RESEARCH METHODS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLS 3700
Spring 2021
Dr. Susan Haire

Office Hours:

Wednesdays, 3:00-4:00 pm on zoom;

Las day of class: May 3; Jan. 18 MLK Day; instructional breaks on Feb. 17 and Mar. 12

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. 2020. The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice. 7th ed. (Sage Publications). There is a very helpful web site associated with this text: edge.sagepub.com/bachmanprccj7e

Additional readings and materials will be uploaded to ELC.

This course will also require that you learn how to use a statistical software program, SPSS, available for free through EITS' "VLAB". More information on what you need to do to download/access VLAB / SPSS: https://eits.uga.edu/support/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

Tests (50%) You will have four tests, the first two are each worth 10%; the second two are each worth 15%. The exams will consist of short answer and essay questions. Although you will be able to access your text and your class notes, you will not have time to look up all that you need to know during the exam period. As a result, you should study as if it is a closed-book exam. Students with medical emergencies may schedule a make-up test; however, you will need to provide documentation that you were ill on that date.

Class participation (10%). Attendance and participation counts for half of your participation grade. 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. I will not grade these "exercises" but completion of them count for half of your participation grade.

Our class is scheduled to meet in Candler, 214. To ensure social distancing, I will assign approximately 30 percent of the class to be present physically in our classroom for a class meeting. The remaining students in the class will be watching/participating synchronously online. Given the interactive nature of this class, students should not miss more than four class sessions, whether participating online or in-person. If you experience a severe illness or you are dealing with a chronic sickness, please contact me via email so that we can work out an accommodation.

Paper Assignment (1): writing an article critique (15%):

For this assignment, you will first identify a social science research question related to criminal justice/criminology, compile a list of peer-reviewed, original research on that question (8 articles), select one of the articles on that list and write a critique. Original studies are those where the author(s) have conducted their own data analysis. You should follow a method of social science citation (APA or MLA) for this paper and the reference list. It is appropriate to quote and cite; it is considered to be plagiarism and a violation of UGA's academic honesty policy if you "borrow" text without attributing the writer/scholar. For more information on plagiarism and other prohibited conduct, https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/

Reading a research study is not easy. Our class is designed to give you the tools for reading through these; nevertheless, it often takes patience and practice. For more guidance on how to read a research article, go the text web site, under student resources, scroll down to "appendices" and open the pdf file. These are also published in the back of your text.

Step (a)for the article critique: Formulating a research question and putting together a reference list of scholarly social science research that relates to that question. *For guidance on identifying scholarly sources, read our text (Bachman and Schutt), p. 32-34.* Our class will have a session with a reference librarian. In addition to being an invaluable resource, the reference librarian can provide some tips on how to locate scholarly research for your review. Once you have identified a possible scholarly source to include, you should read through it to make sure that it is one that will be appropriate to review (sometimes titles and abstracts are misleading). Your references hang together in terms of the topic/question. You must submit your reference list to me (in proper full APA or MLA citation form), noting which article you intend to critique by February 12th. *Your list should include a minimum of 8 scholarly, peer-reviewed studies, one of which will be the article that you critique.*

Step (b): You will submit your article critique on **March 15th.** The purpose of this paper is to summarize and evaluate published research. What was the research question addressed in the article? What theoretical perspectives were utilized? What were the authors' hypotheses? What was the observation strategy? How did the authors measure key concepts? What did they find? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these research design choices?

Paper Assignment(2): *data analysis and writing up results* (25% 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 second 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." https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/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 through February 5th.

January 13th, 15th

Science, Society, and Research, Bachman and Schutt, Ch. 1

January 20th

The process of research, Bachman and Schutt, p. 26-42

January 22nd
The process of research continued, Bachman and Schutt, chapter 2, remainder

January 25th

SPSS – introduction

Appendix C at the text web site – "How to use a statistical package" read the first five pages and the last four pages.

(We will be using the SPSS datasets at the text web site, including a subset of the General Social Survey (GSS). You may want to become more familiar with the GSS at https://gss.norc.org/)

January 27th
SPSS – frequency distributions and recoding: appendix C – the first eight pages

January 29th

Session with reference librarian (online class), Bachman and Schutt, p. 32-34

February 1st

Watch-listen to learn about the Stanford Prison experiment.

https://www.prisonexp.org/the-story

Reading: Bachman and Schutt p. 59-74

February 3rd

Review Stanford Prison Experiment
Ethics, Bachman and Schutt, Ch. 3, remainder

February 5th
Test 1

Disability

If you plan to request accommodations for any disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center.

