

RUTGERS School of Criminal Justice

Professor: Brenden Beck, PhD (brenden.beck@rutgers.edu)

Teaching Assistant: Rosheka Faulkner (rnf32@scj.rutgers.edu)

Class location and time: Online, asynchronous

Office hours: Wednesdays 1:00pm-3:00pm or by appointment. In-person or on Zoom.

Office: Center for Law and Justice, Room 542

SCJ 27:202:522:90 Research and Evaluation, Spring 2024

Course Description

This course provides a basic introduction to research design in the social sciences, with an emphasis on criminology and criminal justice applications. Students will learn the steps required for framing an empirical question and be introduced to a variety of research methodologies. The course will provide equal emphasis on causal-explanatory, exploratory-descriptive, and qualitative designs, and students will learn the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Course Objectives

Through this course, you will:

- Detail the role of research and the value of evidence in understanding the social world.
- Evaluate and apply a variety of social research methods in a range of professional contexts.
- Critically assess research reports and research-based media claims.
- Demonstrate an understanding of research and professional ethics.

Requirements and Grading

20% – Presentation on a methodological debate

Once during the semester you will present the different sides of a methodological debate either alone or with a partner. You will choose the debate from a list I provide. You will read three or more articles weighing in on the debate and then produce a 10-15 minute presentation, with slides, to the class. See detailed instructions under the Assignments tab on Canvas. Every week that you don't present, you will respond to your fellow students' presentations with a short (one sentence) response or question.

20% – Exercises

Before most classes, you will have a short homework assignment to complete like finding research articles, writing down how you might use a method, or completing an ethics training. The exercises are listed on the syllabus and Brenden will elaborate on them the week before they are due.

20% of total grade – Discussion posts

There are no exams in this class, so the TA and I will assess your mastery of the readings and lectures through your posts to the Canvas discussion board. Each week, you will respond to:

- all the discussion prompts directly (i.e. before seeing other students' responses),
- one of your classmate's comments on the collaborative threads (these can be as short as "I agree!"), and
- that week's debate presentation (if there is one).

High-scoring posts are:

- concise (maximum one paragraph),
- thought-out and edited (**you cannot edit or delete your posts** once they're posted, so be sure to edit them thoroughly), and
- closely engaged with the course materials (use parentheticals to refer to specific pages in the reading or specific moments in the lectures).

Remember, these posts are how you show that you did the readings and watched the lectures closely. The week with your lowest discussion grade will be dropped from your total grade. This means you can skip one week without penalty if you'd like.

40% – Research proposal and presentation

The largest portion of your grade will be to write and present a proposal for a research project using three methods. Each method will answer the same (or a closely related) research question. The proposal should be 8-15 pages and the presentation should be 10-15 minutes. Many of your discussion responses and exercises will be useful starting points, and you are welcome incorporate them in your proposal verbatim. I will provide detailed instructions sheet and a rubric closer to the due date. The presentations are due May 9th at 5pm.

Letter grades follow the School of Criminal Justice's grading scheme (below). Percentages are unrounded.

| | |
|----|---------------|
| A | 90% to 100% |
| B+ | 87% to 89.99% |
| B | 80% to 86.99% |
| C+ | 77% to 79.99% |
| C | 70% to 76.99% |
| D | 60% to 69.99% |
| F | 0% to 59.99% |

Weekly Schedule

Each week covers a different topic, with a mix of readings and lectures on that topic, and discussion posts to demonstrate your knowledge of those readings and lectures. Most weeks will also have a student debate presentation that you will either create or respond to. Here is the schedule for each week:

Sundays, 9:00am

The week's course materials are released. If the week includes exercises, the prompt for those will be posted on Sundays. Read the discussion prompts first, read any texts

before watching the lectures and do all that before contributing to the discussions.

Thursdays, 5:00pm

Deadline for reading and/or watching all the course materials, writing your direct responses to the discussion prompts, and submitting your exercises (if any). This is also the deadline for your debate presentation if yours is the next week.

Fridays, 11:59pm

Deadline for responding to **one** of your classmates' discussion comments on the collaborative discussion threads and responding to that week's debate presentation. In other words, you have two posts due by this time.

Work Time per Week

As with most MA-level courses, one credit represents about three hours of academic work per week, so for our three-credit class, you should expect to do about nine hours of work each week. Some weeks will be more and some will be less. Online courses like this one are more flexible than in-person courses, but they are not easier. You'll have about 100 pages of reading in the typical week. This will require some extensive butt-in-chair reading time (what the Germans call [sitzfleisch](#)), so plan breaks and persevere through tough passages. I turn off my laptop's wifi and put my phone in a different room when I have a lot of reading to do. I find I read best first thing in the morning.

