

# ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

Criminal Justice 7350b - 001

Spring, 2014 – 41604

Meeting Time: 6:30 pm - 9:20 pm Wednesday  
Location: Hines 205  
Level: Designed for Doctoral students, but others are welcome  
Instructor: Professor Marcus Felson

## *Course Description:*

This course is designed to take the mystery out of planning academic research, interpreting results, preparing manuscripts, and the professional craft in general. I seek to teach you how to build the foundation for your research and writing, but also how to put your plan into practice. I explain how to focus your topic, how to set up an article or report, and how to design tables. This course should help you break down the tasks to make them manageable. Scholarship is a craft that can be learned. You already know parts of that craft. You will get better over time, but every new project can create some nervous challenge. I cannot protect you from creative suffering, but I can teach you some ways to solve problems and to make the process a bit more normal for you.

You will need to learn how to

- Find a reasonable topic
- Move from a general issue towards a specific researchable problem
- Break the project into manageable parts, and
- Address your academic audience in person and in print.

I draw your attention to two journals. *Public Opinion Quarterly* as a model social science journal, even though it is not about crime. The clear writing and tables in that journal offer a model for you to emulate. Also, the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* is the most improved criminology journal in recent years, and merits additional attention.

This course does not teach you simply to conform to my generation's performance. Criminology is in a process of major change, including

- Much bigger data sets
- Much more focused and disaggregated crime variables
- Better specified subsamples
- More maps and spatial analysis
- More on crime rather than just criminals
- More emphasis on crime situations and on co-offending than on lone individuals

I am preparing you for what I see as criminology in the future, not just for replicating what my generation did.

## REQUIREMENTS

Attendance is required, and you should email me if you are going to miss a class or be late, trying to minimize those events.

This course has no textbook, no term paper, and no specific assigned readings, but you will be asked to examine certain journals or ranges of journals. For example, I may ask you to look at all 2013 issues of the journal *Criminology* for examples of some phenomenon. I may ask you to check two years' issues of *Public Opinion Quarterly* to see how samples are written up.

Your weekly assignments will normally involve five to eight written pages, ten references, and five to ten minutes of class presentation. These assignments focus on acquiring the sixteen skills listed below in this order:

Skill 1 – Focusing on a problem

Skill 2 – Linking a problem to a larger literature

Skill 3 – From literature to problem to this particular study

Skill 4 – How to do your abstract and title

Skill 5 – How to write up a literature review

Skill 6 – Comprehending samples and relevant comparisons

Skill 7 – The concept of exposure to risk

Skill 8 – Controlling empirical temptation

Skill 9 – The art of describing data

Skill 10 - The craft of producing a table

Skill 11 – How to write up a table

Skill 12 - How to formulate an equation

Skill 13 – How to write up implications section

Skill 14 – How to do your powerpoints

Skill 15 – Giving a ten minute talk at a meeting

Skill 16 – How to keep growing, finding new ideas, and new topics

I have at least one out-of-town trip planned (third week in April) and there may be some other cancellations, but I am not attending the ACJS meetings this year.

END OF SYLLABUS