



**Department of Social Sciences
Criminal Justice Research Methods CRIJ 4322
Fall 2026
CAS 257
Tuesday & Thursday from 9:30 – 10:50**

Professor: Beatriz Amalfi Wronski, PhD

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Office Availability: Pre- and post-class periods AND by appointment

COURSE INFORMATION

This course relies on Open Educational Resources (OER). All materials used in this class are openly licensed and available to you free of cost.

Recommended Materials:

Bachman, R. & Schutt, R. (2024). The Practice of Research in Criminology and Criminal Justice (8th Edition). Sage Publisher.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to teach students the methods by which factual information is generated on crime and the criminal justice system. Topics include experiments, surveys, observation, unobtrusive techniques, measurement, statistics, data analysis, and ethics in research.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to complete the following:

1. Know and understand the main components of criminology and criminal justice research (i.e., literature review, research question, sampling, causality, measures, and operationalizations).
2. Understand the differences and importance of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering.
3. Develop and enhance writing skills to successfully apply course content to criminal justice-related topics.
4. Analyze and critically evaluate social science research.

5. Acquire a deeper understanding of ethical concerns of reaching hidden populations to address controversial questions within the field of criminology and criminal justice.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

After successfully completing this course, students will have acquired the following professional competencies:

1. Project Management
 - a. Management of time and tasks necessary for project completion
 - b. Oral and written communication of strategy, planning, and findings
 - c. Collaboration (effectively working with and learning from others)
 - d. Professional feedback
2. Critical Thinking
 - a. Problem definition (turning a broad concern into a researchable question)
 - b. Data collection and management
 - c. Interpretation and evaluation of information

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Possible Points</i>	<i>Actual Points</i>	<i>Grading Scale</i>
Weekly Points	110		A = 198 - 220 B = 176 - 197 C = 154 - 175 D = 132 - 153 F = 0 - 131
Research Project – Research Question	10		
Research Project – Article Choice	5		
Research Project – Methodological Evaluation	35		
Research Project –Brainstorming Worksheet	35		
Research Project – Pathways	10		
Research Project Presentation	15		
Total Points	220		

- I. *Weekly Points (110 points total; 10 points each):*** Weekly points represent a student's attendance, participation, and completion of in-class activities. Please note that attendance during the course is **required**. Remember that it is your responsibility to reach out to the instructor if you miss class or know you will miss it.
- II. *Research Project (110 points total):*** Students are expected to complete a research project this semester. The project is scaffolded into the following assignments (grading rubrics provided on Canvas):
 - 1. *Research Question & Justification (10 points):*** Find a topic of interest to you and propose a research question that can be scientifically studied. Include a paragraph justifying your choice [*Why are you interested in this topic? Why is this topic important? Where have you heard of this topic before (in class? At work?)*].

2. **Methodological Evaluation & Proposal:** It is very difficult to find a research topic that has never been explored before. Often, other researchers have at least indirectly studied the connection between the independent and dependent variables you were interested in. The goal of this assignment is to make sense of what has already been learned about a topic, evaluate methodological decisions, and use peer-reviewed works to inform your own research. For this assignment, you will:
- i. (At home) Find a peer-reviewed scholarly work that examines the same or a closely related question to the one you proposed. Submit your article for approval (**worth 5 points**).
 - ii. (At home) Read and annotate the article (what is the research question or article purpose? What is the population or sample being studied? What sampling strategy was used? What are the variables and the concepts being studied? How did the authors measure these variables? How was data collected?). Please note that highlighting an entire paragraph or writing “important” does not count as an annotation;
 - iii. (In class – Day 1) Evaluate the article (**worth 35 points**). Here you will go beyond identifying information provided by the authors and will provide an objective critique of the methodological choices made by the researchers. Your goal is to critically analyze whether the researchers’ choices were (a) appropriate to answer the research question, (b) whether they could be improved (and how), (c) what their strengths and weaknesses are, (d) whether the authors took into account any ethical concerns with their project, and (e) how can this study be used to inform your research project.
 - iv. (In class – Day 2) Design an original research plan by completing the “brainstorming worksheet” provided to you in class (**worth 35 points**).

