

RESEARCH METHODS FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
POLS 3700  
Fall 2022

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Baldwin 272 and 180

Office Hours:  
By appointment [cmshaire@uga.edu](mailto:cmshaire@uga.edu)

Important Dates:

Labor Day holiday: Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>  
Thanksgiving holiday: Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>  
Fall break: Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>  
Last day to withdraw: Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>  
Last day of class: Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> (a Tuesday, but a “Friday” class)  
Final exam (test 4): Monday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>: 12:00pm (other test dates and assignment deadlines will be announced in class)

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. By the end of this course, students will be able to conduct their own social science research and possess skills for evaluating existing scholarship.

In part I of this course, students will be introduced to the scientific process used in criminological research. After considering the strengths and limitations 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 obtaining an understanding of the various research designs, students will learn how to develop a survey and use content analysis. In this part of the course, students will also perform

data analyses and 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*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Sage Publications). There is a very helpful web site associated with this text: [edge.sagepub.com/bachmanprccj7e](http://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. Some students may find the convenience worth the additional cost--you can get a 6-month rental from OntheHub or another IBM vendor for about \$35...12-month rentals are also available. If you google SPSS grad back rental, you'll see another of options...just make sure that it is an IBM-approved vendor or you may end up with some malware.

### Requirements and Grading

Tests (50%) You will have four tests, the first two are each worth 10%; the second two are each worth 15%. While all exams are "timed" and take place during the class period, two of the four exams will be "open-book" and taken on-line whereas two will be "closed-book" and taken in-class. All exams will consist of short answer and essay questions. 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 in-class 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 the other half of your participation grade.

Our classroom is a place of learning where all are welcome. Innovation and creativity are much more likely in an inclusive environment where we each bring a different identity to class—and this relies on the participation of all of you. I encourage you to ask questions and respond to class discussion, but also understand that you are doing so in a learning environment in which we all are expected to treat one another with respect. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. I may also need guidance on pronunciation of your name. Please

advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. You should also let me know if you will need to miss class due to religious observance. Given the interactive nature of this class, students should not miss more than four class sessions—*this includes those that are missed due to illness, religious accommodations, or other emergency*. Having said that, if you experience a severe illness or you are dealing with a chronic sickness, please contact me and/or Student Care and Outreach: <https://sco.uga.edu/> via email so that we can work out an accommodation.

Article critique and reference list paper assignment (15%). There are multiple parts to this assignment that are graded together. This paper assignment requires that you formulate a research question related to criminal justice/criminology (due Sept. 21st ), generate a list of eight peer-reviewed, original research studies on that question (also due Sept. 21st ). When you submit the list, you will note which of the studies on that list will be the one for which you will write a 4-5 page article critique (critique is due Oct. 24th).

You should follow a method of social science citation (APA or MLA) for this reference list and article critique. 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/>

For guidance on identifying scholarly sources (original social science research) for your reference list, you should read our text (Bachman and Schutt), p. 32-34. Our class will also include 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 should hang together in terms of the topic/question. You must submit your research question and reference list to me (in proper full APA or MLA citation form) by Sept. 21st, noting which article you intend to critique by. Your list should include a minimum of 8 scholarly, original, peer-reviewed studies, one of which will be the article that you critique.

For your article critique (due Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>), you will find that reading closely an original 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. The purpose of the article critique is to summarize and evaluate a piece of published, original, social science (empirical) 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? You will be expected to apply what you have learned about research design to this critique.

Data analysis paper assignment (25%): Dataset and draft tables are due on Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>. Final tables and paper (write up) are due December 5<sup>th</sup>.

For this last assignment, you will test a hypothesis related to a research question in criminal justice (you can use the same research question as that used for paper assignment 1, 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.

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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/](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 paper assignments for this class.

Disability. *If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <http://drc.uga.edu>.*

Class recordings. In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.”

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## Health and Safety

As you learn more about the role of science from this class, you'll better understand why public health depends on our following practices and tools developed with advances drawn scientific knowledge. As you'll also learn in this class-- scientific knowledge is always tentative, subject to modification as more research is conducted. The practices below are supported by current scientific evidence.

COVID-19. I will be wearing a face covering when case rates in Athens reach the point to trigger a response by Athens-Clarke County government. You are not required to wear one, but please be tolerant of those who do. The best way to avoid becoming seriously ill from COVID is to be vaccinated. UHC is scheduling appointments for students through the patient portal. You may also make arrangements at no cost to you to receive the vaccine from the Georgia Dept of Health, pharmacy chains, and local providers.

<https://georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>. 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. In the event of a positive COVID test, you should consult public health resources to find out how long to quarantine/self-isolate:

<https://coronavirus.uga.edu>

Mental Health and Wellness Resources. If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu/>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

- UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).
- If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Classroom safety. If the fire alarm sounds, please exit the building and reassemble on Herty Field near the fountain. If there is a tornado warning, we will move to the ground floor (basement) of this building. If you have concerns about other emergencies or have

special circumstances that I need to know about, please speak with me after class. You will find more guidance on a separate emergency preparedness sheet uploaded to ELC.

