

# Criminal Justice Research Methods (CJ 202:307)

Spring 2017

Mondays and Thursdays 10:20am-11:40am, Rutgers Cinema 2

This syllabus is subject to change at any time throughout the semester. Announcements in class, via e-mail, or on Sakai supersede anything written here.

**Instructor:** Amanda Agan

aagan@econ.rutgers.edu (put CJ 307 in the subject!)

Office Hours: Mondays 9:00-10:00am Lucy Stone Hall A355

or by appointment: New Jersey Hall, Room 420 CAC

(848) 932-8616

**Final exam: Monday May 8 8-11am**

Last day to drop: January 24

Last day to withdraw with a W: April 3

Any withdrawal after April 3 will result in an "F" grade

**Course Synopsis:** This course provides an introduction to statistics and quantitative reasoning that can be used to answer empirical, policy-relevant questions in the social sciences and specifically within criminal justice. The primary objectives of this course are to build familiarity with the fundamentals of research methods, statistics, and data analysis and develop the skills necessary for describing, analyzing, and presenting quantitative data. This course does not assume any background in research methods, probability, or statistics. At the completion of this course, students will be expected to: have a basic knowledge of statistical methods used for the social sciences; organize and describe data; read and create statistical graphs and charts; understand the concept of and application of statistical inference; conduct statistical analyses; and be able to critically evaluate different research methods.

**Prerequisite(s):** The prerequisite for this course is Introduction to Criminal Justice (01:202:201 or 47:202:103) or Criminal Justice in American Society (50:202:201), that is students should have some introduction to criminal justice. There are no formal statistics prerequisites for this course, though one term of college-level math is encouraged.

**Materials:** There is **no** textbook for this course. Instead all readings for the course will be available through the course's Sakai website (<http://sakai.rutgers.edu>) either directly or through the Rutgers Library (Note you can access Rutgers Library online resources remotely from off-campus by logging in on the Rutgers Library homepage). All readings are required unless explicitly stated otherwise.

**Communication about Assignments and Readings:** Announcements about assignments, readings, exams, etc... will be made via e-mail and/or through Sakai. All students are **required** to check their Rutgers e-mail and the Sakai website, I would recommend logging in at least once a day.

E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me: aagan@econ.rutgers.edu. You can also post questions in the “forums” section of the Sakai course site.

All e-mails regarding this class *must* have “CJ 307” in the subject - this helps me filter important e-mails so I can make sure to respond to you.

**Grade Distribution:**

In class assignments/participation	15%
Homework Assignments:	20%
Research Project Proposal:	10%
2 Midterms:	15% (highest score counts)
Final Exam	40%

**In class assignments/participation/quizzes:**

I expect that you will read all readings prior to the class session in which they are discussed. Class participation about these readings will count towards your grade. There may occasionally be pop quizzes, particularly if I get the impression that students are not keeping up with the readings and discussion.

Every week there will be at least one in class assignment, group discussion, or small out of class surveys or assignments for which you will be asked to participate. For the most part, simply keeping up with the reading and paying attention in class will get you a high score in this area. You can “drop” two activities from your score, but no make-ups or extra credit will be offered for missed quizzes/class/activities/discussions/etc...

In addition, on the course sakai website (<http://sakai.rutgers.edu>) there will be forums for discussion of in class materials, or mentions in the media, or in academic papers of the topics we are covering in class (labeled “Discussion Topics”). Throughout the semester, as part of your participation, you will be expected to substantively participate at least 3 times in these discussion. Participation is: posting a new (appropriate) article or topic to discuss, responding to a question, or responding to another comment in a way that moves discussion forward. These must be completed by the last class lecture. However, posting the full 3 posts on the last day of class will result in only half credit for this participation component - participate early participate often!

**Homework Assignments:** There will be 4 homework assignments throughout the semester. Your lowest score will be dropped.

**Research Project Proposals:** Towards the end of the semester you will be required to turn in a *proposal* for a research project that you would like to undertake that uses the skills and ideas you have learned in class applied to a criminal justice research question of interest. You do not actually have to complete the proposed project. Project proposals should be 2-4 pages in length, double spaced in 12pt Times New Roman font. We will workshop these proposals in small groups at some point before the due date. More instructions, including the due date, will be posted on Sakai and announced in class later in the semester.

**Midterm Exams:** Two midterm exams will be held during class time. Midterms are not strictly cumulative, though of course you often need earlier material in order to understand and perform later material. Only your highest score on the two midterms will count towards your final grade, however you must take both midterms to reap this benefit unless you have a valid excuse discussed with me in advance. Midterm dates will be announced in class and via Sakai at least 1 week before they happen.

**Final Exam:** The final exam is **Monday May 8 at 8:00am**. The final exam will be cumulative and include all announced readings, in class discussions, and lecture notes.

## Course Policies

- **Academic Dishonesty:** Please review the University's Academic Integrity policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>. Academic misconduct will be taken very seriously. Any assignment for which you are explicitly allowed to work in groups but told to turn in your write up means that it needs to be written up in your *own* words and turned in individually unless otherwise specified. You may not take any unauthorized materials into an exam.
- Given that you can drop one midterm exam (and assuming a valid excuse you can drop a 0) no make up exams will be provided except under extremely extenuating circumstances.
- If you have a final exam conflict (more than 2 final exams on one calendar day, more than 2 final exams in consecutive periods, or 2 exams schedule for the same time) please let me know as soon as you know and a make-up will be scheduled if required by the policies of the School of Arts and Sciences.
- **Regrading Policy:** If you believe your score on a mid-term or homework was penalized incorrectly, you may turn in the exam or homework with a typed, 1-page description of why you want a particular question regraded and a clear and complete explanation of why you believe you deserve more credit. These should be handed back to me in class or in office hours within a week of receiving the exam or homework. Obviously, if there is a simple addition error please bring it to my attention right away and I will fix it.

**University Resources:**

- **Students with Disabilities:** The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources. :<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, the office of disability services will provide you with a Letter of Accommodation. Please share this letter with me and discuss the accommodations with me as early in the course as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.
- **Counseling Services:** If you experience psychological or other difficulties as a result of this course, or because of other issues that may interfere with your performance in the course, please contact Rutgers Counseling, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) <http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu/home-2/>