RESEARCH METHODS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE
POLS 3700
Fall 2017
Dr. Susan Haire
Baldwin 221C

Office Hours:
by appt. cmshaire@uga.edu

Objectives
This course will focus on the basic methods used in empirical social science research in criminology and criminal justice. Empirical analyses are based on observation, requiring one to study something as it is, rather than how it should be. Whereas some research focuses on discovering and reporting descriptions of phenomena, most social scientists are interested in explanatory or causal analyses. In this course, the student will learn how to conduct social science research while developing skills to evaluate existing research.

In part I of this course, students will be introduced to the scientific process used in criminological research. After considering the strengths and limits of social science in evaluating phenomena, students will learn how to formulate questions appropriate for research with special attention to ethical concerns. Students will also develop an understanding of the role of theory and the relationship between conceptualization and measurement. The first part of the course will cover the basics of sampling. And, students will also be introduced to statistical software (SPSS) and techniques for univariate and bivariate data analyses.

In part II of this course, students will develop an understanding of the principles of research design associated with the testing of causal hypotheses. This section includes learning the elements of experimental designs and how to distinguish studies that employ non-experimental or quasi-experimental designs. After developing an understanding of the various research designs, students will learn how to conduct a survey and content analysis. In this part of the course, students will learn how to conduct data analysis to test causal hypotheses, including those that require attention to control variables. By the end of the course, students will be well-positioned to design their own study, conduct an original data analysis, and write up the results.

Required Reading
Bachmann, Ronet and Russell K. Schutt. 2017. Fundamentals of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice. 4th ed. (Sage Publications). There is a very helpful web site associated with this text (the web address is on the inside cover of your text)

Wagner, William. 2016. Using IBM Statistics for Research Methods and Social Science Statistics. 6th ed. (Sage Publications).

This course will also require that you learn how to use a statistical software program, SPSS, available for free through EITS' "VLAB". (SPSS is also available for purchase or lease through

various web sites; if you purchase or lease it yourself, you are able to download the software for personalized use)

Requirements and Grading

Exams (40%) You will have two exams, each worth 20%, at the conclusion of each "part" of the class (for part 2, this exam will take place during the final exam period). The exams will consist of short answer and essay questions. Students with medical emergencies may schedule a make-up exam (the questions will be different from the test given to the class); however, you will need to provide documentation that you were ill on that date. ***The first exam is tentatively scheduled for October 2nd.***

Class participation and "no-notice" quizzes (20%). All students should be prepared to discuss the assigned material. In addition, students will be asked to participate in class on problems designed to apply skills. Your participation in class will count towards 10% of your course grade. Obviously, you must be in class in order to participate. One letter grade will be deducted for every three classes that you miss (not counting excused, documented absences for reasons of illness). I will also be giving three "pop" quizzes over the course of the semester. Collectively, they are worth 10%. They will be straightforward assessments of whether you have read the material for that class day. I will drop the lowest quiz grade (keeping two quiz grades, each worth 5%). If you miss a quiz for nonattendance, that will be the quiz grade that you drop!

Paper Assignment 1:

Identifying and evaluating scholarly research (20% of your course grade). For this assignment, you will identify a social science research question related to criminal justice/criminology and write a literature review on that question. The literature review does not simply chronicle/summarize what other researchers have found. It is also analytical: you will compare and contrast existing research, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies. A well-written literature review provides the reader with a collective sense of what others have found on the research question and how they have conducted that research. It is NOT an annotated bibliography—you should discuss the relevant literature in a way that relates each study cited to one another—and your own research question. Your review must cite/discuss 4-6 scholarly studies. You should follow a method of social science citation for this paper and include a reference list. **You must submit your reference list to me (in proper citation form) for feedback by September 22nd.** When submitting your reference list, you must also include pdf (or word) files of all scholarly articles. **You will submit an electronic AND paper copy of your literature review on October 18th**

-The list submitted on September 22nd is binding. You can take studies off of that list, but you cannot add to that list. If you fail to submit a reference list on September 22nd, I will automatically deduct 10 points off of your paper grade.

--Read through each study on your list before you submit (sometimes the abstract and title are misleading; sometimes you are not able to actually get the full text of an article through the libraries)

--Per the guidance above (4-6 scholarly studies)….you should have at least three that represent "original" social science research…that is appearing in a peer-reviewed journal (law reviews and law journals are

not peer-reviewed). Original studies are those where the author(s) have conducted their own data analysis.

