Department of Criminology & Criminal Justice
Master of Science
Comprehensive Examination

STUDY GUIDE AND EVALUATION RUBRIC

Date: Friday, October 11, 2019
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
This study guide contains a set of potential questions for the MSCJ comprehensive exam. You must pass this exam in order to graduate with a master’s degree in Criminal Justice at UA (non-thesis option).

1. **Pre exam**: Select which questions you would like to study for the exam. Only one of the questions listed for each course will appear on the actual exam. You will be required to answer TWO questions relating to the core courses and ONE question relating to the electives. Reading lists for each course have been provided to help with your preparation.

2. **Exam**: Submit a MINIMUM of FOUR double-spaced typed pages for each question, with the exception of the Statistics question, which does not have a minimum requirement.

3. **Note**: You will not be able to bring notes, study guides, or books into the exam.

Your comprehensive questions will be graded on the following rubric. You should prepare your answers accordingly. In general, answers to comprehensive exam questions will be graded based on the following PRIMARY criteria:

1. Quality of response (how well do you answer the question?)
2. Clarity of response (is your answer coherent and intelligible?)
3. Application of existing scholarship and readings (do you cite the relevant literature?)
4. Demonstration of classroom learning (do you demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the topic area?)

Some SECONDARY criteria relate to your ability to:

1. Think creatively and apply the theories and concepts you learned in appropriate or novel ways
2. Apply statistical tools to evaluate social problems, policies and/or programs
3. Use critical thinking skills for analysis

Please pay attention to spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and organization.

**Remember**: This is a closed book exam.

**GOOD LUCK!**
CORE COURSES
(Must answer two questions relating to core courses)
  581 - Applied Statistics
  584 - Criminological Theory
  586 - Research Methods in CJ
Statistics CJ 581

QUESTION #1

Table 1 presents the results of OLS regression analyses examining the determinants of individuals’ perceived risk of criminal victimization (i.e. the degree to which they think they may be the victim of a crime). The dependent variable is an additive scale composed of six questions asking the respondents how safe they think they are when they engage in a number of everyday activities, such as walking alone in their neighborhood, followed by five response categories ranging from very safe to very unsafe. The scale ranges from 0-30, with higher values indicating higher levels of perceived risk. The independent variables are measured as follows:

- White is a dummy variable coded as white or non-white, with non-white = 0 and white = 1.
- Female is a dummy variable, white female = 1 and non-female = 0.
- Income is the monthly household income, from all sources, in dollars.
- Previous Victim is a dummy variable indicating if the respondent was ever the victim of a violent crime. Previous victimization = 1, no prior victimization = 0.
- Fear is an additive scale ranging from 0 to 30 with higher values indicating a greater baseline level of fear of crime, irrespective of perceived risk of victimization.
- Precautions is an additive scale ranging from 0 to 30 indicating the number of things that the respondent reports doing to protect themselves from crime (such as having a security alarm at their residence).

Using the data from the table:

a. Explain why the researcher presents three separate models. What is the purpose of each one?
b. Interpret all of the statistics presented in Model 2. Are they statistically significant? What do they tell you about the relationship between that variable and the dependent variable? Is the overall model significant?
c. What do the interaction coefficients added in Model 3 tell us about the relationship between gender, fear, and perceived risk of victimization? Note the dichotomous nature of the female variable. How does this impact the interaction effect values for males and females?
d. Which model explains the most variability in perceived risk of criminal victimization? Why?
Table 1: OLS Regression Coefficients of Perceived Risk of Criminal Victimization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>.372</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td>.550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.484***</td>
<td>1.777**</td>
<td>10.723**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-203.543</td>
<td>-256.002</td>
<td>-315.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Victim</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.525***</td>
<td>.861***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precautions</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-1.172***</td>
<td>-.926**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear*Female</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-.587**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precautions*Female</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-.349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>16.525</td>
<td>18.259</td>
<td>13.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.320</td>
<td>.343</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: standard errors in parentheses, standardized coefficients in brackets; n=350
* p<.05  ** p<.01  ***p<.001
QUESTION #2