Required texts

The textbook to buy is Carr et al. (2021), the full citation of which is below. All other readings will be posted as PDFs to our Canvas page. Make sure to buy the 2021 second edition of Carr et al. It sells online for about [\\$50 used](#) and about \$75 new. I apologize for this expense, but it really is the best book, and all the other readings will be zero cost. Let me know if this expense is out of your reach and we will work something out. Do *not* buy the electronic version as that leads to extreme page number confusion. You will need the physical copy. We remember better when we read physical media anyway.

Carr, Deborah, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Benjamin Cornwell, Shelley Correll, Robert Crosnoe, Jeremy Freese, and Mary C. Waters. 2021. *The Art and Science of Social Research*. WW Norton & Company, 2nd edition.

Plagiarism and A.I.

Plagiarism of any kind will result in you failing the course. For more information, review Rutgers Newark's Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity [here](#). I will be using plagiarism detection software for your research proposals. You are allowed to refer to large-language models like Chat GPT if you would like but remember they "hallucinate" (i.e. make things up) and they are not drawing on the specific readings that we are.

Supports for Students with Disabilities and Students with Emergencies

See the last page of this syllabus for a list of helpful resources. If you have a disability and require accommodations in our class, register with the Office of Disability Services, and let me know early in the semester so we can work together to provide a supportive learning environment.

Contacting Brenden

I respond more quickly to email (brenden.beck@rutgers.edu) than Canvas messages. If you emailed me and haven't heard back in 48 hours, feel free to email me again.

Course Schedule

(This schedule is preliminary. See the Canvas modules for the finalized materials.)

Week 1 – week of January 16th – Introduction

No readings

Exercise 1: By Monday, January 22nd at 5pm, submit your top three debate choices via the Canvas assignment.

Exercise 2: By Monday, January 22nd at 5pm, complete the survey [here](#).

Week 2 – week of January 21st – Asking Research Questions and Theorizing

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 1: The Art and Science of Social Research."

- Closely read the section on choosing a question, pp. 22-23 & 26. The PDF of the first chapter is on Canvas, but you'll need to buy the book before February 4th. You can skip all the "Conversations from the Front Lines" in the Carr et al. book.

Luker, Kristin. 2009. "Chapter 1: Salsa Dancing? In the Social Sciences?" *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Harvard University Press.

- You can skim this chapter lightly. Save this PDF as we'll come back to it frequently. You do not have to do the exercises listed at the end of Luker's chapters.

Luker, Kristin. 2009. "Chapter 4: What Is This a Case of Anyway?" *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Pages 51-68.

- Note, this is not the whole chapter.

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 2: Research Foundations: Linking Sociological Theory to Research."

- Skip the second section on "Social Science Theory" p. 44-51.

Exercise 1: Write three research questions you might like to answer with your research proposal. These can change later. Follow Carr et al. and Luker's guidelines for good research questions. Submit them via Canvas assignments.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 3 – week of January 28th – Choosing a Method and Building an Argument

Luker, Kristin. 2009. Chapter 2. "What's It All About?" *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Harvard University Press. Pp. 22-39.

Krippner, Greta. Undated. "Making a Sociological Argument"
<https://dept.writing.wisc.edu/wac/making-a-sociological-argument-orienting-students-to-a-new-field/>

Freese, Jeremy, Brian Powell, and Lala Carr Steelman. 1999. "Rebel Without Cause or Effect: Birth Order and Social Attitudes," *American Sociological Review* 64: 207-231.

- Krippner references this article in her piece, so refer to it as you read the Krippner, but you don't have to read it thoroughly.

Optional: Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14(3): 227-249.

Exercise 1: Identify a book or article that you think is especially great. Post a citation and (if available) the PDF of this "north star" text to the Canvas discussion page. This might be an article from a criminology journal or a book by a criminologist, but it doesn't have to be. Post to Canvas discussion board about why this text speaks to you, who the author(s) is(are), and how it answers the six methodological choices (discussed week 2).

Exercise 2: Submit your finalized research question via the Canvas assignment.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 4 – week of February 4th – Research Ethics and Causality

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 3: Ethical Issues in Social Science Research."

Scheiber. 2023. "The Harvard Professor and the Bloggers." *New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/30/business/the-harvard-professor-and-the-bloggers.html>

American Society of Criminology. 2016. *Code of Ethics*.

