Research Methods for Criminal Justice

Professor Jody Sundt

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Chat: MS Teams

Class Meetings
This is a fully online course with no required meeting times.

Attendance
Log-in to Canvas several times a week to submit assignments, receive announcements, and complete learning modules.

Course Description
Every day we are confronted with claims about “facts” and whether we can trust information. When is knowledge valid and how can we assess the accuracy of information? Whose “facts” can we believe and how do we know?

This class introduces students to the research techniques necessary to systematically analyze crime and criminal justice. We will place particular emphasis on the concept of validity and think carefully about research design, causality, generalizability, and measurement. Students will learn the habits of an open-mind necessary to critically evaluate research and foster understanding. You will also become familiar with the sources of criminal justice data and learn about the quality of that data. More broadly, you will learn how to assess the accuracy of the information you encounter and recognize the major sources of error, bias, and illogical thinking.

Course Goals
This class prepares students to be a problem solver. Problem solvers work individually and with others to collect, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information to implement innovative solutions to challenging local and global problems.

By completing this course, you will:

- Develop an appreciation for the habits of an open mind that fosters understanding and problem-solving.
- Understand and apply fundamental concepts in social science research including causation, generalizability, and validity.
- Evaluate the basic elements of research design and the primary methods of data collection.
- Apply knowledge about research methods to determine the extent to which conclusions and generalizations are valid.
Expectations

What You Can Expect from Me
My job as your instructor is to help you discover the content and create opportunities for you to learn. I cannot learn for you, but I can be your partner on this journey. You can also expect me to:

- Maintain a positive learning environment for all students.
- Challenge you to achieve new heights of understanding.
- Support and encourage your efforts to learn.
- Create meaningful learning experiences with real-life applicability.
- Treat all students fairly and with dignity and respect.
- Provide you with meaningful feedback on your progress.
- Acknowledge the limits of my knowledge and the possibility of being wrong.

What I Expect of You
Your job as a student is to learn and to be a contributing member of this class. I expect you to:

- Take responsibility for your learning.
- Treat everyone in the class with dignity and respect.
- Work together to cultivate intellectual humility, a willingness to admit the limits of knowledge, and the possibility of being wrong.
- Welcome clumsy conversations and be forgiving of mistakes.
- Do your own work.
- Ask for help when you need it.

Required Reading


Course Requirements
Your grade in the course is based on 3 types of work: participation and practice exercises, reflection papers, and quizzes. There will be no opportunity for extra credit in this course.

Participation & Practice Assignments (20%)
Participation is a critical part of the class. Each week we will be doing various activities online, some of which will be collaborative. It is important to complete your readings and review the online lecture before completing participation and practice assignments. Participation and practice exercises are graded pass/fail.
Open Mind Reflection Papers (30%)  
Your will write 3 short papers reflecting on the habits of an open mind. Detailed assignment and grading rubrics are available on our Canvas site. The due date for paper are listed in the course outline on and Canvas.

Quizzes (50%)  
You will complete quizzes on the chapters assigned from the textbook by Bachman & Schutt. Quizzes are available on Canvas and should be completed by Sundays at midnight. You may use resources to complete the quizzes, but you may not collaborate on the quizzes by sharing answers or receiving help from others. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped and your total quiz grade will be based on your average quiz score.

Grading Scale  
The following grading scale will be used to determine a course letter grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D-</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>73-70</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>64-66</td>
<td>63-60</td>
<td>&gt;60</td>
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Course grades are final and will only be changed in cases where an error has been made. Standard rounding rules will apply for assigning a letter grade. For example, a numeric average of 79.5 will be rounded to 80 and assigned a B-, whereas a numeric average of 79.4 will be rounded to 79 and assigned a C+.