It is 10 years in the future and you are working as a criminal justice practitioner. Your supervisor asks you to measure the efficacy of a new diversion program. The program has already been implemented and there are data from a treatment and control group. You are interested to see if the program is effective in reducing recidivism as measured by a count of new offenses in the next 12 months. You are also interested in the impact that gender (male or female), age (in years), and highest education degree competed has on recidivism. Using this information, answer the following

1. What is the independent and dependent variable for measuring the efficacy of the program?
2. At what level of measurement is each variable measured?
3. What is the appropriate measure of central tendency for each variable? Why are some measures of central tendency not useful for certain levels of measurement?
4. What is the appropriate statistical test to compare each of these bivariate relationships?
   a. Program participation and recidivism
   b. Gender and recidivism
   c. Age and recidivism
   d. Highest degree completed and recidivism
5. When applying each of these tests, what do you need to interpret and how do you decide if it is statistically significant?
6. Pretend that the bivariate relationships are all statistically significant, how would you describe what these relationships mean to your supervisor? You can make up the nature of these relationships.

READING LIST

QUESTION #1

1. Taking into account what you learned in CJ 584, provide a thorough discussion of the following aspects of one (1) criminological theory in which you are well-versed:

   A. Introduction:
   Introduce the reader to the purpose, utility, and importance of criminological theory. Then, name the theory that you selected and the criminal activity to which it will be applied.

   B. Theory Explained:
   Present a summary of the theory, including the theory’s hypotheses, propositions, and major concepts, and how the postulated constructs operate (alone and/or in combination) in explaining crime and/or criminal, delinquent, or deviant behavior. Be sure your complete and thorough discussion specifies the full causal process, emphasizes the most important points of the theory, and highlights the most important explanatory factors (if any are specified).

   C. Evaluation:
   Use material in Brown, Esbensen, and Geis (2013) to evaluate the criminological theory that you selected. Where appropriate, back up your conclusions and arguments using evidence from the textbook or empirical research. When discussing the empirical validity of the theory, draw some general conclusions concerning the degree to which past research supports or refutes the theory.

READING LIST


QUESTION #2

After a long period of declining crime in the United States, many cities have seen a sharp increase in violent offences. Gun-related crimes are particularly on the rise. Criminologists are puzzled by the crime wave, but report that unemployed young men account for much of the increase. Using Conflict Theory as your conceptual framework, write a four-page, double-spaced essay as follows:

1. Background.

   Describe the origins of Conflict Theory and the European and U.S. criminologists who built this canon of theoretical thought. How has the theory changed over time? Where does the theory stand in modern criminology? Identify at least FOUR tenets of the theory that can be used for analysis.
2. Analysis.

Using these tenets of Conflict Theory, reflect on the historical conditions in which violent crime is a raced, classed, and gendered activity in U.S. society. Focus on macro-criminological conditions rather than the individual as a unit for analysis. Link the present crime wave to the Conflict Theory in modern context.

3. Policy.

Summarize your arguments and make two recommendations for addressing the current crime wave that would be useful for community interventions.

READING LIST

Research Methods CJ 586

QUESTION #1

The Tuscaloosa Police Department has requested a preliminary study to determine whether Community-Oriented Policing (COP) placed in communities would (1) increase citizen rapport with the police and (2) reduce crime in those communities. As a researcher, you are asked to develop a research proposal/design that could be used to measure the effect of community-oriented policing on citizen rapport and crime rate. Develop your proposal by addressing the following questions below:

I. Identify the research question, the experimental variable(s), and the outcome variable(s). Operationalize the COP program on a nominal scale by showing what components would make up your community oriented policing program. Identify and show the operationalizations of citizen rapport and crime rate on a nominal, ordinal, interval, or ratio scale. One way to do this is to develop three questions that measure crime rate and three questions that measure citizen rapport and indicate what scale of measurement you would use for each question.

II. State two separate positive or/and negative hypotheses. State (word) the hypotheses in testable form. Using the classical experimental design, show and explain the model by using Xs, Os, etc. You must be specific here and explain the entire model using the exact name of the variables, groups, and specify exactly what you are going to pretest and posttest. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages (limitations) of using the selected experimental model.

III. Explain the procedures used to select the community groups by discussing the concept of matching or equivalence. Also identify what variables you will use to match the communities. Why is it necessary to have the groups matched?

