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|  | **CJUS 3900 (Online)**  **Research Methodologies**  **College of Health and Public Service**  **University of North Texas**  **Fall 2025** |

**Instructor:** Rachael Rief, Ph.D. Office hours: By appointment

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Email expectations: I can only discuss grades with email messages sent through your Eagle Connect email account ([username@my.unt.edu](mailto:username@my.unt.edu)). You can expect to receive a response within 48 hours during the week and 72 hours on the weekend. If you have not received a response within that time, please email me back as it may have gotten lost.

**Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions**There are no pre-requisites for this course. However, it is assumed that students possess a basic understanding of criminological theory and criminal justice.

**Required Materials**   
Maxfield, M, & Babbie, E. (2018). *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology* (8th edition).

**Course Description**  
Research methods is designed to help students learn the various ways in which criminal justice questions can be answered. Many of these questions can be addressed in multiple ways, with multiple techniques, each having their own advantages and disadvantages. Discussing and evaluating these techniques for criminal justice related questions is the overall focus of this course. Major topics related to this overall focus include research ethics and human participant guidelines, the nature of causation versus correlation, experimental and survey research designs, sampling, qualitative research, the advantages and disadvantages of experimental, survey, and qualitative research designs, and reliability and validity among others.

This course is primarily designed as an introduction and evaluation of several research methods so that students become intelligent consumers of research. It is also geared toward those who desire a basis for graduate school and/or a foundation of research methods for their chosen occupation. This course is not limited to criminal justice topics, however, as all social science researchers (and all researchers in general) use the same or similar procedures and techniques for answering most research questions. As such, this course covers a wide variety of topics to help illustrate the research process.

**Course Objectives**

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Identify and examine the purposes of conducting scientific research and address methodological issues necessary for conducting and critically analyzing criminal justice research.
2. Evaluate the various forms of data collection and sampling techniques used in criminal justice research.
3. Explain issues in research design, including criteria for causality, types of validity, units of analysis, different types of research design, and stages in the research process.
4. Find and use resources for answering real world research questions.
5. Critically evaluate research based on knowledge of the research process.

**How the Course is Organized**   
This course will take place completely online through Canvas. The course is composed of several modules. Each module contains the relevant chapter outlines as well as other supplementary material as needed. Note not all modules will contain supplementary materials or require extra reading beyond the textbook. The students will also participate in four discussions through Canvas during the course. The students will also engage in participant-observation research and submit a final paper describing their findings. Finally, the students will take four exams. Each exam will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions.

***What Should Students Do First?***Once you have read this syllabus, go to the “Start Here” module and respond to the Introduction Discussion. Once you have responded to this post, you can move on to the first module. ***How Students Should Proceed Each Week for Class Activities***At the beginning of each week, the student should refer to the course schedule (see below) for their reading assignment for that week. After completing each reading assignment in its entirety, the student should open the corresponding module and study the notes. As noted on the course calendar, four times throughout the semester the student will have a discussion post to complete. They will respond to material that is pertinent to the theme of the course that week, and then respond to one of their peers’ posts. The textbook chapters and the online modules will help you complete the discussion posts for each week and satisfy all learning objectives. During the semester, the students will engage in participant-observation research. The textbook chapters and online modules will assist the students in this task as well.

**Course Notes and Recommendations**

Please make sure to have your official UNT email forwarded to your preferred email address (if different) to receive important updates, changes, announcements, class cancellations (if applicable), and generally, so I can reach you if necessary. **Before emailing Dr. Craig or the course TA with a question, make sure to review this syllabus. Most questions are answered in this document.**

The announcement board in Canvas and email will be used for primary communication to the class as a whole. I advise you check the announcements section frequently.

**Important:** Minimum technology requirements for this course: a browser that is compatible with Canvas (visit [this link](https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/canvas/requirements) to ensure your browser is suitable) and Microsoft Office Word (or a similar word-processing software). Microsoft Office 365 is available for free to all currently-enrolled students. For instructions to download the software, please see [this link](https://it.unt.edu/installoffice365). Students are expected to know how to access their UNT email, open attachments, and use Microsoft Word (or a similar word-processing software). Students facing IT issues should visit [UNT’s IT website](https://it.unt.edu/) or the [IT Helpdesk](https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk). Students are also expected to have basic digital literacy skills such as using UNT’s library’s website, searching online databases, and properly citing information sources. Here is a [UNT Library Guide for Criminal Justice students](https://guides.library.unt.edu/cjus) that walks you through how to find research and official sources online.   
**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

This course is made up of a series of assignments and assessments to assist you in achieving the course learning objectives. Each week you will work on various combinations of readings, discussions, and quizzes which will generally be made available to you by each Monday morning at 6 AM. Students can expect their grades and feedback to be released to them within 3 business days. There are a total of 780 points that can be earned in this class. The grading policy along with other class requirements is presented below.