--Make sure that your references "hang together" in terms of a topic. Again, titles and abstracts may suggest that they will…but then, when you read them and try to write about them in a lit review, you realize that it is far easier to write an integrated lit review when they are more closely connect

Paper Assignment 2: Data Analysis (20% of your course grade). For this assignment, you will formulate a hypothesis related to a research question in criminal justice (you can use the same research question as that used for your literature review, or you can pursue a different research question). You will generate your own dataset (in SPSS), using "imagined" observations (a minimum of 50 observations) that can be used to test your hypothesis (this will require that you advance measures of an independent variable, dependent variable, and control variable). You will then use these "data" in a multivariate analysis and write up the results of your analysis. You'll find more detail on this paper assignment, including due dates, at the end of this syllabus.

Academic honesty. All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense. All academic work for this course must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe, and ignorance is not an acceptable defense. The University library has a terrific web site re: plagiarism with several resources that students should consult when writing this paper (or any paper).

The following is a TENTATIVE schedule:

Part I

August 14th and August 16th

Science, Society, and Research, Bachman and Schutt, Ch. 1 through p. 16

August 18th

Remainder of chapter 1 and chapter 2, the process of research, Bachman and Schutt, through p. 29

August 21st

Out-of-class assignment

August 23rd

The process of research continued, Bachman and Schutt, chapter 2, remainder

August 25th

Chapter 1, Wagner: SPSS - overview

August 28th

Ethics, Bachman and Schutt, p. 46-59

August 30th

Ethics, Bachman and Schutt, Ch. 3, remainder

September 1st

Wagner, chapter 2 p. 15-25, Recoding and Computing

September 4th

No class – Labor Day

September 6th

Concepts and Measures, Bachman and Schutt, p. 70-82

September 8th

SPSS measures of central tendency/variability and frequency distributions, Wagner p. 41-51

September 11th

Library session (tentative)

September 13th

Measurement validity and reliability, Bachman and Schutt, chapter 4, remainder

September 15th

Charts and graphs, Wagner, chapter 5

September 18th

Sampling, Bachman and Schutt, p. 93-105

Sept. 20th

Sampling, Bachman and Schutt, chapter 5, remainder

September 22nd – References for paper assignment 1 due

Cross tabulations, Wagner, p. 89-93

September 25th

Cross tabulations and statistical inference, continued Wagner, p. 85-89

Sept. 27th

Lab exercise: data analysis (cross tabulations)

September 29th

Review

October 2nd – first exam

The schedule of readings for part II of this course will be distributed via ELC at a later date.

Data analysis paper:

This paper will include a brief discussion of the research question to be addressed, the hypotheses tested, an explanation of the observation strategy, a listing and discussion of the measures used for your variables, information on the method of data analysis, and a write-up of the results (including inferential statistics). This paper is submitted in two stages. The dataset and draft tables/SPSS output are submitted electronically on **November 29th**. The data analysis paper, including your final tables, will be submitted hard copy on the last day of class, **December 5th**.

You will generate your own dataset (in SPSS), using "made up" observations to test your hypothesis. Your paper should describe the "imagined" observation strategy—including a probability sampling design (so that you can use statistical inference). This step will require that you provide operational definitions of your independent (IV) and dependent variables (DV)—in short, how are they measured? You should have a minimum of 50 observations in your SPSS dataset. The dataset should consist of the IV, DV, and any "third variables (a minimum of one 3rd/control variable should be included in your analysis). Before you do your multivariable analysis, make sure that you start with the bivariate analysis and then compare those findings with those from the multivariate analysis.

You will test your hypothesis with these data, using appropriate methods of data analysis (in SPSS). If your variables are measured categorically, you may use cross tabulations. If they are continuous, then you should use regression analysis. I have pasted below a template that I will use to evaluate your paper.

a. How well did the paper identify and discuss the research question? Does the data analysis address this research question? Does the paper advance an empirically testable hypothesis?

b. How well did the paper identify and discuss the observation strategy (although "imagined," you need to describe how your observations were collected…for example, …."I identified respondents through a sampling design where 100 students were randomly selected from a list provided by the University of Georgia registrar's office that contained all undergraduates enrolled in 2012. I contacted each respondent and requested that they fill out an on-line questionnaire….."

c. How well did the paper identify and discuss variables and their measures? Here is where you would describe, for example, the items in the questionnaire given to the undergraduates (using the illustration above) and how these are used to construct the dependent and independent variables.

d. Did the paper's discussion of findings demonstrate knowledge of data analysis? Are tables and tests properly interpreted?

e. Your output/tables should include the following:
---frequency distribution(s)
--bivariate analysis (independent variable of interest and dependent variable)
--multivariate analysis (adds a control variable)
--appropriate statistical tests

f. Your dataset should include the following:

--clear labels for variables of interest

--minimum of 50 observations and a minimum of 3 variables

g. How well was the paper written? (i.e. attention to grammar, clear writing style)