IV. Discuss sampling and data collection. What type of sample would you use and explain the sampling procedures used to compose the sample. For example, if you wanted to measure citizen rapport, what type of sample would you use and what procedures would you use to compose the sample? Also, what type of data collection method (face-to-face interviews, mailed questions, etc.) would you use and how would you distribute the questionnaire or conduct the interview and retrieve the data (explain the data collection procedures)? How many times would the data be collected and why? How would data be collected to measure crime rate?

V. Identify and discuss mortality, testing effect, and selection bias as threats (same as control variables or extraneous variables). Do not define the threats but use clear examples of how the threats may impact the results of the study. How would the lack of controls for the threats to internal validity and external validity influence the results of the study?

READING LIST

QUESTION #2

Participant observation (qualitative research) has gained some momentum during the last decade. Assume that you are interested in conducting research on the daily experiences of inmates incarcerated in a maximum-security prison. In other words, you are interested in observing inmates’ behavior in their nature environment. Also, assume that you are infiltrating the group as a correctional officer when, in actuality, you are a researcher. How would you address the following?

a. Formulate a research question
b. Explain procedures/steps used to gain permission from various entities to conduct the research study
c. How would you prepare yourself to conduct a research study of this nature?
d. Type of participant observation used and why
e. Explain whether the research is inductive or deductive
f. Discuss the role of objectivity and subjectivity in the research study
g. Discuss the role of reactivity in the research study
h. Human subject issues (e.g., confidentiality, invasion of privacy, voluntary participation)
i. Going native
j. Gatekeepers (roles and disadvantage of such roles)
k. Field notes, recording, and mnemonics
l. Debriefing
m. Discuss the research advantages and disadvantages of conducting participant observation research.

READING LIST


ELECTIVES
(Must answer one question relating to electives)

CJ 505 Gender & Crime
CJ 506 Terrorism
CJ 590 Forensic Science
CJ 590 Media and Crime
CJ 590 Justice in Practice
CJ 590 Crime Mapping
CJ 590 Immigration and Crime
QUESTION #1

In “Crime as Structured Action”, Messerschmidt outlines the principles of structured action theory, a theory that he uses as a framework for explaining the gender projects of different men or groups of men who participated in criminal activity. In this answer, discuss the main points of structured action theory, including definitions of the different types of masculinity and femininity. Then, discuss the gender projects of men or groups of men in two of Messerschmidt’s cases and how each of these juveniles’ gender projects influenced their decision-making processes. Your answer should discuss how engaging (or not engaging) in criminal activity is an expression of gender, as well as a description of how the social context affects the expression of gender for each case.

Reading List (include, but not limited to):


QUESTION #2

In the Gender and Crime course, you learned about feminist theories of crimes. Why do proponents of these theories believe that they are needed in addition to traditional theories of crime? Pick one of these theories and apply it to a particular criminal offense. Additionally, describe feminist methods of studying crime and what these methods seek to discover about the offender and the offense.

READING LIST (include, but not limited to):


QUESTION #1

Consider globalized politics and modernized business practices as an explanation for terrorism. Describe some of the reasons why this may have caused or contributed to the recent conflict between Western powers and Islamic terrorists. Is there a clear “right” and “wrong” here, or do both sides have some legitimate reasons to be frustrated? If you would like, you might also consider making parallels between the anger raised by these issues in the Islamic world and similar backlashes over change within the U.S. itself.

QUESTION #2

Consider clashes over religion as an explanation for terrorism. Describe some of the reasons why this may have caused or contributed to the recent conflict between Western powers and Islamic terrorists. Is there a clear “right” and “wrong” here, or do both sides have some legitimate reasons to be frustrated? If you would like, you might also consider making parallels between the anger raised by these issues in the Islamic world and similar backlashes over change within the U.S. itself.

READING LIST

- *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* excerpt.
- “Sitcom Planet” article.
- “Gender, Terrorism, and War” article.
- “Killing at Sexual Range” chapter.
- “Religion as a Cause of Terrorism” chapter.
- Class notes.
- Class handouts.
Forensic Science CJ 590

QUESTION #1

What is “Forensic Science” (FS)? Offer and support a definition of the term. Identify and discuss at least three different classes of evidence offered by FS in the investigation of crime, giving examples of each. Discuss the impact of FS on the operation of the criminal justice system over the last 100 years.