**Grading Scale:**

702-780 points=A

624-701 points=B

546-623 points=C

468-545 points=D

Below 468 points=F

**Discussion Posts (400 points total)**

Each student will be required to respond to 4 Canvas discussions throughout the course of the semester. Each Canvas discussion is worth 100 points, for a total of 300 points towards your final grade. Written portions of the Canvas discussions should be a minimum of 250 words. Students *must* reply to at least one other student’s posts for full point potential (responding appropriately, of course). For each discussion, your original post will be worth 85 points and the reply will be 15 points. The discussion assignments will be posted on Canvas and available a few days before they are noted on the syllabus schedule.

Your discussions will be graded on depth of explanation, utilization of outside sources, specific efforts to back up your arguments with logical points and sources, grammar and spelling, and adhering to the assignment.

To locate the discussion boards, click the Discussions tab to the left of the main screen. Select the appropriate Canvas Discussion assignment. Next click on the appropriate forum. To post a comment select “Create Thread.” In order to receive full credit you must post an original response and respond to at least one other students’ posts. Note that you will NOT be able to see any other students’ posts until you have first posted a thread yourself.

**Quizzes (240 points total)**

Each student will be required to take four quizzes in this course for a total of 240 points (each worth 60 points). Each test will consist of 30 multiple choice and true/false questions. Each test will cover all module note material, assigned material in the classroom text, and other assigned reading material. By its nature, the material in this class builds off of prior material. As such, the tests may have material from prior sections on it.

Each quiz will be available for 3 days. However, once you start the exam you will have only 60 minutes to take it. Note, the tests in this course will have other restrictions as well including the ability to only answer one question at a time.

**Human Subjects Research Training for Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers (40 points total)**

Each student will be required to complete an Internet-based Human Subjects Research Training for Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers through the University of North Texas. You will need to register with <https://www.citiprogram.org/> to access the training. Be sure to record your log-in information in a secure place in case you need to access it at a later date.

If this website does not work, try a general search (in Google or Yahoo) for “Human Participant Protections Education” which should direct you the National Institute of Health Extramural Research website. **Please contact me as soon as possible if you experience problems and I will get you to the correct site.** Failure to contact me if you have problems is not a defense against missing the due date.

Once you have registered, start with the first module for the Social-Behavioral-Educational (SBE) Basic Training and progress through the various additional modules and complete the test after each one. There are a total of 16 modules so be sure to allow yourself plenty of time to complete them. Depending on the time, the website may be busy—so please do not wait until the last minute.

To get credit for this training and hence this assignment, you must submit the certificate that you will receive at the conclusion of successful training by the due date. This certificate must have your registered name on it for proper credit to be given. This training should take approximately 1-3 hours.  I would advise you to take a few notes during the tutorials so that you may pass the various tests which are sometimes difficult.  You will submit the certificate on the Canvas assignment page. Failure to turn in your certification will result in forfeiture of all points associated with this assignment. This assignment satisfies course objectives 1 and 2.

**Participant Observation Paper (100 points total)**

Each student will be responsible for conducting a participant observation activity. This assignment is worth 100 points and must include a 4-5 page detailed analysis **with field notes attached**. The details for this assignment will be posted on Canvas.

**In addition, I will require that you submit your research question/topic/problem for approval before you conduct your observation activity. You will submit this as a Canvas Discussion Post by the date posted on the syllabus. I will then respond with comments to help you clarify your research question as needed. This assignment is specific, and must be much more than “watching people.”** Please note the due date of your research question and the completed assignment in the syllabus.

To submit your paper, select the “Participant Observation Paper” folder in the Content section. Click the link labeled “Submit Participant Observation Paper” and this will take you to the submission area. Attach your paper as a Word document. Late assignments will NOT be accepted. Do not submit more than one assignment, the first one you submit will be graded regardless of multiple submissions.

**Class Policies**

**Make-Up Policy**

Make-up exams/assignments are allowed in this class as long as you have an authorized absence according to university policies. Those in athletics, those who are absent for religious holidays, and/or those involved in other school supported activities that require being absent from class will be allowed make up if proper procedures are followed in requesting an excused absence. I must have written documentation in advance that you will be away from class for the absence to be excused. Make-up assignments as a result of authorized absences must be turned in within 3 days of returning from the authorized absence. If you were critically ill in such a way that you could not complete any required assignment or exam, you must submit a doctor’s note to me within 3 days.

To be excused, any authorized absence must take place over the entire submission window. That is, if a student has an authorized absence for 1 day of a 3-day submission window for an exam or any other assignment, then they will not be excused and will not be able to take a make-up. In the event that circumstances require a make-up test, and provided students follow the appropriate procedures for requesting an excused absence that falls on a test or assignment due date, any authorized make-up test will be conducted during finals week immediately after the final test in this course or at a time arranged with the professor.