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The following is a TENTATIVE schedule through the first month of the semester.

August 17<sup>th</sup>  
Introduction

August 19<sup>th</sup>  
Science, Society, and Research, Bachman and Schutt, ch. 1;

August 22<sup>nd</sup>

Learning how to navigate through VLAB and SPSS

Prior to class: Unless you decided to purchase SPSS to install on your computer, you will need VLAB to get access to SPSS on your home computer/laptop. If you have not used VLAB before, you should read carefully through this web site to familiarize yourself with what VLAB does/provides. In order to use VLAB, you'll need to install some software (citrix) as part of the setup. Leave yourself some time to sort out any technical glitches...I can help with some issues, but you'll find EITS to be extremely helpful if you run into problems getting VLAB to work on your machine.

Once you are "in" VLAB, it will appear to look like a desktop (remember it is not really your desktop; it is simulating one). You should click on the windows in the left corner to pull up everything that is available to you. Click on IBM SPSS...a folder will open and then you should click on IBM SPSS 27 or 28.

At that point, you'll be able to follow along with the youtube tutorials (links below) that will introduce you to the SPSS workspace. For class, you should watch the first two youtube videos...the second one is longer with more specific content that you will need.

Video 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN-H8GikRQo&t=os>

Video 2: Follow along the 23 minute video below; you can stop watching at 20 minutes...as you follow along, you should produce the same SPSS dataset as instructed in video 2, including the instructions for how to save your dataset.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN-H8GikRQo&t=os>

In class, we will be using the laptops that have already installed a version of SPSS; you are also free to bring your own laptop for this use (either with VLAB or if you have rented a version of SPSS yourself)

Aug. 24<sup>th</sup>

The process of research Bachman and Schutt, chapter 2

Aug. 26<sup>th</sup>

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

We will be using the datasets at the text web site (see web address above under required reading).

One of the SPSS datasets used for this class is a subset of the General Social Survey. You may want to become more familiar with the GSS at <https://gss.norc.org/>

Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>

Session with reference librarian  
Bachman and Schutt, p. 32-34

Aug. 31<sup>st</sup>

Watch-listen to learn about the Stanford Prison experiment.

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

Reading: Bachman and Schutt p. 59-74

Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>

Ethics, Bachman and Schutt, Ch. 3, remainder  
Review for test

Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> (Labor Day)

Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> Test 1 – in class

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Appendix below (with more information about the second paper assignment--data analysis and writing up results)

For this assignment, you will:

- a) -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).
- b) -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 at least one control variable).
- c) -use these “imagined data” in a multivariate analysis (also include univariate, bivariate analyses)
- d) -write up the results, including a conclusion discussing whether the hypothesis is supported and any limitations
- e) This paper is submitted in two stages.
- f) The dataset and draft tables/SPSS output are submitted electronically. On this date, you submit your SPSS dataset, output (generated in SPSS but saved as a word doc or PDF document), and draft tables.
- g) For your SPSS dataset submitted, 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 3<sup>rd</sup>/control variable should be included in your analysis).
- h) You will also be submitting your SPSS output/draft tables on Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>. Before you do your multivariable analysis, make sure that you start with the univariate analysis, then move to the bivariate analysis. (For the final paper, this will be important because you will be comparing findings from the bivariate analysis with those from the multivariate analysis. )
- i) For your final paper, you will test your hypothesis with these data, using appropriate methods of data analysis (in SPSS). The level of measurement associated with your dependent variable, and independent variable(s) affect the choice of data analysis, including univariate analysis. Please refer back to those sections of the course where we talked about data analysis..and, follow up with me if you have any questions about whether to use a bar chart or histogram for the univariate analysis.
- j) In terms of the bivariate/multivariate analysis, if your variables are measured categorically (nominal or ordinal), you may use cross tabulations. If they are continuous (interval or ratio...although some ordinal variables that have many categories can be used), then you should use regression analysis.
- k) The data analysis paper, including your final tables, will be submitted the last week of class. This paper will include a brief discussion of the research question and the hypotheses tested. It will also provide an explanation of the (imagined) observation strategy, including the sampling design, the way in which the observations were gathered (e.g. survey or content analysis). You will include a listing and discussion of the measures used for the independent variable(s), dependent variable (codebooks can be helpful here). The paper will also include information on the method of data analysis and then a write-up of the results.
- l) Below is a template used to evaluate your paper. All work submitted for this assignment must be your own. I am available to provide guidance to you; we will also set aside time in class for you to work on this. If you receive any outside assistance on this assignment, it is a violation of the



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?

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....”

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.

Did the paper’s discussion of the tests of the hypotheses demonstrate knowledge of data analysis? Are tables and tests properly interpreted?

Did the analysis include?

- Univariate analysis: this may be a frequency distribution(s), appropriate measures of central tendency and variability; suggest using graphs where possible
- bivariate analysis (independent variable of interest and dependent variable)
- multivariate analysis (adds a control variable)
- appropriate statistical tests

Did the dataset (min of 50 observations and min of 3 variables) include clear labels?

Overall, how well was the paper written? (attention to grammar, clear writing style)