

## SOC1209: Methods of Social Science Research

### College of Graduate and Continuing Studies, Norwich University

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#### Course Description

#### **SOC1209 - Methods of Social Science Research - 3 credits**

The purpose of this course is to develop a working understanding of social science research and research methodology, with an emphasis on its application within the criminal justice field. The course will cover various methodologies (e.g., interviewing, questionnaires, secondary data analysis), as well as data collection and documentation procedures. We will also be concentrating on how to evaluate and use academic literature throughout the class. The course will also cover identification of ethical considerations and obligations in conducting research involving human subjects, and means for minimizing potential harms. An examination of fundamental statistical measures is provided for the purpose of data analysis and interpretation. You will develop a skill-set allowing you to gain an understanding of the research process, and the ability to critically review data and research findings.

#### Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the methodological foundations of the social sciences, including the logic and technique of empirical inquiry
- Explain ethical behavior in research
- Assess how a literature review sets the framework for conducting research on a specific problem, and apply appropriate scholarly conventions when reporting or performing (using the American Psychological Association style guide)
- Recognize a variety of research designs, including qualitative, experimental, quantitative, non-reactive, and mixed methods
- Identify techniques of data collection (including: surveys, interviews, secondary analysis, experiments, observation, and evaluation), and sampling techniques
- Organize and analyze data, understand and interpret graph and table construction, and use and apply relevant software
- Describe the utility of descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency
- Differentiate between correlation and causation
- Operationalize concepts, and construct testable hypotheses related to research in the criminal justice field
- Describe, explain and select an appropriate methodological approach for a specified evaluation research project

#### Weekly Outline

Every week has a prescribed checklist of activities required to successfully complete the lesson. Follow this checklist, in the specified order, to complete each lesson.

Week	Topic	Topic	Activities
Week	Introduction to Criminal Justice Research Methods	1	Weekly Discussion #1

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Week 02	Ethics in Criminal Justice Research	2	Weekly Discussion #2 Written Assignment #1
Week 03	Research Design	3	Weekly Discussion #3 Program Identification and Background Description
Week 04	The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) and Sampling	4	Weekly Discussion #4 Written Assignment #2
Week 05	Survey Research	5 & 6	Weekly Discussion #5 Written Assignment #3
Week 06	Participant Observation and Case Studies; Unobtrusive Measures, Secondary Analysis, and the Uses of Official Statistics	7 & 8	Weekly Discussion #6 Written Assignment #4
Week 07	Validity, Reliability, and Triangulated Strategies; Scaling and Index Construction	9 & 10	Weekly Discussion #7
Week 08	Policy Analysis and Evaluation Research	11	Program Evaluation Proposal

### Required Textbooks

#### **Textbook required for this course:**

- Hagan, F. E. (2012). *Essentials of Research Methods for Criminal Justice, 3/E*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. Print ISBN: 9780135121009.

See **Required Reading List** for additional seminar readings.

### Course Components

#### **POLICIES: The following policies apply to this seminar:**

**Classroom Conduct** - All students are expected to treat each other and the professor with respect at all times.

**Academic Dishonesty** – Academic dishonesty (i.e., cheating on an assignment or exam, attempting to cheat, plagiarism, etc) will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person’s ideas, research or writings as your own. The following are some examples of plagiarism, but by no means is it an exhaustive list: Copying another person’s actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes attributing the words to their source. Presenting another person’s ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the source. Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source. Failing to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments. Internet plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the internet without citing the source, and —cutting & pasting from various sources without proper attribution.

Please review the academic dishonesty section of the Norwich University Academic Regulations.

#### **DUE DATE FOR SUBMISSION**

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date. Assessment items submitted after the due date will be subject to a penalty unless an extension of time is approved.

## REQUEST FOR EXTENSION

You must apply in writing prior to the due date of an assessment item for an extension.

The following would generally be considered acceptable grounds to approve an extension for an assessment item.

on the grounds of illness;  
accident;  
temporary disability;  
bereavement; sporting or cultural commitment at state, national or international level;  
other compassionate circumstances.

### *Supporting Documentation for Extension Requests*

Acceptable documentary evidence to support an extension on the grounds on incapacitation includes a statement or certificate from a medical practitioner, counselor or work supervisor. The nature of the incapacity related to illness or personal problems does not need to be disclosed; however the document must stipulate the number of days of incapacity. This must match the number of days the assessment item is late or marks will be deducted on a pro rata basis. Students may provide an additional explanatory note if necessary.

## PENALTIES FOR LATE SUBMISSION

An assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalized. The penalty is the reduction of the mark allocated to the assessment item by 10% of the maximum mark applicable for the assessment item, for each day or part day that the item is late. Weekends count as one day in determining the penalty. Assessment items submitted more than five days after the due date are awarded zero marks.

## REVIEWS OF MARKS/GRADES

When marked items are returned, as a first step, please carefully read all feedback – including individual comments on the paper, together with any general feedback that may be supplied. If you do not understand the feedback you have been given, you can contact the Convener with specific queries.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have specific learning, attentional, psychological or physical disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. All discussions will remain confidential.