3. **Pathways (CHOOSE ONE):**

- i. **Pathway A: Survey (10 points):** Students who wish to obtain more experience with survey research and quantitative data analysis should choose Pathway A to answer their research question. For this assignment, you will develop a survey capable of obtaining valid and reliable information about your independent, dependent, and control variables. Detailed information and a grading rubric will be provided on Canvas.
- ii. **Pathway B: Interview (10 points):** Students who wish to obtain more experience with interviews and qualitative data analysis should choose Pathway B to answer their research question. For this assignment, you will develop a set of questions capable of obtaining valid and reliable information that can answer your research question. Detailed information and a grading rubric will be provided on Canvas.

4. **Presentation (15 points):** Students will create a PowerPoint presentation designed to serve as a complete research proposal. Presentations will take place at the end of the semester and should be no longer than 10 minutes. Grades will be assigned based on content, delivery, and professionalism.

LATE WORK AND MAKE-UP POLICY

Students are not allowed to submit late assignments in this course. Similarly, there will be no make-up exams, unless in specific extenuating circumstances. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any expected absence during an exam or in-class activity so that the proper arrangements can be made. Students who wish to request an extension must email the instructor **before** the original assignment deadline and provide a **copy of their assignment** in its current state. If the student has made sufficient progress until that point, the instructor will provide an alternative timeline for the completion of the project. Do not wait to start assignments at the last possible minute.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Any technology or device, such as a laptop or tablet, is welcome in our classroom **if, and only if**, you are using it for class-related purposes. Please turn all mobile devices on vibrate or silent. Please police yourself and avoid texting or using your device for any other purposes. Also, headphones are not allowed during class periods. Please do not audio or video record class lectures.

CONTACT POLICY

The best way to contact me is via my university email (bwrnski@uttyler.edu). If you have **any** questions, feel free to contact me. You can expect a response within 24 hours on a weekday or within 48 hours on the weekend.

COURSE-SPECIFIC POLICIES

COURSE NOTES, MATERIALS, AND RECORDING POLICY

Any materials from this course developed by the professor or provided to the students may not be sold or distributed to other people. Also, note that this is a tentative schedule. I reserve the right to make changes at any point. All changes will be communicated to students as soon as possible.

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment Due
1	Tuesday, August 25	Syllabus Expectations	-
	Thursday, August 27	Defining research Research ethics	-
2	Tuesday, September 1	Ethics (continued)	Weekly #1 (in class)

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment Due
		Developing a research question	
	Thursday, September 3	Literature reviews Finding/Citing scholarly sources	Research Question & Justification (11:59 p.m.)
3	Tuesday, September 8	Literature reviews	Weekly #2 (in class)
	Thursday, September 10	Validity Reliability	-
4	Tuesday, September 15	Levels of measurement	-
	Thursday, September 17	Levels of measurement	Weekly #3 (in class)
5	Tuesday, September 22	Probability sampling	-
	Thursday, September 24	Probability sampling	Weekly #4 (in class)
6	Tuesday, September 29	Nonprobability sampling	Article submission (11:59 pm)
	Thursday, October 1	Nonprobability sampling	Weekly #5 (in class)
7	Tuesday, October 6	Causation	-
	Thursday, October 8	Causation	Weekly #6 (in class)
8	Tuesday, October 13	Survey research	-
	Thursday, October 15	Survey research	Weekly #7 (in class)
9	Tuesday, October 20	Qualitative methods	-
	Thursday, October 22	Qualitative methods	Weekly #8 (in class)
10	Tuesday, October 27	In-class “evaluation”	Article Evaluation (in class)
	Thursday, October 29	In-class “evaluation”	Brainstorm worksheet (in class)
11	Tuesday, November 3	Qualitative methods	-
	Thursday, November 5	Qualitative methods	-
12	Tuesday, November 10	Mixed methods Meta Analysis Meta Synthesis	Pathways (11h59 pm)
	Thursday, November 12	Secondary data and archival research	Weekly #9 (in class)
13	Tuesday, November 17	Evaluation research	-
	Thursday, November 19	Evaluation research	Weekly #10 (in class)
14	Tuesday, November 24	Thanksgiving holiday: no class	-
	Thursday, November 26	Thanksgiving holiday: no class	-
15	Tuesday, December 1	Delivering information	-
	Thursday, December 3	Delivering information	Weekly #11 (in class)
16	Tuesday, December 8	Research proposal presentations	Presentation slides (9h am.) Proposal presentations
	Thursday, December 10	Research proposal presentations	Proposal presentations

