

## Social Sciences Research Assignment – Criminal Justice

*This assignment helps students to remain objective while exploring competing perspectives in peer-reviewed journals.*

**Genre:** Expository writing

**Course Level:** Any

**Student Difficulty:** Moderate

**Teacher Preparation:** Intermediate level, provide resources to students & teach research skills

**Class Size:** Any

**Semester Time:** 8 weeks or longer (combine several assignments throughout the year to make one final research paper), or it can be only one standalone research paper.

**Writing Component:** Research project

**Close Reading:** Intermediate level

**Estimated time:** 8 hours

**Core Objectives:** Critical Thinking & Empirical and Quantitative Skills

### Exercise

- You will write a **scholarly** paper about deterrence and crime.
- You must remain objective, and do **NOT** include your own opinion. Do not use first person.
- You will be focusing on studies that have researched this topic through **experiments, vignettes, or the analysis of data**. Do not use recent or newsworthy events.
- **Comparison**
  - Obtain scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles that concluded that crime is deterred based on the threat of punishment. And then select three additional articles that **negate** these results where the authors did not find statistically significant evidence that deterrence is effective. Ultimately you are looking for articles that studied deterrence and its effects on crime to see if the threat of punishment prevents crime. You will summarize the articles' findings, for each article, for a total of **SIX** separate articles and discussions for this comparison.
- **Analysis**
  - Then you need to explain what has worked to prevent crime through deterrence methods, what has not worked, and what is promising for the future. You will select an additional three articles for this portion.
- This assignment is expected to help students remain objective when researching criminal justice topics, and to dissect scholarly journals from differing perspectives.
- You should have **AT** least six journal articles cited in-text, and within your bibliography page for your **comparison portion**. And an additional **three articles** to explain what works, what's promising and what hasn't worked (**Analysis**).
- The articles you cite should demonstrate a relationship, or lack thereof, between deterrence and the prevention of crime.
- You should cite articles that were an **experiment/study/quasi-experiment/analysis of data, etc.** Do **NOT** get articles that summarize opinions or generalize.
- 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1" margins, Double Space
- Cover Page with course title, your name (Cover page does not count towards your page count)

- Four pages minimum, not including cover page or bibliography page
- Six sources for the comparison portion and three articles for the analysis portion, for a total of nine sources for the entire assignment. If you need additional sources for an introduction, conclusion, or the analysis section, you may have more than nine sources.
- Include a bibliography AND in-text citations
- APA citation format
- DO NOT DIRECT QUOTE. Paraphrase in your own words; however, you must still cite in-text.

## RUBRIC

Any rubric could be formatted for this research assignment based on the professor's preference, but a general rubric is below.

### Scoring Rubric for Written Assignments

Content	Critical Thinking	Spelling and Grammar	Organization	Length
<b>Excellent 60 points</b>	<b>Excellent 10 points</b>	<b>Excellent 10 points</b>	<b>Excellent 10 points</b>	<b>Excellent 10 points</b>
All the required components of the paper were adequately addressed with full explanations. There were no APA in-text & reference page errors	Analysis (in-depth description of issue or problem); Inquiry (in-depth, accurate use of data, ideas, or alternative perspectives Evaluation (in-depth understanding and use of relevant arguments that lead to a relevant conclusion); Synthesis (in-depth conclusion that is well supported and logical); Creativity (in-depth use of new ideas or approaches that transcend the original task or problem)	If there were any spelling or grammar errors, they were insignificant	The paper was organized well with good paragraph structure and a good flow to the reading	The paper was closer to the maximum length than the minimum length and had good content
<b>Good 55 points</b>	<b>Good 8 points</b>	<b>Good 8 points</b>	<b>Good 8 points</b>	<b>Good 8 points</b>
A minor required component was missing, or there was not good explanation for at least one of the required major components. APA in-text citations & references were given but with minor errors	Analysis (Fully identifies issue or problem); Inquiry (Fully uses data, ideas, or perspectives); Evaluation (Fully uses relevant arguments that lead to a relevant conclusion); Synthesis (Fully communicates a conclusion and prior arguments); Creativity (Fully uses new ideas or approaches that are relevant to the task or problem)	There were a few spelling or grammar errors that were noticeable but did not detract from the paper	The paper was organized well and flowed well, but it may not have been broken down into enough paragraphs	The paper was more than the minimum length requirement

<b>Fair 50 points</b>	<b>Fair points</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Fair 6 points</b>	<b>Fair 6 points</b>	<b>Fair 6 points</b>
Important required components of the paper were missing or there were a few components not fully explained. APA in-text citations & references were given but with major errors	Analysis (Partially identifies issue or problem); Inquiry (Partially uses data, ideas, or perspectives); Evaluation (Partially uses relevant arguments that lead to a relevant conclusion); Synthesis (Partially communicates a conclusion and prior arguments); Creativity (Partially uses new ideas or approaches that are relevant to the task or problem)		There were a few spelling or grammar errors that were noticeable and detracted somewhat from the paper	The paper was not well organized with good succinct paragraphs or did not flow well because of poor transition or structure	The paper just barely met the minimum length requirement
<b>Poor 45 points</b>	<b>Poor/Failing 4 points</b>		<b>Poor 4 points</b>	<b>Poor 4 points</b>	<b>Poor 4 points</b>
Not all of the required components of the paper were addressed, nor were they fully explained. APA in-text citations & references were not given	Analysis (Does not identify the issue or problem); Inquiry (Does not use data, ideas, or perspectives); Evaluation (Does not use relevant arguments that lead to a logical or relevant conclusion); Synthesis (Does not include a conclusion); Creativity (Does not use new ideas or approaches that are relevant to the task or problem)		There were several spelling and grammar mistakes that detracted from the paper	There were either no paragraphs in this paper, or the organization was otherwise poor, making it difficult to read	The paper did not meet the minimum length requirements
<b>Failing Not more than 40 points</b>			<b>Failing 2 points</b>	<b>Failing 2 points</b>	<b>Failing 2 points</b>
The content of the paper was grossly inadequate with only cursory coverage of required elements and very little if any explanation of required components			There were a great number of spelling and grammar mistakes that detracted greatly from the reading of the paper, such that it was difficult to read	The organization of the paper was so poor as to render it almost impossible to read	The paper was considerably less than the minimum length requirement

## Teaching Reflection

**Difficulty:** Students may be confused about how to locate these sources, so it might be helpful to schedule a library instruction session with a reference librarian. Students may also have difficulty

understanding scholarly research and how exactly to find articles that found support or failed to find support for deterrence. I find it helpful to give students an example, with articles, to share with them. I find one that supports the discussion, and one that refutes it.

**Timing:** The assignment is usually completed in the latter part of the term, so you have adequate time to teach the students research skills.

**Sources:** The students should be focusing on peer-reviewed scholarly articles. I recommend the Sage Criminology Collection. This can be accessed via the online library at Collin College. The students should only focus on peer-reviewed journal articles rather than books, textbooks, newspapers, or websites.

**Response:** Students typically respond to this assignment with confusion because they may not have a lot of experience with reading and interpreting scholarly research. Also, students have reported that they were challenged with this assignment but learned a lot. I have noticed that almost all the students remained objective.

If you would like to contact me for more information, please email me at [slemaire@collin.edu](mailto:slemaire@collin.edu).