

CJ 681: Thesis

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Office Hours:
Tuesday 9-11; 2-3
Wednesday 8:30-10:30
Thursday 2-3
Other days and times available by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course permits the student to undertake supervised research (field or library) in any area where there is no appropriate course.

**Students who wish to pursue the thesis option will be required to take CJ 679: Problem Report in order to develop the prospectus of the thesis under the guidance of a criminal justice faculty member. It is assumed that this faculty member will also serve as the thesis chair. Toward the end of the semester in which the student is enrolled in problem report, it is expected that the student will defend his/her prospectus to the potential thesis committee members.*

MEETING TIMES: Mondays 3:15, 732 Smith Hall

REQUIRED TEXTS:

American Psychological Association [APA] (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CRIMINOLOGY PROGRAM

Upon completion of the Master of Science degree in criminal justice, and in part emphasized and reinforced through this course, graduate students will be able to:

Exhibit specialized knowledge in the criminal justice and criminology field by

1. demonstrating advanced knowledge of the terms, laws, theories, processes, research methods, statistics, and key principles and (met by objectives c and e)
2. analyzing and critiquing concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and trends. (met by objectives b, c, and e)

Demonstrate oral, written, and analytic abilities by

3. evaluating contemporary criminal justice issues using analytical reasoning, problem solving, and effective communication skills; (met by objectives b, c, and e)
4. preparing and delivering a presentation using effective oral communication skills that contains sustained, coherent arguments or explanations; and/or (met by objective e)
5. interpreting descriptive and inferential statistical data. (met by objectives b)

Integrate and apply advanced knowledge of the criminal justice and criminology field by:

6. designing and producing an applied, investigative, paper or project with real-world implications that draws on scientific literacy, theoretical criminology, and research methods (met by objective e)
7. supporting the paper or project with appropriate information from the scholarly literature and using citations in APA format; and (met by objective a and d)
8. assessing and articulating the relevant public policy implications of that project. (met by objective e)

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES MATRIX

Course Objectives	How Practiced in this Course	How Evaluated in this Course
a. Students will <i>select</i> scholarly sources by using the library research databases.	Library database research and literature review draft	Final prospectus/paper
b. Students will <i>practice</i> research methods and statistical analysis skills.	Methods draft	Final prospectus/paper
c. Students will <i>compose</i> a professional research paper that includes an introduction, literature review, methods, results, and conclusion.	First complete prospectus draft	Final prospectus/paper
d. Students will <i>demonstrate</i> APA citation skills.	Reference page draft and first complete prospectus draft	Final prospectus/paper
e. Students will <i>produce</i> a defensible thesis prospectus or highly sophisticated research paper to be presented.	Drafts of the introduction, methods, literature review, etc.	Final prospectus/paper

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND DETERMINATION OF GRADES

To evaluate your progress in reaching the aforementioned course outcomes, you will be assessed in the following ways:

Literature review draft + references	15%	Grading Scale: 100%-90% = A 69%-60% = D 89%-80% = B Below 60% = F 79%-70% = C
Introduction + title page	10%	
Methods draft + abstract	15%	
Complete prospectus	45%	
Presentation/possible prospectus defense	15%	

COURSE POLICIES:

Emails and Teacher-Student Correspondence:

If you have any questions about the course material, exams, or assignments you may email me, visit me during my office hours, or schedule an appointment. If you email me, under most circumstances, I will get back to you within 24 hours. However, there may be times when I am out of the office (for meetings, class, or conferences), hence, delaying my response.

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend class and participate regularly. I understand that there are circumstances that may arise throughout the semester that prevent a student from attending class. Documentation of an excused absence can be obtained from the Dean of Student Affairs, MSC 2W38. Excused absences include: death or illness of an immediate family member, pre-approved university sponsored activity, athletics, academic activities, short-term military obligation, jury duty/court appointment, and/or religious holiday (see MU Undergraduate Catalog). Nonetheless, if you miss class it is your responsibility as a student to obtain any lecture notes or assignments that you missed on that day.

University Policies:

By enrolling in this course, you agree to the University Policies listed below. Please read the full text of each policy by going to www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs and clicking on "Marshall University Policies." Or, you can access the policies directly by going to http://www.marshall.edu/academic-affairs/?page_id=802

Academic Dishonesty/ Excused Absence Policy for Undergraduates/ Computing Services Acceptable Use/ Inclement Weather/ Dead Week/ Students with Disabilities/ Academic Forgiveness/ Academic Probation and Suspension/ Academic Rights and Responsibilities of Students/ Affirmative Action/ Sexual Harassment

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Course Assignments	Items Due
Week 1:	Review course syllabus and course requirements	
Week 2:	Recruitment	IRB application and abstract
Week 3:	Recruitment; refine literature review and methods	<u>Submit to IRB</u>
Week 4:	Recruitment; refine literature review and methods	
Week 5:	Collect data	
Week 6:	Collect data	
Week 7:	Collect Data	
Week 8:	Analyze Data	
Week 9:	Analyze Data	
Week 10:	Analyze Data	
Week 11:	Write results and discussion	
Week 12:	Write results and discussion	
Week 13:	Write results and discussion	<u>Submit for committee review</u>
Week 14:	No Class	
Week 15:	Prepare defense	
Week 16:	Present defense	
Week 17:	Submit revisions	

*The *Guide for Preparation and Submission of Electronic Theses and Dissertations* can be found on the Graduate College website.

