

CRIMINAL JUSTICE 523 Masters Project Seminar Fall 2025

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is for Masters level students who have completed the Problem Analysis and Planning and Evaluation courses. The class is designed as a workshop/seminar in which students apply the skills learned in these classes to a final Masters project. The project is a criminal justice research endeavor led by the student, and facilitated by the professor. Projects will take different forms, depending on each student's interests, prior experiences in the field, or internship placements.

The class will largely be student directed, with the professor serving as a facilitator for problem solving and completion of the projects. Students are expected to be engaged and self-directed, working independently, and seeking assistance from the professor and other faculty members as needed.

SUMMARY OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

This is a 3-credit course. You will receive a letter grade. It is designed to be hands on and interesting, allowing you to apply much of what you've learned during your time at the School of Criminal Justice. We will discuss potential projects in early course meetings. The final product will be analytical rather than descriptive in nature, and will not be a literature review type paper. Students will complete human subjects research training through the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board (IRB), propose their research projects to the IRB, and ultimately receive approval through Non-Human Subjects Research designations. **IRB approval must be granted prior to gathering data.** Students will submit progress reports throughout the semester. The course will culminate in the submission of a final paper and presentation of research findings.

Successful IRB training completion (CITI).....	5%
Receive IRB approval for Non-Human Subjects Research Designation.....	5%
Research proposal.....	10%
Progress report 1 (Introduction and Literature Review).....	10%
Progress report 2 (Research Questions and Methodologies).....	10%
Progress report 3 (Results, Discussion, and Conclusions).....	10%
Final paper.....	25%
Presentation of findings.....	25%

Submit all assignments on Canvas by 11:59 pm on the date on which they are due.

The grading scale is:

A	90-100
B+	86-89
B	80-85
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	59 and below

In order to receive a satisfactory grade, you must meet the following course requirements:

Successfully pass the Rutgers IRB Human Subjects Training modules (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative).

Receive approval for your study from the IRB through the Non-Human Subjects Research designation.

Attend course meeting sessions.

Submit proposal and progress reports as indicated on the meeting schedule.

Attend scheduled meeting(s) with the professor.

Present results of your study.

Submit the final Masters project you propose.

CLASS PROCEDURES AND EXPECTATIONS

Class sessions will follow a seminar format with a great deal of participation. You are expected to be prepared to participate in class, and to treat other class members with courtesy and consideration.

We will meet as a group three times. Once in the beginning of the semester to orient the class, once in the middle of the semester to share progress with the group and receive feedback, and once at the end of the semester to make formal Power Point presentations about research findings. We will have an individual meeting (likely via Zoom) during the second week of the semester to discuss project ideas and research interests. Other individual meetings will take place as necessary throughout the semester. Both group and individual meetings are mandatory requirements for the course.

Prior to starting your project, you are required to pass the [Rutgers University Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative \(CITI\) Basic Course](#). [Log into the CITI program with your Rutgers NetID and Password](#). This training course familiarizes researchers with appropriate protocols for conducting research that involves human subjects. Proof of successfully passing the training shall be submitted to the professor at the first individual meeting session in the second week of the semester. The specific course that you need to pass is called “Social / Behavioral / Epidemiologic Research Investigators.” Students should submit their PDF certificates of course completion to Canvas.

The Masters Project Seminar course serves as a classroom exercise to familiarize students with the process of conducting applied research projects. As such, **students will not be able to use or present findings from projects outside of the class**. Additionally, student projects shall not include vulnerable populations such as imprisoned people or children, **and will pose no more than minimal risk to potential participants**.

To ensure that projects are approved by the IRB in a timely fashion, students should seek determination of their research to be “Non-Human Subjects Research.” [Students must login to the Rutgers University eIRB](#) to propose a study and select “Non-Human Subjects Research (NHSR)” as the submission type. A Quick Guide about the process can be found [here](#).

When asked whether your project qualifies as research (“Does the proposed activity constitute research according to the federal definition of research”) – you are answering “No” because this project is an in-class exercise to learn about the research process, and you are not contributing to a generalizable knowledgebase.

A one-to-five-page proposal is due near the beginning of the course, and sections of the final paper are due throughout the semester. Specifics about what to include in the proposal are presented in the schedule below and will be covered in the first class session. The proposal shall be submitted to the professor and will be used by students for their research summaries to get IRB approval through the Non-Human Subjects Designation.

Progress reports should reflect an approximation of a final product for each respective section. Follow standard rules about documentation and citation. If you are unsure about how to properly cite, please contact the professor for guidance and use helpful guides such as the one found [here](#).

The final paper is due at the end of the semester on **December 15**. The professor must approve any deviations from the proposed project. Final papers should be of a graduate thesis level in quality and between approximately 25 and 30 pages in length.

You are responsible for all announcements and class proceedings. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to obtain notes, handouts, and announcements as soon as possible. The class schedule is subject to change with appropriate notice from the instructor.

All assignments, except for the Power Point presentations at the end of the semester, are to be submitted via Canvas by 11:59pm on the date on which they are due. Submit your Power Point presentation to Canvas by 5:00pm on December 8 so that I can prepare for the in-person presentations that day. Late assignments will not be accepted.

ASSIGNMENTS

Week of September 15: CITI Training Completion

1. Go to the CITI website and take (and pass) the course “Social / Behavioral / Epidemiologic Research Investigators”
 - a. [CITI website](#)

September 22: Proposal (~1-5 pages)

1. An introduction to your project.
2. A statement of why the proposed research is important and addresses a criminal justice problem of interest.
3. A brief description of your proposed methodology(ies).
4. A statement about the subjects of your research.
5. A concluding paragraph with a summarization.

