

**Special Topics: Introduction to Forensic Psychology
Psychology 461
Fall 2012**

Class: Online Course
Instructor: Shilpa Krishnan, Ph. D. (skrishn6@gmu.edu)
Office Hrs: Mondays & Thursdays 7:30-8:30pm or by appointment, via telephone.
Videoconferencing appointments available by request.
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Official Communications via GMU E-mail: Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Learning Community

In this online course, each week begins on Monday. Each week officially ends on Sunday of that week. Late assignments will not be accepted once the week has ended. Working online requires dedication and organization. Students must check their GMU email messages on a daily basis and communicate any questions or problems that might arise promptly.

Netiquette

In our online learning community, we must be respectful of one another. Please be aware that innocent remarks can be misconstrued. Sarcasm and humor can be easily taken out of context. When communicating, please be positive and diplomatic. I encourage you to learn more about Netiquette.

Course Description

This course provides student with an introduction to and overview of the field of forensic psychology. In its broadest sense, forensic psychology entails the interface between psychology and the justice system – including legal proceedings, law enforcement agencies, and correctional institutions. Attention will be given to the ways in which psychologists have or can influence this system in terms of such issues as assessment of competency and insanity, legal decision-making, jury composition and related issues, police selection, eyewitness testimony, criminal behavior, correctional psychology, and juvenile and family legal matters.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course students will be expected to:

- Identify the challenges associated with merging the fields of psychology and law.
- Discuss the roles that psychologists can play in a forensic context.
- Describe the empirical and clinical contributions that psychology has made and can make to the justice system.
- Identify the various forensic psychological evaluations conducted in the justice system.

- Understand the complexity of factors that contribute to criminal behavior and the challenges associated with predicting criminal offending.
- Describe the knowledge base psychology has provided for jury composition and decision-making, as well as for processes such as eyewitness identification and interrogation.
- Discuss psychological issues present within correctional institutions, as well as law enforcement agencies.

Course Requirements:

A. Quizzes. There will be **SIX** online quizzes that are scheduled every other week (see schedule portion of the syllabus). Each quiz will cover the two preceding chapters that were covered. The exam format will consist of multiple-choice questions. You will be allowed to drop your lowest quiz. Thus, each one of your five highest quiz scores will constitute 4% of your final grade (for a total of 20%).

B. Discussion Board. Due to the online format of this class, you will not attend any classroom lectures. As such, class participation, and your understanding of the readings and lectures will be assessed primarily through your participation in the discussion board. Participation in the Discussion Board constitutes 24% of your grade.

i. Organization of Discussion Board: By the first day of class, you will find that you are assigned to one of four groups (Groups A, B, C & D). This will be your Discussion board group for the semester.

ii. Requirements: Each week, I will pose a topic to the discussion board. On a rotating schedule, one group will be responsible for responding to my initial post by **Wednesday** of each week. Your post must answer the initial question in a scholarly and concise manner, and should range from 400-500 words of text. Initial posts should contain references to the readings, news/other media, and/or information from previous classes. I will respond individually to students who posted the initial discussion posts. Students in the other three groups (i.e., who were not responsible for individual posts), will respond to their classmates posts. These posts should be three to four sentences at least, and should also contain substantive material (i.e., from the readings, lecture or other sources). Simply stating your opinion on the quality of the post (i.e., “I like your idea”, or “Good post”), will not earn you full credit. I may respond to some of these subsequent discussion threads. Peer responses are due no later than **Saturday** of each week. Students are free to respond to more than the one required post. I reserve the right to assign bonus points to students who are active in the discussion board, or who provide especially thoughtful/well-written posts on a consistent basis.

iii. Grading Rubric: There are 12 total discussion questions. Each student is responsible for **THREE** initial postings, which are worth a total of 30 points. The grading for these postings is as follows:

0- Does not meet expectations. Student did not respond to initial post in a timely manner.

2- Below Expectations. Student responded to post on time, but it did not answer the question appropriately, and did not apply any knowledge from readings, lecture material, or other sources.

4- Marginally Meets Expectations. Student’s response answered the question in a somewhat relevant way, and applied some knowledge from readings, lecture or other sources.

6- Meets Expectations. Student’s response answered the question relevantly, applied knowledge from readings, lecture, or other sources, and made a good contribution to the overall discussion.