- You can skim this

Corbetta, Piergiorgio. Excerpt from "Chapter 4: Causality and Experimentation." pp. 88-94.

Wolfers, Justin. "The Credibility Revolution in Economics." *Twitter* thread. 2021.
<https://twitter.com/justinwolfers/status/1447502684521652230>

Sampson, "Gold Standard Myths: Observations on the Experimental Turn in Quantitative Criminology." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*. 2010.

- This is dense reading that might require extra time. Read the introduction and "Implications and New Directions" sections closely and skim the sections on the three myths.

Exercise: Complete the CITI training (details via separate document).

Optional: Winship, Christopher, and Stephen L. Morgan. 1999. "The Estimation of Causal Effects from Observational Data." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25(1): 659-706.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 5 – week of February 11th – Conceptualization and Measurement

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 4: From Concepts to Models: Hypotheses, Operationalization, and Measurement."

- Do not read the whole chapter. Precise pages TBD.

Luker. "Operationalization" and "Generalizability," *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences* pp. 113-127.

- Content warning: the section on operationalization discusses rape in depth. Email Brenden if you'd like to skip this reading and select an alternate one.

Zapatka, Kasey and Brenden Beck. "Does Demand Lead Supply? Gentrifiers and Developers in the Sequence of Gentrification." *Urban Studies* 58(11): 2348-2368.

- Skim. How do the authors turn the three theories into measures? Are those measures a good fit for the concepts?

Exercise: Using research databases, find at least six articles, books, or book chapters from high-quality sources that address your research question. Complete a search log describing which terms you searched and which databases you used. You can use the Luker search log on p. 242 or design your own. I am also asking you to finalize your research question by this week. Post your final research question, search log, and a bibliography of the six sources to Canvas. You do not need to annotate the bibliography.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 6 – week of February 18th – Content Analysis and Sampling

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 6: Sampling Strategies."

Calarco, Jessica. Undated. "Academic Article Outline."

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 12: Materials-based Methods."

Exercise: Choose a scholarly article or book chapter (it can be a north star article or an article you found last week) and write an outline of how it is organized. You might use the article's headings to structure your outline. Include a short description of each of these elements (if they appear): the frame, research question, hypotheses, literature review, data (e.g. sample, cases, variables, and/or unit of analysis), methods, findings, and conclusions. Review Luker ch. 4 if you need a refresher on frames. Also note, roughly, how many words and sources the text uses. Post a citation to the article and your outline to the Canvas discussion page.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 7 – week of February 25th – Ethnography and Writing Literature Reviews

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 10: Ethnography."

Guest speaker: Dr. Johnna Christian.

Christian, Johnna. 2005. "Riding the Bus: Barriers to Prison Visitation and Family Management Strategies." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*.

Luker. 2008. "Reviewing the Literature." Pp 76-98 from *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*.

Reread Carr et al. "Reviewing the Literature" on pp 56-58. [You read this Week 2]

Optional: Contreras, Randol. 2012. "Getting the Shit" from *The Stick-up Kids*.

Exercises:

- (1) Identify an *Annual Review* piece and two ASC sections that overlap with your research and post them to Canvas at least an hour before class. Then, draw a "daisy" with the subfields of your research as described by Luker on p. 98 and include a picture of your daisy in the same Canvas post.
- (2) If you were to use ethnography to answer your research question, what would your field site be? Who would be some key informants? Would you be a complete participant, participant observer, observer, or covert observer? What is a challenge you foresee encountering?

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 8 – week of March 3rd – In-depth Interviewing and Focus Groups

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 11: In-Depth Interviewing."

Small, Mario. 2009. "'How Many Cases Do I Need?' On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-Based Research." *Ethnography* 10(1): 5-38.

Morgan, David L. 1996. "Focus groups." *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:129-152.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 9 – week of March 10th – Spring Break – no class

Week 10 – week of March 17th – Univariate and Bivariate Analysis of Quantitative Data and Writing Tips

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 13: Univariate and Bivariate Analysis of Quantitative Data."

Kliff, Sarah. 2014. "The Mystery of the Falling Teen Birth Rate." *Vox*, January 21st.

Williams, Joseph M. 2006. "Understanding the Principles of Clarity" from *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 9th edition. Pp 33-39.

Optional: Khan, Shamus. 2019. "Habits, Canvases, and Conversations: How I Think about Publishing." *Sociologica* 13(1): 21-27.

Optional: Zuckerman, Ezra. 2008. "Tips for Article Writers."