By September 29: Non-Human Subjects Research Application to IRB should be complete

1. Go to the eIRB website and propose a new study under the “Non-Human Subjects Research” type. Submit a synopsis of your research to the IRB. When asked about whether your research meets the federal definition of research you are answering “No” because this is strictly an in-class research exercise, and students do not use results outside of the class. If students need additional help with crafting their research synopses for the IRB, the DRAFT services team can help (in addition to the professor). The DRAFT team typically hold Zoom office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and are responsive to emails.
 - a. [eIRB website](#)
 - b. [Non-Human Subjects Research Quick guide website](#)
 - c. [DRAFT Services website](#)

Progress Reports

October 13: Introduction and Literature Review (~8-10 pages)

1. Introduce the subject/problem that you are exploring in your research.
2. Communicate the purpose, goals, and objectives of the proposed project and demonstrate its importance.
3. Review and evaluate relevant literature to demonstrate awareness of the state of current research in your problem area. Look for reviews that summarize a field (Annual Review papers for example) or meta-analyses as well as original research communicated in academic journal articles.
4. State how the project is expected to contribute to our collective understanding of your topic area.

November 3: Research Questions and Methodologies (~6-10 pages)

1. State the central research question(s) and any hypotheses (precise, testable). Describe your research design (i.e., description of the method(s) you will use to collect data) and provide precise details on how you will collect the data. Describe the population of interest, the sample, and the sampling technique that will be used. Discuss measurement and analysis.

November 24: Results, Discussion, and Conclusions (~8-10 pages)

1. Write about the results of your study and describe your findings. Use graphs, tables, and figures as necessary.
2. Describe the implications of your project for practice and policy. How will the broader criminal justice system benefit from your research project? What benefits will the research provide participants, those connected to them, and their communities?
3. Conclude your study with a summarization of findings, a reflection on prior work in the field of study you chose (i.e., your literature review), and how your project adds to our knowledge.
4. Review potential limitations of your study, and provide advice about how to address these limitations in future research.

December 8: Power Point Presentation of Research Findings (~15 minutes)

1. Present your research projects to your peers.
2. Presentations should be about 15 minutes in length and cover the totality of your projects: the introduction, brief synopsis of the literature in the area, your research questions, methodologies, results, discussion, and conclusion.

December 15: Final Assignment (~25-30 pages)

A revised proposal that integrates all of the revised progress reports into a coherent package.

Submission Guidelines

Language Statement: The Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice (SCJ) encourages students, faculty, and staff to use person-first and humanizing language in their verbal and written communications. Being mindful of the ways in which we describe people impacted by our criminal legal systems is an important step in restoring their dignity and humanity. This evolution of language is an important piece of broader systemic shifts that are needed to make our justice systems more equitable. We encourage replacing labels that refer to people as “offender,” “inmate,” “parolee” or related labels with more neutral descriptors such as “person convicted of a crime,” “incarcerated person,” and “person under parole supervision.” Additional details about why this is important can be found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Formatting: All assignments must be submitted on Canvas. Use Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, and left-justified only. Use in-text citations and follow American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines (e.g., Smith, 2021). All progress reports require a set of references that follow APA guidelines. Helpful resources about proper APA citation strategies can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Writing: The SCJ will hire a writing tutor in October. You can make appointments with the tutor through the university writing center. <https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>

Deadlines: Contact the instructor at least three days before an assignment is due if you are struggling to meet a deadline. Extensions are rare but may be provided on a case-by-case basis given extenuating circumstances. Late assignments receive a .25 penalty for each day late (e.g., a paper graded as 9/10 would receive 8.75).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Consult the School catalog regarding University policies about academic dishonesty and plagiarism and see the professor for guidance if you are not sure that you understand these policies. Any case of academic dishonesty, including the use of ChatGPT and other large language models to craft written work, will result in an appropriate reduction in the course grade and in referral to the University Judicial System. I will be using “Turn it in” to check that your submissions are original.

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 its 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 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 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). 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 help with absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

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, recovery from surgery, etc.). 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. VPVA is a confidential resource and 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. VPVA also maintains 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 to receive assistance; 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: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@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 to any RU-N student through Uwill services:

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

SCHEDULE

September 8: **Class meeting.** Introduction, identifying a project area, and research protocols involving human subjects. Preliminary discussion of project interests.

Week of September 15: **Individual meetings with professor.** Discussion about potential proposals and submission of proof of passing IRB CITI training.

September 22: No class. **Proposal due:** Students submit one-to-five-page proposal. Include title, synopsis and purpose of project, aims and goals, proposed research methodologies, methods by which subjects will be accessed and consent procedure (if applicable), and methods for ensuring the anonymity of research subjects.

This proposal will help with your research summary to be submitted to the Rutgers IRB for approval to conduct your research project.

September 29: No class. **Students Submit Non-Human Subjects Research Applications to the IRB by this point in the semester.**

October 6: No class.

October 13: No class. **Progress report due:** Students submit introduction and literature review sections.

October 20: No class.

October 27: No class.

November 3: **Class meeting.** Group discussions about progress. **Progress report due:** Students submit research questions and methodology sections.

November 10: No class.

November 17: No class.

November 24: No class. **Progress report due:** Students submit results, discussion, and conclusion sections.

December 1: No class.

December 8: Class meeting. **Presentations about research findings.**

December 15: **Final paper due.**