RESEARCH METHODS

EMAIL POLICY: The best way to contact me is by email. On weekdays (M-F) I will make every effort to respond to all email inquiries promptly. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours (M-F) or 48 hours (weekends), feel free to send a follow-up email. **When emailing, please use your Islander email account, include your name, and what course you are in.** I will not respond to emails sent from personal email accounts.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is meant to help students gain a working understanding of the research process with direct application to criminal justice research. Attention will focus on various aspects of the research process including quantitative and qualitative methods. Students will complete literature reviews, create research proposals, conduct observations/interviews, and construct surveys in addition to various assignments and activities.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the semester students should be able to:

1) Discuss basic concepts and terminology in research methods.
2) Explain the research process, research designs, and methods used in social sciences.
3) Process and discuss professional literature in the field of criminal justice and criminology, while identifying scholarly sources and determining the quality of the articles based on their methodology.
4) Demonstrate the ability to apply professional standards of writing and research.

REQUIRED READING:


Additional handouts and readings assigned by the instructor.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION POLICY: Attendance will be taken regularly. Regular attendance is necessary if you want to do well in the course. Exams will cover material presented during the lectures that may not be covered in the text. Additionally, many of the assignments are based on activities that we will be doing in class. If you are not in class, you will not be able to complete the related assignments. In general, you are expected to attend class regularly and come to class prepared to discuss required readings and assignments. If you are unprepared for class, you will be counted absent for that period.
STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAY POLICY: Section 51.91 (b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observation of a religious holy day, including travel for the purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University Policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor.

A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). This request must be made within the first fifteen days of the semester or the first seven days of a summer session in which the absence(s) will occur. The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable time frame in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

GRADING: Your course grade will be based on your grades on the required exams, Blackboard assignments, and term paper. Your grades will be posted on Blackboard.

MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

EXAMS: There will be three exams given over the course of the semester. Each exam is worth 100 points (10% of your final grade). See the course calendar for exam dates. The exams may include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions over material from the textbook (which may not be discussed in class), lectures, and other material provided by the instructor in class or on Blackboard. Missed Exams: You will only be able to make up a missed exam if you provide the instructor with a reasonable excuse for missing the exam ahead of time!! “Reasonable excuses” are determined at the discretion of the instructor and may require documentation. The instructor reserves the right to alter the content and format of exams taken outside of the designated class period for the exam.

ARTICLE REVIEWS: You will complete three article reviews over the course of the semester. Each article review is worth 100 points (10% of your final grade). The articles will be empirical journal articles chosen from reputable criminal justice journals. Article reviews should be approximately 2 pages long, not including the citation and abstract (see below). The purpose of the assignment is not to critique the article you are reviewing. Instead, focus on demonstrating that you understand (at least most of) the article. Pay particular attention to how the research was conducted and how it was presented in the article. A sample article review will be posted on Blackboard. Each of your article reviews should include the following sections:
1) **Citation:** Include the full APA citation at the top of the first page of the assignment.

2) **Abstract:** Type or copy/paste the original abstract *verbatim* into your article summary. (This is to give me a baseline understanding of what the article is about.)

3) **Introduction:** What was the author(s)' purpose in writing this article? Why is the topic important? Provide a very brief overview of the article. The hypothesis/research question should be stated in this section.

4) **Literature Review:** What kind of background information about the hypothesis/research question did the author(s) present? What relationships between variables were being tested? The author(s) should summarize and comment on previous research in this section. Do not go into detail. Just summarize the main points made by the literature review. What were the general trends in the previous research?

5) **Methodology:** How did the author(s) collect their data? What method(s) were used? Was a sample used? How was it selected? If a sample was not used, what was the justification? What were the concepts in which the author was interested? How were the concepts operationalized? What measurements were used (survey, interviews, etc.)? Identify the independent and dependent variables.

6) **Findings and Discussion:** What did the author(s) find? Were the hypotheses confirmed? What is the one major finding? Summarize the findings. When the author(s) finished the article, what did they say about the completed study? Were the findings generalizable? Did the author(s) find faults/problems/limitations in their study? What “new” questions have been raised by the research? What suggestions did the author(s) make for future research?

**I'm happy to read and critique completed drafts of your article reviews if you submit them (by email or in person) one week ahead of the due date. You can come by the office or email me any time with questions about the assignment.**

**WORKSHEETS:** For several sections of the research proposal you will be required to submit a worksheet. In addition to submitting the worksheets, you will need to attend a class workshop or meet with me one-on-one. I have set aside class time for these workshops and meetings. Further instructions and sign-up sheets will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL:** Because of the limited time available in a semester, you will not be conducting a study for your primary project in this class. Instead, you will write a proposal for a study that you *could* conduct. Writing a research proposal can feel overwhelming, so the project will be broken up into smaller writing assignments. These smaller assignments will ultimately be compiled and edited for your final research proposal. All sections of the research proposal should follow proper APA format. A sample research proposal and guides to help you with each section of the proposal will be posted on Blackboard.