Health and Safety

Everyone has a critical role to play as we work together to protect the health and safety of every member of the Bulldog Nation.

Academic calendar and schedule. Classes begin on January 13. You can find the most recent academic calendar here: https://reg.uga.edu/general-information/calendars/academic-calendars/. The Daily Class Schedule has been adjusted to add more time between classes. Our class will begin at 3:55pm and end at 5:00pm

Face coverings. Effective July 15, 2020, the University of Georgia—along with all University System of Georgia (USG) institutions—requires all faculty, staff, students and visitors to wear an appropriate face covering while inside campus facilities/buildings, like Baldwin Hall, where six feet social distancing may not always be possible. Face covering use is in addition to and is not a substitute for social distancing. Anyone not using a face covering when required will be asked to wear one or must leave the area. Reasonable accommodations may be made for those who are unable to wear a face covering for documented health reasons. Students seeking an accommodation related to face coverings should contact Disability Services at https://drc.uga.edu/.

Keep a safe distance. In all public spaces, please maintain six feet between you and others. The seating capacity in your classroom has been modified to allow for social distancing. Only sit in designated, marked seats. In all public spaces, including classrooms, you should not remove signage or re-arrange furniture, even if it appears that furniture is not being used.

Keep it clean. Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces are important to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, but classrooms are only being cleaned once-per-day. On your way into your classroom take a wipe from the sanitation bucket-on-a-stick to wipe down all high-touch surfaces associated with your seat. You can help further slow the spread of the virus by frequently washing your hands – all indoor public spaces also have hands-free sanitizers installed.

Your health. If you have an underlying medical condition or, for any reason, believe that you are at a high risk of developing a serious case of COVID-19, you may request an accommodation through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at drc@uga.edu or 706-542-8719: https://drc.uga.edu/content_page/student-accommodation-guidelines

Other reminders and resources related to coronavirus:

DawgCheck:

Please perform a quick symptom check each weekday on DawgCheck—on the UGA app or website—whether you feel sick or not. It will help health providers monitor the health situation on campus: https://dawgcheck.uga.edu/

What do I do if I have symptoms?

Students showing symptoms should self-isolate and schedule an appointment with the University Health Center by calling 706-542-1162 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). Please DO NOT walk-in. For emergencies and after-hours care, see https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies.

What do I do if I am notified that I have been exposed?

Students who learn they have been directly exposed to COVID-19 but are not showing symptoms should self-quarantine for a period consistent with Department of Public Health (DPH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. Please correspond with your instructor via email, with a cc: to Student Care & Outreach at sco@uga.edu, to coordinate continuing your coursework while self-quarantined. If you develop symptoms, you should contact the University Health Center to make an appointment to be tested. You should continue to monitor your symptoms daily on DawgCheck.

How do I get a test?

Students who are demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19 should call the University Health Center. UHC is offering testing by appointment for students; appointments may be booked by calling 706-542-1162.

UGA will also be recruiting asymptomatic students to participate in surveillance tests. Students living in residence halls, Greek housing and off-campus apartment complexes are encouraged to participate.

What do I do if I test positive?

Any student with a positive COVID-19 test is **required** to report the test in DawgCheck and should self-isolate immediately. Students should not attend classes in-person until the isolation period is completed. Once you report the positive test through DawgCheck, UGA Student Care and Outreach will follow up with you.

Check your email regularly so you don't miss important information, and also check the University COVID-19 website for updates and resources. This web site also includes links from student affairs with helpful, up-to-date messages for students and parents.

Data analysis and writing up results (Paper assignment no. 2):

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 April 23rd . The data analysis paper, including your final tables, **will be submitted hard copy on the last day of class, May 3rd**

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. All work submitted for this assignment must be your own. I am available via email to answer any questions that you may have. If you receive any outside assistance on this assignment, it is considered to be a violation of https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/

1. 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?
2. 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....."
3. 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.
4. Did the paper's discussion of findings demonstrate knowledge of data analysis? Are tables and tests properly interpreted?
5. Your output/tables (*submitted as a PDF file*) 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

6. Your dataset *(submitted as an SPSS data file: sav extension)* 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)