QUESTION #2

Select any appropriate historical event on which a forensic investigation was conducted (i.e.: the great Chicago fire of 1871 or the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows bridge etc.). Identify at least 2-3 piece of forensic evidence critical to the invitation. Discuss techniques of collection, the role of custody, the techniques used to assess the evidence (i.e.: Mass Spectrometry-Gas chromatography, Harmonic resonance specification etc.) and the theory underling the evidentiary conclusions (i.e. the tetrahedron theory of fire).

READING LIST:


QUESTION #1

Some argue that entertainment media is only that—entertainment. Others argue that entertainment media influences public perceptions and potentially policy. Given the proliferation of shows, movies, podcasts, etc. that focus on crime and justice issues, entertainment media may be particularly important to consider as criminologists.

1. What is the theoretical explanation for why and how media would influence the public?

2. Based on the empirical research available, is one side clearly right? What is the evidence to support each perspective?

3. What are some of the challenges to identifying the influence that media have on the public? Can we ever pinpoint this? Why or why not?

QUESTION #2

For centuries, news media have been the primary source of crime information for the public. While there are benefits to this, there are also a number of drawback and issues that arise from how news media cover (or neglect to cover) crime.

1. Trace the history of crime news media over the last few hundred years.

2. Identify some of the major historic issues with news media representations of crime.

3. Discuss how these issues have persisted, changed, or disappeared in more recent decades. What new challenges or issues have emerged during this time?

4. Provide a few concrete examples of evidence showing that news media misrepresent crime as it actually occurs and discuss how this may influence opinion and policy.

READING LIST

Anything on the syllabus that helps to answer the question. At least 6 (probably more) sources are needed to answer either question adequately.
QUESTION #1

Analyze the police legitimacy crisis in the United States. Be sure to draw on relevant theoretical literature as well as empirical research to examine the ways in which police behavior shapes the public’s perceptions and the public’s willingness to cooperate with the police.

READING LIST


- “A Rising Storm” from Harvard Kennedy School Case Program


- U.S. Department of Justice “Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department”

- Wakeham, Joshua. “Institutional Corruption in the Criminal Justice System: The Case of Ferguson.”


- Zaki, Jamil. September 15, 2015. “When Cops Choose Empathy” from The New Yorker:
QUESTION #2

Analyze the ways in which justice principles interact with the practical functioning of the court. Examine both the ways in which ideas or principles shape law and policy and the ways in which practical demands push back against or constrain principles.

READING LIST


Immigration and Crime CJ 590

QUESTION #1

Analyze the crimmigration crisis in the United States. Draw from relevant theoretical literature as well as empirical research to examine the ways in which immigration policy and criminal law have converged to (re)shape criminal sanctions for immigration-related conduct and criminal grounds for removal from the United States.

READING LIST


QUESTION #2

Analyze the ways in which the policing and surveillance of immigrants intersects with issues of human rights. Examine the ways in which law enforcement tactics are bolstered and/or constrained by external forces (e.g., citizens, landscapes, media, corporate politics) to exacerbate human rights issues while simultaneously alleviating responsibility and liability.
READING LIST

Crime Mapping CJ 590

QUESTION #1

A map layout is intended to provide enough information so that your audience is able to understand the story being conveyed. However, a map is only as good as the data quality and the ability for the analyst to consolidate a lot of data into a readable and useful map that provides the reader with knowledge that is easy to decipher from the map developed.

1. When developing a map, what are some considerations in design, and what are four key elements that should be on every map?

2. Explain what is meant by the term “data cleaning” and explain why this is such an important step in the crime analysis and map making process.

3. What would be your three major concerns when creating a crime map that showed the locations of high density of crime?

QUESTION #2

Crime mapping and GIS are tools used within law enforcement to identify crime hotspots as well as predict future problem areas.

1. Discuss the different audiences (at least 2) you may have to cater to as a crime analyst and describe one map you might make for each audience.

2. Outline 3 ways that maps depicting the demands placed on law enforcement by the community can be helpful.

3. Explain the two areas where most of the problems lie with crime mapping within law enforcement.

READING LIST