8- Above Expectations. Student's response provided a thoughtful, meaningful response to the question, incorporated elements from readings, lecture, media, and other sources. Quality of writing is very good.

10-Far Exceeds Expectations. Student's response provided a thoughtful, meaningful response to the question, incorporated elements from readings, lecture, media, and other sources, contributed to the group discussion in a lively way, and was exceptionally well written.

Each student is responsible for posting at least ONE peer discussion each week, for a total of 18 points. The grading for this is as follows:

0- Did not complete the assignment

1- Posted at least one peer discussion that met the basic requirements, as stated above

2- Posted at least one peer discussion that was thoughtful, provided some synthesis of the material, and contributed meaningfully to the group discussion

*In the first week of class you will be required to post a brief autobiography in the "Blog" section of Blackboard. In this assignment, you will introduce yourself to the class, stating your major, any experiences you may have related to Forensic Psychology, what interests you most about the topic of Forensic Psychology, and your favorite show or movie related to Forensic Psychology. This assignment is worth 1% of your grade.

C. Group Presentation. You will be required to conduct a brief literature review and submit a group presentation on a topic that is related to forensic psychology. I will post the list of topics (8 topics, 8 groups of 5) on 9/2/12. Please sign up on the posted spreadsheet for the topic of your choosing, by 9/16/12. By this date, all the groups should be formed, and I will set up the eight groups within blackboard so that members can communicate with each other. The format of the presentation will be a powerpoint presentation with an audio recorded presentation OR a video presentation. The group presentation will last for approximately 15 minutes and will adhere to all APA publication guidelines. I will post more detailed instructions about the presentation format by 9/16/12, and I will also be happy to set up time to talk to students individually about the presentation. Students are also responsible for submitting written peer feedback for ONE presentation. I will compile the peer feedback along with my feedback and email it to the presenting group to preserve confidentiality. The peer feedback schedule is as follows:

Group #1 will be evaluated by members of Group #4

Group #2 will be evaluated by members of Group #5

Group #3 will be evaluated by members of Group #6

Group #4 will be evaluated by members of Group #7

Group #5 will be evaluated by members of Group #8

Group #6 will be evaluated by members of Group #1

Group #7 will be evaluated by members of Group #2

Group #8 will be evaluated by members of Group #3

The presentation will constitute 25% of your final grade. If you do not submit peer feedback to your assigned group presentation, an automatic 5% will be deducted from your INDIVIDUAL grade (in other words, the rest of the group will not be penalized on account of one individual).

E. Final Exam. There will be a final exam scheduled ON CAMPUS on Saturday December 8th, 2012 at 10:30 am in Robinson Hall B202. The final exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions, and will be cover material from readings, lecture, and class presentations. Students are expected to come to campus to take the final exam. Exceptions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances (such as an individual who is living out of state). It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor AS SOON AS POSSIBLE if you cannot make the on-campus final exam due to a special circumstance. In this, an alternate form of the exam will be given, which will consist of essay questions. The final exam will constitute 30% of your final grade.

Course Grading

Percentage Grade	Letter Grade
95-100%	A
90-94%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
60-69%	D
≤59%	F

Required Texts:

Bartol, C. R., & Bartol, A. M. (2012). *Introduction to forensic psychology: Research and Application, 3rd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Required Articles and Chapters: (Available online)

American Psychology-Law Society: Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychologists
<http://www.ap-ls.org/links/currentforensicguidelines.pdf>

Huss, M.T. (2001). What is forensic psychology? It's not silence of the lambs. *Eye on Psi Chi*. Retrieved from http://www.psichi.org/pubs/articles/article_58.aspx

Otto, R., & Heilbrun, K. (2002). The practice of forensic psychology: A look toward the future in light of the past. *American Psychologist*, 57 (1), 5-18.

Snook, B., Cullen, M., Bennell, C., Taylor, P., and Gendreau, P. (2008). The Criminal Profiling Illusion: What's behind the smoke and mirrors? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35:1257-1276.

Optional Texts:

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual* (6th ed.). Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association. (APA)

Technology Requirements:

Hardware: You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to hear recorded content and a headset with a microphone is recommended for the best experience. For the amount of Hard Disk Space required to take a distance education course consider and allow for: 1. the storage amount needed to install any additional software and, 2. space to store work that you will do for the course. If you are considering the purchase of a new computer, please go to <http://itservices.gmu.edu/services/services-students.cfm> to see recommendations.

