

CRIMINOLOGY 862-3 RESEARCH METHODS III: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN CRIMINOLOGY SPRING 2011

THE PROFESSOR

Your instructor is Dr. Ted Palys. To get in touch you can:

- Come by my office (SWH-10334)
- Send an email to palys@sfu.ca
- Leave an urgent message with the secretaries in the Criminology General Office, at 778-782-3213

My main teaching days this semester are Wednesday and Friday, while Thursdays are often meeting days, so those will be the best and most reliable days for finding me on campus. Generally speaking, email is the best way to get in touch.

THE COURSE

The “official” description of Crim 862 from the Criminology web site states:

This course will address a range of research techniques generally subsumed under the rubric of “qualitative” research including field research, interview techniques, historical and legal research, and documentary analysis. Emphasis will be on the logic underlying such inquiry, the advantages and limitations associated with different sources of information and procedures, and the processes by which analytical rigour is achieved.

I see Crim 862 as an advanced (but not *too* advanced ...) graduate seminar and workshop on qualitative research methods in criminology that should mix reading, discussion and experience. Some of my goals for the course include:

- Ensuring you understand the logic of qualitative inquiry and its distinctiveness from and complementarity to quantitative inquiry
- Exposing you to a range of techniques and approaches that are considered under the “qualitative” umbrella
- Introducing you to *NVivo*, a qualitative data analysis program
- Informing you about some ways the digital revolution has and may influence qualitative inquiry

- Exposing you to some of the sociology of knowledge issues that have arisen in relation to qualitative approaches and techniques
- Providing you opportunities to engage in qualitative research that is in keeping with your own interests and curiosities
- Providing you opportunities to further develop your writing and presentation skills

READINGS

There are two main sources of readings for this course. The first is a “basic” text that recognizes that, for many of you, this may be your first course devoted solely to qualitative research. The text is:

Berg, Bruce L. (2008). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (7th Ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson.

The Berg (2008) text is a useful overview of the “range of research techniques generally subsumed under the rubric of ‘qualitative’ research” and thereby provides a basic reference that offers a departure point for discussing the various issues and techniques that comprise the course.

Our other readings will deal with more “advanced issues.” I have a list of these in mind already, but will wait until after we meet for the first time, and discuss what your interests are, before I finalize the list. While you will be expected to do all these readings, for each reading one or more of you will be responsible for being the “expert” on that particular reading and leading discussion about it in class.

WEEKLY SEMINARS

We are scheduled to meet Wednesdays from 9:30 AM to 12:20 PM. Most of the time we will meet in the Faculty Conference room. The “typical” weekly seminar will include some mixture of: (1) discussion of readings; (2) discussion of “advanced issues,” typically with a presentation by me and/or one of the members of the class; and (3) discussion of your research projects. Periodically, we will also have an NVivo-based demonstration or lab that will be conducted in the classroom or Criminology Grad Lab. You are expected to keep up with readings and be ready to discuss them and ask questions in class; 20% of the course grade will reflect your participation.

COURSE WEB PAGE

I will maintain a course web page throughout the semester that contains notices of general interest to the class, links related to the course, and anything else that seems useful. It is to be considered the definitive source of what we have done and will be up to in any given week. The URL is <http://www.sfu.ca/~palys/crim862.htm>

COURSE EMAIL

The course email address is *crim862-g1@sfu.ca*. Any of you can write an email to that address (from your SFU account or when logged into your SFU address via SFU Webmail) and it will be received by me and everyone registered in the course. If your SFU email is not the one you normally use, please ensure you have set your SFU email to forward it to your preferred address. I will assume that anything I send to that address is received by everyone in the course.

TERM RESEARCH PROJECT

Doing a piece of research is the best way to understand the complexities that are involved. You will do one semester-long **research project** in this course, which will contribute a total of **60%** to your final grade in the course – this includes (a) a brief proposal you submit electronically as soon as you are able (and must continue re-submitting until it is approved) but no later than 3 February 2011; and (b) a written and presentation version of your final report.

PROPOSAL AND ETHICS REVIEW

According to the SFU Ethics policy, all research done at SFU must receive prior ethics review. For Crim 862, responsibility for that review has been delegated to the course instructor. Toward this end, before you start *formally* collecting data, you must submit a brief (2-page) proposal that identifies as much as you are able your topic area, the procedures you will follow, the sample this will involve, and any ethics issues you have considered in the formulation of your proposal. If your first proposal is not approved, you will need to revise and resubmit and continue in that manner until you submit a proposal that *is* approved. In the event you believe your research is exempt from ethics review according to SFU Policy R20.01, for this course you nonetheless must submit a proposal and outline the reason(s) you believe the exemption applies to your research. Your proposal should be sent to me electronically according to instructions you will find on the course web page.

Approval of your proposal will be contingent on you showing that you understand how criminology's professional standards with respect to research ethics apply to your area of research, and that your research is consistent with those principles as well as SFU's ethics policy. In most cases, this will involve you explaining what you will do to ensure **informed consent**, that **confidentiality** is protected, and that you have identified and addressed any **unique issues** that arise in the context of your particular research (e.g., conflict of interest; freedom of choice).

THE FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

Two versions of your final report should be prepared by the end of semester: (1) a presentation version that will be delivered in conference-style in a class colloquium we

will organize for the final week of the semester; and (2) a written research report that will be no more than **20 pages** long -- double-spaced, in 12-pitch font – roughly **5-6000 words**. Your final paper is due by Friday, 8 April. It should be sent to me electronically according to instructions that will be posted on the course web page.

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Requirement	Due	Value
Research Proposal/Ethics Review (electronic submission)	ASAP, but no later than 3 Feb	0%
Participation in class discussion		20%
Leading discussion of an article (from list supplied by instructor)	As assigned	20%
Term Research Project - class presentation - hard copy (electronic submission)	TBA 8 April	20% 40%
TOTAL		100%