Library Research Skills for Criminology
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Overview
1. Scholarly journals & other sources
2. Citing: Why and how
3. Choosing a topic (you will need to refine or revise!)
4. Searching (and refining your search)

Scholarly journals
This assignment requires you use:

- Scholarly research journal articles, to investigate a criminology theory
- Note:
  - Court decisions and legislation are authoritative sources, but do not provide the scholarly analysis that your instructor requires for this assignment.
  - Today our main focus is searching a sociology database (and other databases, if needed).

Citations: ASA Style, with a touch of McGill
Criminology & sociology researchers follow the American Sociological Association Style Guide. Scholars follow these to:

- Show their own place in the sociological conversation
- Acknowledge sources of ideas, to avoid plagiarism

The databases will format ASA references for you, but you must refer to an ASA guide and fix errors.

- If the database doesn’t give an ASA option, use Chicago (the closest), and modify following the ASA guide

If you are citing legislation or a court decision, follow the Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation, (also called the “McGill Guide”). Find examples under:

- Library.vcc.ca → Using APA, MLA... → Legal Citation
- Or libguides.vcc.ca/crim → Legal Citation Basics (McGill Guide) tab

Please consult with your instructor or your legal/crim librarian if you have questions about referencing.

- Note that I will not check or correct your citations for you—that is part of the grading system—but I will help you find and use suitable examples.
- Set up an appointment via koldenburg@vcc.ca or drop by the library & I might be available
Choosing your topic & developing a search statement

Choose a topic that is interesting to you. Get ideas from your experiences, the textbook, or lectures.

Write a search statement about something that you could research.

If you’re not certain yet, you can make this general, but you will need to refine the topic once you find some articles.

1. Come up with a search statement or question. Identify the criminology theory you will use (from lectures or your textbook).
   
   Example: How does social exclusion theory help us understand recidivism amongst Canadian young offenders?
   
   [Note that this statement is a bit too general, but I can get more specific as I get ideas from search results]

   **Your search statement:**

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

2. Identify concepts from your search statement
   
   Example: social exclusion; youth crime; recidivism; Canada

   **Concepts from your statement:**

   ______________________________________________________________

3. List related words and synonyms for each concept from your search statement
   
   Example:
   
   Social exclusion
   
   Recidivis*
   
   Youth or young or teen* or adolescen*
   
   Canad*

   **Related words & synonyms for words from your statement:**

   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

Note that I do not use the word “crime”. That is implied by recidivism, so an article title/abstract probably won’t include both words.
Searching library research databases for sociology

VCC Libraries subscribe to many research databases, peer-reviewed journal article databases, such as *Canadian Journal of Sociology* and *Canadian Review of Sociology*.

From the library homepage – library.vcc.ca – select Articles & Resources by Subject ➔ Sociology ➔ Go

These are the research databases:

Sociology database; Canadian business & current affairs database; Academic search complete

**Sociology database** is most relevant so let’s start with that:
4. Make sure you’re in **Advanced Search** (white screen, two big search boxes). Click **Advanced Search** if you need to:

Enter your search concepts.

- Put words with similar meanings together in one search box with **or**
- Put each concept in a **different search box**
- Use **Add a row** to add more search boxes, to enter additional concepts
- Select **Peer reviewed**
- Click **Search**
5. Look at your results, then **Modify search** to make the list shorter or longer.

![Search bar with example query: "social exclusion” AND recidivis* AND canad* AND (youth OR young OR teen* OR adolescen*)

57 results

- Modify search
- Recent searches
- Save search/alert

6. For example,
   - I can **Add a row**, and another concept to make it more specific
   - I can delete the theory; maybe I will have to do my own analysis, using the textbook’s explanation of the theory, or delete Canada, and look at how criminology scholars have analysed youth recidivism in other countries, then combine that with other studies of youth recidivism in Canada, for my own analysis.
   - I can widen a concept by adding other terms for it, in the same search box, with **OR**
     - Example: recidivis* OR “repeat offen*”

![Search bar with modified query: "social exclusion" AND recidivis* OR "repeat offen*"]

7. Explore other database features, like **Publication date; Document type; Language**, etc. (along left)

8. When you find something that looks relevant, click **cited by**, to find related articles:

![Article citation: Schools, Pupil Behaviour and Young Offenders: Using Postcode Classification to Target Behaviour Support and Crime Prevention Programmes]

9. Click an article title for more information

![Article title: Schools, Pupil Behaviour and Young Offenders: Using Postcode Classification to Target Behaviour Support and Crime Prevention Programmes]
10. Email the article to yourself. **Copying & pasting the URL will not work.**
   - Click **Cite** and copy the citation. **Remember to check it against a guide!**
   - Look under **Related items** to find similar articles
   - Click **Find it at VCC** if there’s no full text. This checks other databases or links to ILL form

11. Explore other research databases, like **Academic Search Complete**,  
    a. or do a search in **Lexis Advance Quicklaw**, then look under **CA Secondary Materials** for legal analysis

12. Use the **Request this item through interlibrary loan** link if there is not a full text article.