Prospectus Guidelines

The Topic

Choose a topic related to your field of study and formulate a research problem for the topic. This may require that you spend a significant amount of time with the literature. You need to find the gaps in knowledge. In other words, what areas have not been researched or addressed? Discuss whether your research is explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, applied, or a combination of those listed. Then, define the major concept(s) and provide operational definitions for the major variables. Provide some detail about the possible methodology you will use to collect the data. The methodology doesn't necessarily have to be the one you will end up using, just brainstorm. Give at least three hypotheses you might have regarding the topic. Keep in mind that this is not permanent but will give you a starting point for your study.

Introduction

Just like your favorite novel, the introduction should be designed to capture the reader's attention. Why is this such an important topic to address? What makes this issue so wonderful?

One way to approach writing the introduction is by drafting an outline. Start at the very general level and give a broad description of the topic to be examined. Include some general statistics or cite some of the previous works on this topic. Then, become more focused with a problem statement and research questions. The Problem Statement and Research Hypotheses/Research Question should be subtitled and underlined accordingly. The problem statement should contain your thesis statement (i.e. a sentence that states the purpose of your writing/research). The section titled Research Hypotheses should contain the same hypotheses. If your study is not explanatory in nature, you may not have hypotheses, but you will need to state explicit research questions instead. Remember to be thorough. You may know this topic very well, but your audience may not.

Literature Review

For a graduate level literature review, the document should be at least 20 pages in length (and could be 30 or more for the final thesis) assuming there is a significant amount of information available on the topic. There are two main types of literature reviews to choose from-chronological or contextual.

Chronological

A chronological literature review highlights all the important studies that are relevant to the topic at hand. Obviously, this requires a detailed account of each study illustrating the progression that has been made from year to year (from the past to the present) in the research arena.

Contextual

A contextual literature review provides a way to present your study in context to what research has already been done. This literature starts very broad, becomes specific, and ends in general terms. This is not a blow-by-blow detailed account of every single piece of literature that exists in your topic area. Instead, you will need to synthesize the important aspects of the study, again that are relevant to your work.

You can start the literature review with a paragraph that outlines the organization of the literature section, followed by a description of those relevant studies and the findings that are applicable to your research. Again, what you are doing here is placing your research question or hypothesis into context of previous work in such a way that justifies what you are doing. Last, you will end with a summary paragraph that captures the literature that you have reviewed.

Methods

In this section of your paper, you will begin by including any information that is related to the participants (and/or other units of analysis) in your study. This includes who or whom (in some cases what) you will be analyzing. Are they male or female? Ages? Occupations? Newspaper clippings? Next, you will need to provide a statement or two about the research setting. Where will the research take place?

You must address and identify all key variables in your study. If you are doing an explanatory study, you will describe the independent and dependent variables. Remember to define your variables both conceptually and operationally.

In the sampling section of your paper you will need to identify the population that you will be sampling from and a description about how you plan to select and identify participants. There are a variety of sampling designs to choose from (i.e. simple random, stratified, etc). You will need to select a sampling procedure that is applicable to what you are researching. Also, you must include the advantages and disadvantages to the sampling design you selected.

If you are using an instrument such as a survey or interview guide, or some type of data collection instrument, you must provide a description of the tool. Then, you can explain how that tool will be used in the next section that describes the procedure. The procedure section will include the "what," "when," "where," "how," and "why" of your study.

Also, if you plan on using an instrument of some sort, you must include a discussion about how you plan to peer test or pilot the tool you want to use. Describe the instrument from top to bottom as if you were describing a vase or object.

The methods section is not complete without a discussion about reliability and validity issues. This is where you will address the limitations to your study, especially about the methods that you have selected. What are the problems or drawbacks to the study that you propose? What biases are involved?

A section that cannot go ignored is the human subject protection issues. You must address the threats, harm, or risks that you pose to the participants. (Even if you do not have participants, you need to make a statement about the fact that no ethical implications exist in your study). Also, you need to address how you will protect your participants and provide anonymity and confidentiality. You will need to discuss informed consent and any permission issues as well.

At this point, I will not expect a detailed description of the analysis you wish to employ. However, I do expect one or two paragraphs that outline your preliminary analysis plan.

Policy Implications

In the event that a prospectus defense is likely, some policy implications should be prepared. These do not have to be included in the document but understood for the prospectus defense.

Reference Page

The reference page must be typed and presented in APA (6th edition). All resources must be presented in alphabetical order.

Appendices

The kinds of items that you can expect to append, include cover letters, informed consent forms, letters of permission, data collection instruments, surveys, interview guides, etc.

Key Components of the Prospectus

Title Page: The title should be brief and informative. Try several titles before choosing one. The title page should follow the *Publication Manual of the APA* and the MU Graduate College thesis submission guidelines.

TABLE OF CONTENTS *(centered at the top of the page)*

ABSTRACT *(centered at the top of the page)*

Write the abstract after the paper has been written. Organization of the abstract should follow the organization of the paper but in extremely brief form: (1) clearly state the hypotheses that will be tested (or problems investigated or questions that will be asked); (2) indicate the number and characteristics of the participants (age, range, M/F, etc); (3) briefly describe the instrument and procedure; and (4) describe the major results that you anticipate. Neither abbreviations nor references are allowed in the abstract. Please note that the maximum length of the abstract should be about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page-double spaced.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION *(centered at the top of the page)*

Statement of the Problem *(flush left and underlined)*

Research Hypotheses/Research Questions *(flush left and underlined)*

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW *(centered at the top of the page)*

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS *(centered at the top of the page)*

(each topic below will be flush left and underlined)

Participants (could also be Social Artifacts or another unit of analysis)

Research Setting

Key Variables (If explanatory-Independent and Dependent Variables)

Sampling Procedure

Procedure

Instrument

Reliability and Validity Issues

Human Subject Protection Issues

Analysis Plan

REFERENCES *(centered at the top of the page)*

APPENDICES *(centered at the top of the page)*