### *Critical Thinking*

Although critical thinking is not always identified as an assignment requirement or as a key element in classroom discussion, you can use this skill every time you complete an assignment and speak with your classmates. It is important to think critically because, when you do, you reason through concepts rather than make automatic or emotionally based conclusions. Consider an idea from all angles to understand both your own perspective and the perspectives of others.

When completing writing assignments, it is good to use quotes but they should not be **more than 20 percent of the paper**. Using mostly quotes and block quotes for the majority of your paper is not critical thinking. Why do we look for scholarly, peer-reviewed, articles? The articles that are chosen for scientific journals are well reviewed by other scholars to see if the research plan was viable, if the population is the correct size, and if the methods and statistical analyses were correctly chosen. Be very cautious of your references. Online research is tricky. Sites like Wikipedia and Answers.com, etc are not peer reviewed and should not be used as your only source.

When addressing problems or assignments, try using the following critical thinking techniques:

- Consider the purpose or goal of an assignment.
  - Restate a question in numerous ways.
  - Gather information.
  - Look for inferences and assumptions inherent in a problem or assignment.
  - Clarify the thought process you use to understand a problem or assignment.
- Try to understand other points of view.
  - Think through the implications and possibilities of your solution or idea.

In general, follow these guidelines for demonstrating your thinking process:

- Be clear. State what you mean and provide various explanations and examples.
- Be accurate. Justify or explain how you know your claims are true. If you are uncertain about the truth of your claims, how could you ascertain their truth?
- Be relevant. Explain how your ideas relate to the topic at hand.
- Be logical. Explain how ideas fit together and why they make sense. Describe how you came to your conclusions.
- Be fair. Consider how your ideas and behaviors will make others feel or think. Treat yourself, your classmates, and your facilitators with respect.

If there are any questions about this, please let me know.

### Quizzes and Exams

This course may have Quizzes and/or Exams. The exams are not timed.

### Grades

You will be provided a weekly commentary/lecture and have [required readings](#) and discussion assignments. There will be a number of written assignments and exercises, which are explained thoroughly in the list of assignments. A total of 1000 points are available in the course distributed across the components listed below, with both points and percent of final grade indicated.

As a student in this course, you have a number of responsibilities that will affect the level of learning you achieve. These responsibilities include: 1) working actively to create a challenging and useful learning experience for yourself, your discussion group and the class as a whole; 2) encouraging and supporting the learning of each member of the class; 3) preparing and participating fully in discussions as well as group and/or class activities; and 4) completing all assigned work on time or making prior arrangements if an absence of late submission is unavailable. In this course you have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that will help you become effective, confident and focused in your learning.

Activities	Total Points	Weights (%)
Weekly Discussions (7)	350	35%
Weekly Written Assignments (4)	400	40%
Program Identification and Background Description (1)	50	5%
Program Evaluation Proposal (1)	200	20%

Letter grades for the course will be based on the following grading scale.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A	93–100%	4.0
A -	90-92.9%	3.7
B +	87-89.9%	3.3
B	83-86.9%	3.0
B -	80-82.9%	2.7
C +	77-79.9%	2.3
C	75-76.9%	2.0
C -	73-74.9%	1.7
D +	70-72.9%	1.3
D	67-69.9%	1.0
D -	63-66.9%	0.7
F	Below 63.0%	0.0

For complete information on the Grading Policy, please refer to the [CGCS Online Catalog](#).

All writing for this seminar must follow the APA writing style. All writing for this seminar must follow APA guidelines for formatting and citation, which can be found at [The Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#). Grading rubrics for assignments and discussions are provided from the [Grading Guidelines and Rubrics](#) link.

### [Discussion Groups](#)

Each week I will post discussion questions that are designed to explore the content of this course as well as some more “immediate” topics. Please refer to the [Grading Guidelines and Rubrics](#) for **Rules** and **Grading on Discussions**.

### [Late Work](#)

It is important that writing assignments and discussion posts be completed on time. Extensions of deadlines will be given only for serious extenuating circumstances. In the absence of such extensions, assignments may be downgraded for lateness at the discretion of the instructor. Regardless, it is imperative that you complete all assignments. Remember, your final paper is worth a significant portion of your final grade, is cumulative and requires a strong grasp of each of our topics!

### [Academic Honesty and the Norwich University Honor Code](#)

A student must submit work that represents the student's own original analysis and writing. Copying another's work is not appropriate. If the student relies on the research or writing of others, the student must cite those sources. Words or ideas that require citations include, but are not limited to all hardcopy or electronic publications, whether copyrighted or not, and all verbal or visual communication when the content of such communication clearly originates from an identifiable source. While students are encouraged to seek editing feedback, extensive revisions of one's work by another person is considered a lack of academic honesty, as it is representing another student's work as one's own.

For more information see:

[Academic Dishonesty](#)

[Academic Integrity](#)

[Norwich University Honor Code](#)

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### **[Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/ADA](#)**

Please consult [Appendix H: University Policy - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) for instructions on obtaining an accommodation.

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Disclaimer: Please note the specifics of this Course Syllabus are subject to change. Students are responsible for abiding by any such changes. Your instructor will notify you of any changes.

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