

**A Straightforward  
Approach to CJ Research  
Methods**



# A Straightforward Approach to CJ Research Methods

*Practices, Policies, and Procedures*

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# A Guide to Using This Book

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We do not want to lie: Research Methods is a tough course. I (Vanessa Griffin) have been fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to teach it several times over the past eight or so years. In fact, this past spring was my first semester *not* teaching Research Methods in over five years. In this time, I have come to realize that when first learning methodologies, it is important to keep the information simple and casual. It is hard enough to understand without a bunch of additional information added.

Over time, I have used different types of textbooks in Research Methods and have found that students seem to respond most to those that provide some explanations and examples, but not *too* many—otherwise, the original message might get lost in translation. In teaching the course, I have often found it is best to give the explanation and example before even introducing the terminology. I have observed that students grasp information more if the examples used are more “real life” type examples rather than “real research” examples. Lastly, I have discovered that sometimes professors (including myself) have assumed that the information you consume in Research Methods is easy to apply to your own research project, when, in fact, it is a lot more helpful to provide additional lessons on *how* to apply the information in developing your own research project.

Taking all this into account, Kyle Burgason and I have attempted to create a straightforward text that is a comprehensive introduction to research methodology in the social sciences. We have attempted to write the chapters on a more personal level, and we use a lot of casual language. Our hope is that it reads as though we are having a conversation with you. Research Methods is formal and complex enough—we do not think that additional formal and complex language helps anyone!

Since we are both criminologists, we tend to use criminology-based research for some examples (where appropriate); however, we are often using more real-life and/or pop culture examples. You will see a lot of references to friends, pets, television shows, and movies. We realized that we cannot assume how far advanced you are in your education. Your university might require that you are a senior to take this course, or you may be a freshman in your first semester. We cannot assume you have taken a bunch of criminology courses, so it would be hard to apply research methodologies to a bunch of courses that you have not yet taken. Therefore, we focused more on real-life examples: most everyone, regardless of where they are in their college career, can relate to friends, pets, television, and movies.

Lastly, the last four chapters of your book (Chapters 12–15) are, in a lot of ways, a separate book—they are to serve as a “how to” guide for research proposals. These chapters are not there for material to cover in class, but as a reference guide for you if you need to (in this class, or in another class) write your own research proposal.

## How to Read This Book

### Authors

We often will write our own personal stories and accounts in the chapters—so it is probably important that you know whether the stories are about Kyle or me (Vanessa). Each chapter has a bit of both of our writing, but here is an overview of the primary author for each chapter.

Chapter Number	Primary Author
1	Vanessa
2	Vanessa
3	Vanessa
4	Vanessa
5	Vanessa
6	Vanessa
7	Vanessa
8	Vanessa
9	Kyle
10	Vanessa
11	Vanessa
12	Kyle
13	Kyle
14	Kyle
15	Kyle

### Terms

Research Methods is not a course for the lazy student or the lazy teacher! You know how in some courses if you just make definition flashcards, you might be okay? Research Methods requires more than just naming and defining the term—you must understand it and apply it in examples. While important terms are marked in the textbook, you should read a few paragraphs before and a few paragraphs after the term to make sure you can define, explain, and apply the term. I know, I know—how annoying. One of the reasons to read a few paragraphs before is that we often will give you the example before we give you the term. Understanding something before having to be introduced to it can be helpful—you do not get wrapped up in fancy language and forget to understand its meaning.



## **BOB and JANE: Examples and Scenarios**

One way that we have tried to simplify things is by using consistent names for examples/scenarios in the main textbook chapters (Chapters 1–11): **BOB** and **JANE**. So, we are putting a BOLO (be on the lookout) for **BOB** and **JANE**—they are hints that we are providing you with a scenario/explanation of the material we have presented. **BOB** and **JANE** are bolded and in a different style from the rest of the material, so that it is easy to spot them. They take on different roles (Offender **BOB**, Professor **JANE**, Shady **JANE**, Student **BOB**, etc.); however, you should know that when you see their names, we have provided you with further explanation.

## **Our Hope Is That You Do Not End Up Hating Us**

We hope that you find this book useful in your Research Methods class (and other classes)—even if its utility is just as a doorstep. Thanks for reading this far—and we hope you find this book more helpful than harmful throughout your college career!

