

# CRIJ 3300 APPLIED RESEARCH METHODS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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## TERM PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

For this assignment, you will create several sections of a research proposal. You must write a short paper that states 1) your research question and hypothesis (if applicable); 2) the population of interest; 3) the units of analysis; 4) the variables of interest; 5) the background and rationale for your proposed project— **this section must include 4 outside references**; 6) your sampling strategy; 7) any potential threats to validity; 8) any possible ethical and practical issues; 9) any limitations of the proposed study; and 10) a reference page. The paper must also include a short survey consisting of 20-30 survey questions. Details about what I expect for each of these parts are listed below. **\*\*Please note that you are not actually going to conduct this project—it is just a proposal for a project. This assignment is worth 125 points.**

### Important date:

- Final draft due **5/8/2019 (prior to class submitted first to Safe Assign in BB)**.
- Submit hard copy of paper as the rough draft has(I recommend doing this early as this will run the paper through Safe Assign—this way you can check yourself for accidental plagiarism)
  - I will deduct 5 points from your total score for each day you are late submitting the paper on Blackboard up to a maximum of 35 points. If you are more than a week late submitting the paper on Blackboard, you will receive a 0 on the assignment.

### The paper:

The actual paper should be written in narrative form using APA format (i.e., full sentences, full paragraphs). This paper should be from 5 – 9 pages long. The paper should include each of the following sections. The sections should all begin with a bold-faced, centered heading.

1. **Research question:** In this section, you will tell me what your research question is. That is, what are you proposing to study?

- a. Remember, that this is a survey project. Hence, you must create a research question that can be answered using a survey.
  - b. Remember that surveys are good at capturing opinions, perceptions, etc.
  - c. Some research questions *will* have independent and dependent variables (e.g., “Are UTEP students that were raised by drug using parents more likely to smoke marijuana?”; “Are former victims of crime more likely to own guns?”). Other research questions are exploratory and *will not* have independent and dependent variables (e.g., “How do UTEP students feel about gun control?”; How should sex offenders be treated after release from prison?”).
  - d. For questions with independent and dependent variables, you must state a hypothesis or hypotheses.
2. **Population of interest:** In this section you will tell me the population that you are interested in finding something out about? For instance, is it all Americans? Is it all Texans? All El Paso residents? All college students? Etc.
- a. Remember that the population is the group that you are trying to find something about out. The sample is the group that you are actually surveying.
3. **Units of analysis:** In this section, you will tell me what units of analysis will your proposed study examine. Individuals, Groups, Social Organizations, or Social Artifacts?
4. **Variables of interest:** This section will likely be 1-3 pages long. Here you will tell me:
- a. What variables you will be collecting data on. If you have independent and dependent variables, clearly identify them. Also identify any control variables in your study—that is, variables that may have some influence on your results. Common control variables include demographic ones such as age, race, gender, and social class.
  - b. The key part of this section is for you to provide conceptual definitions of your variables. Do not assume that I know how YOU conceptualize these variables. Provide a clear definition of each variable so that I know exactly how you do and do not define them.
  - c. You should also note which of the survey measures relate to your variables.
  - d. Example: “In the present study I define drug use as the use of an illicit drug such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamine, as well as the use of prescription drugs in a manner not prescribed or the use of prescription drugs prescribed to other individuals. Survey questions 7-15 are measures of this variable.”

5. **Prior research/Rationale and Background:** For this section, you must find four outside sources that cover either your proposed topic/research question or something related to it. You must then provide short reviews of this literature that are 1-2 paragraphs long.
  - a. The four sources must be academic/scholarly sources. Websites, popular magazines, blogs, vlogs, newspapers, etc. do not count. Articles from peer-reviewed journals and books are appropriate.
  - b. The book assigned for the course does not count as an outside source.
  - c. I recommend going to Google Scholar and typing in your topic as the search terms. Most of the sources that come up are acceptable for this assignment. If on campus, there will likely be hyperlinks to the materials to the right of the respective articles that will take to a webpage wherein you can download them. If off campus you can go to this webpage <https://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=74367> and download the UTEP VPN onto your computer. Then connect through the VPN and you will be able to gain access to sources just as if you were on campus.
  
6. **Sampling strategy:** In this section you will tell me what sampling strategy you are going to use.
  - a. State what sampling strategy are you going to use.
  - b. Describe the sampling method.
  - c. Describe why it is appropriate to use.
  
7. **Threats to validity:** Discuss any potential threats to validity that your study design may face.
  - a. State at least **two** threats to validity that may affect the results of your proposed study.
  - b. Define these threats to validity.
  
8. **Ethical issues:** Discuss any ethical issues the proposed study may face and how you are planning to eliminate and/or minimize them.
  - a. Describe one or more ethical issues you may have to consider.
  - b. Describe what measures you would include in the study to counter these ethical issues.
  
9. **References**
  - a. The references must be in APA format. Please make sure to include all the references used in the study.

## Survey:

You must also include a survey that includes questions that can be used to collect data on the variables of interest and their relationships with each other. **This part of the term project is worth 30 points.** The survey should look as professional as possible. To this end, please be careful to pay attention to the spacing of questions, the ordering of questions, and the overall design of the survey. Also make certain to pay attention to whether your questions and answer categories are exclusive and exhaustive and are worded properly (e.g., no double-barreled questions). **The survey must include:** 1) Open and close-ended questions; 2) at least one contingency or matrix question; and 3) questions relating to all of your variables. The survey must include at least 20-25 questions. It is permissible to take questions from pre-existing surveys. If you choose to do this, however, you must provide a reference to the source where you located these examples on your reference page.

## Citation and references:

When using pre-existing questions or referencing the ideas of others that are not your own (as you will in the prior research/rational and background section) please use APA formatting. Refer to <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for APA guidelines. The reference section will be the very last part of the paper section of this assignment. **IMPORTANT:** Please only use APA formatting for your in-text and reference page citations.

## Writing:

This exercise will require that you write clearly and concisely. If you require assistance in writing, I strongly urge you to seek assistance from the writing center. You will be judged on grammar and spelling as well as content so make sure that you revise and edit your paper. **Do not use contractions!!!**

Writing suggestions for paper:

- Avoid first-and-second-person (*I, me, my, we, our*).
- Avoid slang and clichés (*since the beginning of time, putting the cart before the horse, better said than done, etc.*).
- Do not use contractions in formal writing (*can't, wouldn't, don't, etc.*).
- Be consistent with verb tense. A common mistake is to alternate between present and past tense.
- Make sure that you do not use plural verbs with singular nouns or vice versa.

- Avoid over-generalizing statements such as “Most people think” & “Everybody knows.”
- Answer the question that you are asked. Read exam and assignment questions carefully.

### **Format:**

The paper should meet the following formatting requirements. Points will be deducted for failing to comply:

- Must be typed!
- 12-pt. black Times New Roman font
- Double-spaced
- 1-inch margins all around
- Page numbered in top right corner
- Indent first line of each paragraph
- No extra lines between paragraphs
- Correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar

### **What you are going to turn in:**

This is how I want you to organize the various parts of the term project when turning it in.

1. Title page—please include the name of the assignment, your name, my name, the course number and name, and the semester. Please see below for an example title page.
2. The paper
3. The survey

Example title page:

Term project assignment

*Your name here*

R. Pastrana

CRIJ 3300 Applied Research Methods in Criminal Justice

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