Course Schedule

Part 1. Opening Our Minds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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</table>
| Week 1 | Jan 11-17 | Module 1: Our Irrational Minds | • Read Jackson & Jamieson, ch. 1-2  
• OpenMind Modules 1 & 2  
• Peer-to-Peer Conversation 1 |
| Week 2 | Jan. 18-24 | Module 2: Tricks of Deception | • Read Jackson & Jamieson, ch. 3-5  
• OpenMind Modules 3 & 4  
• Peer-to-Peer Conversation 2  
• Reflection Paper 1 |
| Week 3 | Jan. 25-31 | Module 3: Getting the Facts | • Read Jackson & Jamieson, ch. 5-7  
• OpenMind Modules 5 & 6  
• Peer-to-Peer Conversation 3 |
| Week 4 | Feb. 1-7 | Module 4: Opening our Minds | • Read Bachman & Schutt, ch 1  
• OpenMind Modules 7 & 8  
• Peer-to-Peer Conversation 4  
• OpenMind Questionnaire |
### Part 2. Think Like a Social Scientist

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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DATES</th>
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<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Feb. 8-14</td>
<td>Module 5: The Scientific Process</td>
<td>• Read Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 2&lt;br&gt;• Distinguish between Facts &amp; Opinions&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Feb. 15-21</td>
<td>Module 6: Measurement</td>
<td>• Read Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 4&lt;br&gt;• Compare measures of sexual assault&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Feb. 22-28</td>
<td>Module 7: Sampling</td>
<td>• Read Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 5&lt;br&gt;• Conduct a sampling simulation&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>March 1-7</td>
<td>Module 8: Causality</td>
<td>• Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 6&lt;br&gt;• Evaluate causal claims&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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### Part 3. Show Me the Data!

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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>March 8-14</td>
<td>Module 9: Experiments</td>
<td>• Read Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 6 (cont)&lt;br&gt;• Interpret results of a simple experiment&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>March 15-21</td>
<td>Module 10: Surveys</td>
<td>• Read Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 7&lt;br&gt;• Create a short online survey&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>March 22-28</td>
<td>Module 11: Available Data</td>
<td>• Read Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 9&lt;br&gt;• Describe crime trends in Texas&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>March 29-April 4</td>
<td>Module 12: Qualitative Methods</td>
<td>• Read Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 8&lt;br&gt;• Conduct an interview&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>April 5-11</td>
<td>Module 13: Evaluation Methods</td>
<td>• Read Bachman &amp; Schutt, ch 12&lt;br&gt;• Review <a href="http://www.crimesolutions.gov">www.crimesolutions.gov</a>&lt;br&gt;• Complete quiz</td>
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Part 4. What We Know and Don’t Know, Yet

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| Week 14  | April 12-18 | Module 14: How do we know? | • Read Jackson & Jamieson, ch. 8-9  
          |        |                               | • Reflection Paper 3                    |
| Week 15  | April 19-22 | Module 15: It’s About Validity | • What you don’t know yet, but want to find out |

Course Policies

Technical Problems
If you are having problems with an assignment, email me or post on our class “Ask the Professor” discussion board. I will reply to messages as soon as possible and not more than 24 hours after receiving your message.

If you are having problems with your computer, software, or with the Canvas website you may find answers at University Information Technology Help Desk. You may also call the UITS at 940-565-2324 or reach them by live chat.

Attendance
Your success in this course is promoted by regular participation and attendance. (See UNT Attendance Policy). You are expected to login to this class weekly and view the materials in the learning modules. Weekly, graded participation assignments are required.

COVID-19 Impact on Attendance
Please contact me if you are unable to attend class because you are ill, or unable to participate in the class due to a related issue regarding COVID-19. It is important that you communicate with me prior to missing assignments so I may make a decision about accommodating your request to be excused or obtain an extension.

If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

Copyright Restriction
Materials in this course, including lectures, notes, handouts, exams, and similar materials created by the instructor, are protected by US copyright law. Materials are used in an educational context for personal use and should not be reproduced, distributed, or sold in print or digitally outside the course without
permission. Students who are involved in the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material may be in violation of Code of Student Conduct.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy
Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Policy
UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website (https://disability.unt.edu/).

Emergency Notification & Procedures
UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.