**Authorized Absences:** Absences are authorized only in cases of participation in school sponsored activities and/or religious holidays. For an excused absence due to a school sponsored activity, students must be approved in advance by the department chair and academic dean. Within three days after the absence, students must obtain authorized absence cards from the Dean of Students for presentation to instructor. Students who wish to request an excused absence for religious holidays can do so and will be excused from class as long as they make a request within the required time frame set by the University (see the most recent undergraduate catalog). Notification must be in writing so that I may have it for my records. Students must arrange to make up any work missed during the excused religious absence or school sponsored activity.

Students that have fallen behind, are failing and/or choose to not complete the coursework for the semester are responsible for officially withdrawing themselves from the course; failure to do so will result in a performance grade of “F.” *Last day to withdraw with a grade of “W” is June 13, 2024.*

**Student Behavior and University Policy:**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct.  The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.  The Code of Student Conduct can be found at this [link](http://www.unt.edu/csrr).

Certain topics in criminal justice are controversial, thus discussion may become heated where there will be disagreements. The online classroom is a place to express ideas, opinions, and engage in thoughtful discussions. Students will respect the views and opinions of others at all times in the online environment. While I do not foresee any problems, if problems do arise, I will address them with the individual student. Below are general guidelines for how to communicate well in an online classroom.

* Remember that college communication is still professional communication. Use correct spelling and grammar and always double-check your response before hitting send or reply. Do not use slang and limit the use of emoticons.
* Use standard, readable fonts, sizes, and colors and avoid writing in all caps.
* Use your instructor’s title of “Dr.” or “Professor,” or if you don’t know use “Mr.” or “Ms.” Do not use “Mrs.” to address female instructors unless told otherwise by said instructor.
* Be mindful of tone in online communication as it lacks the nonverbal cues of face-to-face communication that provide clarity and context to conversations.
* Respect the personal identities of others based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and/or culture.
* Respect the privacy of yourself, your instructor, and your peers. Keep in mind what you reveal and do not reveal, particularly if this information involves personal health and/or classroom performance, such as grades.
* Give people the benefit of the doubt. Though there may be a computer between you, there are people on the other side of the screen.
* Do not make assumptions about others’ technological skills. Technological skills vary across a variety of factors, including experience, age, culture, etc.
* Read these [Core Rules of Netiquette](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html) for additional tips about online communication.

*Communicating via Email*

* Check the syllabus before asking a question about the course and let the instructor know you checked the syllabus before asking. Instructors put a lot of time into making syllabi as comprehensive as possible for students.
* Use a descriptive subject line to get the instructor’s attention. Instructors receive a lot of emails and a descriptive subject line helps them identify student inquiries more efficiently.
* Be concise and to the point.
* For a sample email, read this article, [“How to Email Your Professor.”](https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087)

*Discussion Board Communication*

* Treat your posts like the professional communication that they are. Use correct spelling and grammar and always double-check a response before hitting send or reply. Do not use slang and limit the use of emoticons.
* Read all the messages in a thread before replying so you do not repeat something one of your peers may have already said.
* Avoid replies such as “I agree” and instead explain why you agree or do not agree.
* Show your work by sharing resources and utilizing citations.
* When disagreeing, do not make personal attacks or use language that discriminates based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and/or culture.

**Academic Dishonesty/Integrity**

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

**Office of Disability Accommodation**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access website](http://www.unt.edu/oda). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

**Student Evaluation of Instruction**

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

**Syllabus Changes**

I reserve the right and have the discretion to change this syllabus. While every effort will be made to follow this syllabus as closely as possible, it is sometimes the case that the syllabus must be modified. In the case that the syllabus needs to be adjusted, I will announce such adjustments to the class. I will make every effort to ensure that any changes to the syllabus benefit the class as a whole. It is the student’s responsibility to check announcements/email so that any and all syllabus changes are documented. Failure to obtain syllabus changes because of failure to check and read announcements does not constitute a defense against missed assignments, test dates, and other applicable changes.

**Succeed at UNT**

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grown. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here’s how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find Support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, visit this [link from UNT Succeed](https://success.unt.edu/resources). UNT offers [additional resources for online students](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources).

**Miscellaneous:**

The material posted online is my personal intellectual property or that of the University of North Texas. You may not utilize the material for other than class purposes. Class recordings are reserved for use only by students in this class for educational purposes. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

A variety of resources services are available to students in the Academic Support tab in Canvas.