Your final research proposal will lay out a plan for conducting research in an area of interest to you and must be within the field of criminal justice. Your final research proposal should include the following sections:
1) **Introduction:** Approximately 2 pages*. This sets the foundation for everything else in your research proposal. It should include the purpose of the study (the research question), why the study is important, the hypothesis, why the research is worthy of funding, and who would benefit from/be interested in the findings.

2) **Literature Review:** Approximately 5-10 pages*. This section should provide a thorough and well organized review of previous studies that relate to your research question. Your writing should not reflect your opinion on the topic. However, you are encouraged to critique the methodology of other articles or highlight gaps in the literature, particularly if this supports the relevance of the study you are proposing. Your literature review should include at least 10 academic sources. If there is a lack of research in your topic area, see the instructor. We will spend at least one class period on how to evaluate articles and conduct a good literature review.

3) **Methods:** Approximately 3-5 pages*. This section describes and justifies your research design. It should include a statement/re-statement of your research question and hypothesis. Your hypothesis will likely be influenced by what you have found during the literature review. If not, why? Is there something other researchers have overlooked? The greatest emphasis should be on the data and sample (where do they come from?), your intended sampling method, instrumentation (how will you be collecting your data? what items will you be using?), independent and dependent variables and how they will be operationalized. You should also include the projected data analysis procedures, an anticipated timeline for the study, and an anticipated budget.

4) **Discussion/Conclusion:** Approximately 2-3 pages*. This section analyzes your proposal almost as if you had conducted the research. You should re-emphasize why your research is important. What are the implications of your potential findings? Include the strengths and weaknesses of your study. How does the study you are proposing build on what others have done? How does it fall short? What are the challenges to conducting the proposed study? What are the threats to validity and reliability in your design?

5) **Final Proposal:** Once you have received a grade and feedback on each of the sections and worksheets, you will compile them into one cohesive document. You should edit each section based on my critiques, add any necessary transition paragraphs, and make any other changes you deem necessary. At that point, you will submit the completed proposal and be graded on overall quality of the final product.

*These page limits are only guidelines. The length of your proposal will vary based on the topic that you choose, and your grade will reflect the quality of your work.

*I’m happy to read and critique completed drafts of your written work if you submit them to me (by email or in person) one week ahead of the due date. You can come by the office or email my any time with questions about the assignments.*
Late Papers/Assignments: Late papers/assignments will only be accepted for 72 hours past the due date/time. All late papers will have 10 points deducted per day, including holidays and weekends. Assignments that are due in class and used for workshops will not be graded past the due date. In addition, you are responsible for following all instructions for submitting assignments. **I DO NOT ACCEPT ASSIGNMENTS VIA EMAIL.** If an assignment is due on Blackboard, you are required to submit the correct assignment, as a single document, the first time. You are allowed only one submission.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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**A** 895-1000 points 89.5-100%

**B** 795-894 points 79.5-89.4%

**C** 695-794 points 69.5-79.4%

**D** 595-694 points 59.5-69.4%

**F** 0-594 points 0-59.4%

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY:**

This course makes use of the Blackboard system. To be successful in the course you will need access to reliable internet service. **Most of the assignments in this course will be submitted using Blackboard.** Specific instructions for submitting assignments will be discussed in class.

You will need to check Blackboard and your Islander email account daily during the week for important course updates and reading assignments.

If you need help with Blackboard:

- View the tutorials at [https://iol.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html](https://iol.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html)
- Call the IT help desk at (361) 825-2692
- Email computer.helpline@tamucc.edu
**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** The faculty of the College of Liberal Arts expects students to conduct their academic work with integrity and honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in the failure of a course and dismissal from the University. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit), the abuse of resource materials, and misrepresentation of credentials or accomplishments as a member of the college.

**CLASSROOM/PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR:** Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**DISABILITY SERVICES**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**GRADE APPEALS PROCESS**
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details,
including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_procedure.pdf). For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC CONTINUITY: In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

CALENDAR

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<td>Intro to CJ Research &amp; Terminology</td>
<td>Chapters 1,2</td>
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<td>How to conduct a review of the literature.</td>
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<td>Avoiding plagiarism.</td>
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*The course calendar is subject to change. All changes to the calendar will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard.*