REQUIRED POLICIES

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Withdrawing from Class

Students may withdraw (drop) from this course using the Withdrawal Portal. Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions on using the Withdrawal portal.

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped includes those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. CAUTION #1: Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule. CAUTION #2: All international students must check with the Office of International Programs before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. CAUTION #3: All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. CAUTION #4: All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with the Military and Veterans Success Center.

* Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. **For this course, AI is permitted only for specific assignments or situations, and appropriate acknowledgment is required.** This course has specific assignments where artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT or Copilot) are permitted and encouraged. When AI use is

permissible, it will be clearly stated in the assignment directions, and all use of AI must be appropriately acknowledged and cited. Using AI tools outside of these parameters violates UT Tyler's Honor Code, constitutes plagiarism, and will be treated as such.

Final Exam Policy

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the Dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members must maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in place of a grade only when all of the following conditions are met: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all coursework or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor, and (c) the student presents these reasons before the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to meet all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has yet to be assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or NC. If the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis, this may adversely affect the student's academic standing.

Grade Appeal Policy

Disputes regarding grades must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade by filing a Grade Appeal Form with the instructor who assigned the grade. A grade appeal should be used when the student thinks the final course grade awarded does not reflect the grades earned on assessments or follow the grading scale as documented in the syllabus. The student should provide the rationale for the grade appeal and attach supporting document about the grades earned. The form should be sent via email to the faculty member who assigned the grade. The faculty member reviews the rationale and supporting documentation and completes the instruction section of the form. The instructor should return the form to the student, even if a grade change is made at this level. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the department from which the grade was issued. In situations where there is an allegation of capricious grading, discrimination, or unlawful actions, appeals may go beyond the Chairperson to the Dean or the Dean's designee.

of the college from which the grade was issued, with that decision being final. The Grade Appeal form is found in the Registrar's Form Library.

NOTE: The Grade Appeal Form is different from the Application for Appeal form submitted to the Student Appeals Committee, which does not rule on grade disputes as described in this policy.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical, and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler/> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <https://www.uttyler.edu/disability-services>, the SAR office located in the Robert Muntz Library, LIB460, email saroffice@uttyler.edu, or call 903.566.7079."

Military Affiliated Students

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. The Military and Veterans Success Center (MVSC) has campus resources for military-affiliated students. The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Students on an F-1 Visa

To remain in compliance with Federal Regulations requirements you must do the following:

- Traditional face-to-face classes: Attend classes on the regular meeting days/times.
- Hybrid Classes: Attend all face-to-face classes convened by the instructor according to the schedule set for your specific course.
- Online course: Only one online course can count toward your full-time enrollment. Students are expected to be fully engaged and meet all requirements for the online course.

Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the Student Conduct and Discipline policy in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

FERPA

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in University Policy 5.2.3. The course instructor will follow all requirements to protect your confidential information.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities

This course follows the practices related to Excused Absences for University Events or Activities as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Religious Holidays

This course follows the practices related to Excused Absences for Religious Holy Days as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Pregnant Students

This course follows the requirements of Texas Laws SB 412, SB 459, SB 597/HB 1361 to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting students. Part of the supports afforded pregnant students includes excused absences. Faculty who are informed by a student of needing this support should make a referral to the Parenting Student Liaison. NOTE: Students must work with the Parenting Student Liaison in order to receive these supports. Students should reach out to the Parenting Student Liaison at parents@uttyler.edu and also complete the Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form.

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>