<https://mitsloan.mit.edu/shared/ods/documents?PublicationDocumentID=7627>

Exercise: Use Social Explorer to look at change in one neighborhood between 2000 and 2020. See the Module for more instructions and an example.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 11 – week of March 24th – Experimental Research

Guest speaker: Dr. Ethan Porter.

Review the Sampson reading from our discussion of causality.

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 8: Experimental Research."

Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5): 937-975.

Nyhan, Brendan et al. 2020. Taking Fact-Checks Literally But No Seriously? *Political Behavior*

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 12 – week of March 31st – Quantitative Analysis

Carr et al. 2021. "Chapter 16: Multivariate and Advanced Quantitative Methods." [This chapter is a PDF.]

Exercise 1: If you were to use multivariate analysis to address your research question, what kind of data would you use? Briefly search for datasets you could use. What would your sample be? What are at least two variables from the dataset you would analyze?

Exercise 2: The General Social Survey is a large, longitudinal survey of Americans' attitudes. Explore the GSS's Data [here](#) and identify three to six variables you might be interested in analyzing. Which would be your dependent/outcome variable, which would be your independent/explanatory variable(s), and which would be your control variables? Write out the path model and/or equation.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 13 – week of April 7th – Mixed Methods and Epistemology

Small, Mario Luis. 2011. "How to Conduct a Mixed Methods Study: Recent Trends in a Rapidly Growing Literature," *Annual Review of Sociology* 37: 57-86.

Fong, Kelley and Sarah Faude. 2018. "Timing Is Everything: Late Registration and Stratified Access to School Choice." *Sociology of Education* 91(3): 242-262.

Lauren Rivera and András Tilcsik. 2016. "Class Advantage, Commitment Penalty: The Gendered Effect of Social Class Signals in an Elite Labor Market," *American Sociological Review* 81(6): 1097-1131.

Matthew Desmond. 2012. "Eviction and the Reproduction of Urban Poverty," *American Journal of Sociology* 118(1): 88-133.

Small, Mario Luis, Erin M. Jacobs, and Rebekah Peeples Massengill. 2008. "Why Organizational Ties Matter for Neighborhood Effects: Resource Access through Childcare Centers." *Social Forces* 87(1): 387-414.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 14 – week of April 14th – Spatial methods and reproducibility

Baller, Robert D., and Kelly K. Richardson. 2002. "Social Integration, Imitation, and the Geographic Patterning of Suicide." *American Sociological Review* 67(6): 873-888.

Logan, John R. 2012. "Making a place for space: Spatial thinking in social science." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 507-524.

Dominus, Susan. 2017. "When the Revolution Came for Amy Cuddy." *The New York Times Magazine*.

Optional: Beck, Brenden. 2020. "Policing Gentrification: Stops and Low-Level Arrests during Demographic Change and Real Estate Reinvestment." *City & Community* 19(1): 245-272.

Debate presenter(s): _____

Week 15 – week of April 21st – Research proposals

Work on your proposal and presentation

May 9th – Research proposal and presentation due by 5pm

ESSENTIAL RESOURCES FOR RU-N STUDENTS – SPRING 2024

Accommodation and Support Statement

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Individuals Experiencing Disability: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers in order to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA to and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. This should occur as early in the semester as possible. More information can be found at the [RU-N ODS website \(ods.newark.rutgers.edu\)](https://ods.newark.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-5063 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Short-term Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to [University Policy 10.2.7](#). Students requesting a letter of verification should submit information using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/Verification>.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University's Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures located at <https://uec.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/60-1-33-current-1.pdf>.

For support related to Interpersonal Violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) can provide any student with confidential support. The office does **not** have a reporting obligation to Title IX. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based helpline available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. Students do not need to be a victim/survivor of violence; any student can receive services, information and support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/RUNReportingForm> or emailing careteam@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Psychological Support (Stress, Mood, Family Issues, Substance Use concerns and other personal challenges): The Rutgers University-Newark Counseling Center provides individual therapy and support groups for students dealing with psychological issues. To schedule an appointment, email counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or call (973) 353-5805. Additional support is available through Uwill services:

- ☐ Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- ☐ Urise: Wellness-based video collection with a free account.
- ☐ Umatch: Free teletherapy with flexible and convenient scheduling, starting with a free account.

Access Uwill@RUN at <https://my.rutgers.edu> using your Netid. Services are confidential and free.

For Emergencies, call 911 or Rutgers University Police Department at (973) 353-5111.