plagiarism and/or cheating of any kind on any assignment will result in failure of the course, consistent with university policy.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Course topics are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Week	Beginning	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	01/27/21	Introduction Crime, Criminal Justice, & Scientific Inquiry	Course syllabus Textbook, Ch. 1	Discussion
2	02/01/21	Planning a Research Project Searching for Research Articles Annotated Bibliography vs. Literature Review	Firebaugh (Canvas) White (Canvas)	Research topic selected

Week	Beginning	Topic	Readings	Assignments
3	02/08/21	Theory & Criminal Justice Research Ethics & Criminal Justice Research	Textbook, Ch. 2 Textbook, Ch. 3	Argument (thesis statement) Discussion
4	02/15/21	Concepts, Operationalization, & Measurement	Textbook, Ch. 5	Quiz No. 1 Discussion
5	02/22/21	Reading and Writing Social Research Reviewing Research & Literature Reviews Bibliographies	Becker (Canvas) Bolderston (Canvas)	None
6	03/01/21	Research Design	Textbook, Ch. 4	Assignment 1: Creating a Bibliography
7	03/08/21	Sampling	Textbook, Ch. 8	Introduction and Literature Review sections
8	03/15/21	Experimental & Quasi-Experimental Designs	Textbook, Ch. 7	Quiz No. 2 Discussion
9	03/22/21	Measuring Crime	Textbook, Ch. 6	Discussion
10	03/29/21	SPRING RECESS		
11	04/05/21	Survey Research	Textbook, Ch. 9	Assignment 2: Using Secondary Data
12	04/12/21	Qualitative Interviewing	Textbook, Ch. 10	Methods and Results sections
13	04/19/21	Field Research	Textbook, Ch. 11	Draft paper due for Peer Review

Week	Beginning	Topic	Readings	Assignments
14	04/26/21	Agency Records, Content Analysis, & Secondary Data	Textbook, Ch. 12	Peer Review
15	05/03/21	Interpreting Data	Babbie (Canvas)	Final Paper
16	05/10/21	Evaluation Research Unobtrusive Research Presentation Skills	Textbook, Ch. 13	Quiz No. 3 Discussion
17	05/17/21	Course Reflection & Evaluation	None	None