**Emergency Notification & Procedures**

UNT uses a system called [Eagle Alert](https://www.unt.edu/eaglealert) to quickly notify you 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). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at [my.unt.edu](file:///C:\Users\Jessica%20Craig\Dropbox\Teaching\CJUS%204700%20Research%20Methods\Old%20Semesters\Summer%202021\my.unt.edu). Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas in the buildings where your classes are held, 2) determine how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and 3) identify where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**Retention of Student Records**

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university’s policy in accordance with those mandates at this [link](file:///C:\Users\Jessica%20Craig\Dropbox\Teaching\CJUS%204700%20Research%20Methods\Old%20Semesters\Summer%202021\essc.unt.edu\registrar\ferpa.html). Information regarding data privacy for Canvas can be found [at this link](https://www.instructure.com/policies/privacy).

**Sexual Assault Prevention**

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Visit [Title IX Student Information](https://edo.unt.edu/title-ix-student-information) (Links to an external site) for more resources.

**F1 Visa Holder Regulation**

Federal regulations state that students may apply only 3 fully-online semester credit hours (SCH) to the hours required for full-time status for F1 Visa holders. Full-time status for F1 Visa students is 12 hours for undergraduates and 9 hours for graduate students. Instructors teaching online courses should insert information into the syllabus to make F1 Visa students aware of this limitation and provide them with information about options to complete an on-campus experiential component in a course that is otherwise fully-online.

If a F-1 Visa holder intends to take more than 3 SCH of online courses in a term, they will need to document the on-campus experiential component of all courses that exceed the 3-hour limit. This on-campus experiential component can be satisfied in a number of ways including a face-to-face test, lab work, a required on-site lecture, mandatory library orientation, etc. Instructors should develop an option to assist students who request an on-campus experiential component to meet the federal regulation. Instructors should have students requesting this assistance to complete the [On-campus Component Reporting Form for Online Courses](https://international.unt.edu/sites/default/files/files/Online%20Course%20Form.pdf) which requires both the student and the instructor’s signature. The instructor should make a copy for the student’s departmental file and send a copy to the UNT International Student and Scholar Services (routing address on the form).

**ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

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| **DATE** | **TOPIC, READING ASSIGNMENTS, AND DUE DATES** |
| **Week 1** | **Topic**: Crime, Criminal Justice, & Scientific Inquiry  **Readings**: Chapter 1  **Assignments**: Introduction Discussion Board due Sunday 8/24 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 2** | **Topic**: Foundations of Criminal Justice Research  **Readings:** Chapter 2  **Assignments**: Human Participant Protections Training due Sunday 8/31 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 3** | **Topic**: Ethics & Criminal Justice Research  **Readings**: Chapter 3  **Assignments**: Discussion Post 1  Main post due Thursday 9/4 at 11:59 PM  Responses due Sunday 9/7 at 11:59 PM  Quiz 1 (Chapters 1-3) due Sunday 9/7 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 4** | **Topic**: General Issues in Research Design  **Readings**: Chapter 4 |
| **Week 5** | **Topic**: Concepts, Operationalization, & Measurement  **Readings**: Chapter 5  **Assignments**: Participant Observation Paper Topic due Sunday 9/21 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 6-9/22** | **Topic**: Measuring Crime  **Readings**: Chapter 6  **Assignments**: Quiz 2 (Chapters 4-6) due Sunday 9/28 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 7** | **Topic**: Experimental & Quasi-Experimental Designs  **Readings**: Chapter 7  **Assignments**: Discussion Post 2  Main post due Thursday 10/2 at 11:59 PM  Responses due Sunday 10/5 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 8** | **Topic**: Sampling  **Readings**: Chapter 8 |
| **Week 9** | **Topic**: Survey Research  **Readings**: Chapter 9  **Assignments**: Quiz 3 (Chapters 7-9) due Sunday 10/19 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 10** | **Topic**: Qualitative Interviewing  **Readings**: Chapter 10  **Assignments**: Discussion Post 3  Main post due Thursday 10/23 at 11:59 PM  Responses due Sunday 10/26 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 11** | **Topic**: Field Observation: Part 1  **Readings**: Chapter 11 |
| **Week 12** | **Topic**: Field Observation: Part 2  **Readings**: Parry (2015) article found on Canvas  **Assignments**: Discussion Post 4  Main post due Thursday 11/6 at 11:59 PM  Responses due Sunday 11/9 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 13** | **Topic**: Agency Records, Content Analysis, & Secondary Data  **Readings**: Chapter 12 |
| **Week 14** | **Topic**: Evaluation Research & Problem Analysis  **Readings**: Chapter 13  **Assignments**: Quiz 4 (Chapters 10-13) due Sunday 11/23 at 11:59 PM |
| **Week 15** | **\*\*Thanksgiving Break\*\*** |
| **Week 16** | **Topic**: Wrapping Up  **Readings**: None  **Assignments**: Participant Observation Paper due Sunday 12/7 at 11:59 PM |