

# **CRIMINOLOGY 862-3**

## **RESEARCH METHODS III:**

### **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

### **METHODS IN CRIMINOLOGY**

#### **SPRING 2024**

### **THE PROFESSOR**

Your instructor is Dr. Ted Palys. If you need to get in touch to arrange an appointment, ask a question, or other important matter, the best way to get in touch is to send an e-mail to [palys@sfu.ca](mailto:palys@sfu.ca) or simply drop by my office. Email should be limited to arranging an appointment or making queries that can be answered in a couple of sentences or less; beyond that, a Zoom meeting would be better.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Designated **office hours** for the Fall semester are Tuesday and Friday afternoons from 1:00 to 2:00 PM, but grad students are welcome to come by any time I'm around and my door is open. Zoom appointments also can be arranged.

### **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. Although you are supposed to have the equivalent of our Crim 321 course (Qualitative Methods in Criminology) behind you, I have found it better to presume you likely have had minimal or no exposure to qualitative methods from anyone who actually uses them and understands their logic and what they involve. Some of my goals for the course include:

- Ensuring you understand the logic of qualitative inquiry and both its distinctiveness from and complementarity to quantitative inquiry

- Exposing you to a range of techniques and approaches that are considered under the “qualitative” umbrella
- Providing you opportunities to engage in qualitative research that is in keeping with your own interests and curiosities
- Informing you about some ways the digital revolution has and may influence qualitative inquiry
- Furthering your knowledge of NVivo
- Exposing you to some of the sociology of knowledge issues that affect and are affected by qualitative approaches and techniques
- Providing you opportunities to further develop your writing and presentation skills

## READINGS

There is no required text for this course. The main source of readings are internet-based readings available through our course web page.

If you do not have a background in qualitative methods and would feel better with an overview text to provide that background, here are two possibilities:

- Bruce Berg's *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. There are all sorts of used copies around, editions 4-7 can be purchased online for cheap, and, in the worst case scenario, edition 4 can be downloaded online. I don't always agree with Berg, and often disagree with him, so don't assume he speaks for everyone who does qualitative research.
- Another possibility is the book I used in Crim 321 (the undergrad version of Qualitative Methods) the last time I taught it: *Qualitative Research Methods (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)* by Monica Hennink, Inge Hutter and Ajay Bailey (2020).

If you would like to get a (optional) supplemental book that would help you in your term projects, then I would recommend a couple by Howard Becker. One that deals with the research process is called *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It* (1998: University of Chicago Press); another that deals with writing is called *Writing for Social Scientists* (1986: U of Chicago Press). You can get used copies of both through Chapters/Indigo or Amazon; the writing book is also available electronically through the SFU library.

## ONE-PAGERS

In most weeks when we have readings, I will ask you to take any one of those readings and write a single page reaction to it. It might be a critique, an aspect you found interesting, a connection you made between the article and your own work, an implication you would like to pursue. The only “wrong” answer here would be you summarizing the article; no need to do that as I already will have read it as well, i.e., don't tell me what it *says*; tell me what it *means* to you, if anything.

Double-spacing is fine on weeks when you don't feel you have as much to say; use single-spacing when you get a bit more verbose; but never exceed one page. It will work out best for both you and me if your submissions to me are spread through the week, but in any event you should endeavour to get the page to me the day before the related class begins (i.e., the day we talk about it), by sending me an electronic version as an attachment. When you do so, please name

the file <lastname\_firstname\_MM\_DD.format> where MM = month of class, DD = day/date of class, and format = whatever format your file is in (e.g., docx, pdf).

## WEEKLY SEMINARS

We are scheduled to meet Fridays from 9:30 AM to 12:20 PM in the Grad Lab. The “typical” weekly activity will include some mixture of: (1) discussion of readings; (2) discussion of “advanced issues” arising from the readings; and (3) discussion of your research projects (see below). You are expected to keep up with readings and be ready to discuss them and ask questions in class.

## COURSE WEB PAGE

I will maintain a course web page throughout the semester that contains notices of general interest to the class, links to the course readings, 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-q100@sfu.ca](mailto:crim862-q100@sfu.ca). Any of you can write an email to that address (from your SFU account) 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 **75%** to your final grade in the course – this includes (a) a brief proposal you submit as soon as you are able (and must continue re-submitting until it is approved) but definitely no later than 9 February; 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 me. In order to do this, I require you, before you start *formally* collecting data, to submit a brief (1-2-page) **proposal** that identifies as much as you are able your topic area, the ethically relevant procedures you will follow, the sample this will involve, and any ethics issues you have considered in the formulation of your proposal. When I say that you cannot “formally” begin collecting data, this does not preclude you checking feasibility, checking on participants’ preferences regarding various issues, and so on.

Note that, according to the SFU ethics policy, ***you cannot begin the formal data-gathering process until you have received ethics approval***. Thus, 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 your research is of a type that is exempt from ethics review (according to

SFU Policy [R20.01](#)), 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 15-20 minute presentation version that will be delivered conference-style in a class symposium we will organize for the end of semester; and (2) a written research report that will be no more than **8000** words (including abstract, body, references, footnotes).

A final version of your written report is due at the end of semester, ideally no later than April 15, but the later it comes, the less time I will have to write detailed comments. It should be sent to me electronically according to instructions that will be posted on the course web page.

### EXAMS

There are no formal exams in this course.

### EVALUATION SUMMARY

Requirement	Due	Value
Research Proposal/Ethics Review (electronic submission)	No later than 9 February	5%
Participation in/Contribution to Class Discussion and submission of One-pagers	Throughout Semester	25%
Term Research Project - class presentations - hard copy (electronic submission)	12 April 15 April	30% 40%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>