Software: This course uses Blackboard as the learning management system. You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the myMason Portal. See supported browsers and operating systems. Log in to myMason to access this course. Access to a Computer Workstation with: Web browser (See Blackboard supported browsers and operating systems), Adobe Acrobat Reader (free download), Flash Player (free download), Windows Media Player (free download), Microsoft Office Word (purchase). Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

Student Expectations:

Academic Integrity: Students must be responsible for their own work, and students and faculty must take on the responsibility of dealing explicitly with violations. The tenet must be a foundation of our university culture. [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/distance>].

Honor Code: All students in this course are to become familiar with and follow the University's honor code, which does not tolerate any form of cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation. [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode>].

MasonLive/Email (GMU Email): Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. [See <https://thanatos.gmu.edu/masonlive/login>].

Patriot Pass: Once you sign up for your Patriot Pass, your passwords will be synchronized, and you will use your Patriot Pass username and password to log in to the following systems: Blackboard, University Libraries, MasonLive, myMason, Patriot Web, Virtual Computing Lab, and WEMS. [See <https://thanatos.gmu.edu/passwordchange/index.jsp>].

Responsible Use of Computing: Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu>]. Students are expected to follow courteous Internet etiquette.

Student Services:

University Libraries: University Libraries provides resources for distance students. [See <http://library.gmu.edu/distance>].

Writing Center: The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>]. You can now sign up for an Online Writing Lab (OWL) session just like you sign up for a face-to-face session in the Writing Center, which means YOU set the date and time of the appointment! Learn more about the Online Writing Lab (OWL) (found under Online Tutoring).

Counseling and Psychological Services: The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu>].

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), also known as the "Buckley Amendment," is a federal law that gives protection to student educational records and provides students with certain rights. [See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/privacy>].

CLASS SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPICS	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1: 8/27/12-9/2/12	Introduction and Overview	Bartol & Bartol Chapter 1 Huss, M.T. (2001). What is forensic psychology? It's not silence of the lambs.	-Orientation Quiz -Autobiography Assignment
Week 2: 9/3/12-9/9/12	Police Psychology	B&B Chapter 2 pp. 34-76 Otto, R., & Heilbrun, K. (2002). The practice of forensic psychology: A look toward the future in light of the past.	-Discussion Board #1 (Group A) -Quiz #1 (Chapter 1&2)
Week 3: 9/10/12-9/16/12	Investigative Psychology	B&B Chapter 3 pp. 77-116 Snook, B., Cullen, M., Bennell, C., Taylor, P., and Gendreau, P. (2008). The Criminal Profiling Illusion: What's behind the smoke and mirrors?	-Discussion Board #2 (Group B) -Sign up for your presentation topic
Week 4: 9/17/12-9/23/12	Consulting & Testifying	B&B Chapter 4 pp. 118-153	-Discussion Board #3 (Group C) -Quiz #2 (Chapters 3&4)
Week 5: 9/24/12-9/30/12	Consulting With Criminal Courts	B&B Chapter 5 pp. 154-186 American Psychology-Law Society: Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychologists	-Discussion Board #4 (Group D)
Week 6: 10/1/12-10/7/12	Consulting with Juvenile and Civil Courts	B&B Chapter 6 pp. 187-226	-Discussion Board #5 (Group A) -Quiz #3 (Chapters 5&6)
Week 7: 10/8/12-10/14/12	The Development of Habitual Criminal Behavior	B&B Chapter 7 228-267	-Discussion Board #6 (Group B)

Week 8: 10/15/12-10/21/12	Psychology of Violence and Intimidation	B&B Chapter 8 pp. 268-303	-Discussion Board #7 (Group C) -Quiz #4 (Chapters 7&8)
Week 9: 10/22/12-10/28/12	Psychology of Sexual Assault	B&B Chapter 9 pp. 304-340	-Discussion Board #8 (Group D)
Week 10: 10/29/12-11/4/12	Forensic Psychology and the Victims of Crime	B&B Chapter 10 pp. 342-366	-Discussion Board #9 (Group A) -Quiz #5 (Chapters 9&10) -Presentation # 1 & 2 Due to Instructor via Email
Week 11: 11/5/12-11/11/12	Family Violence, Abuse and Victimization	B&B Chapter 11 pp. 367-400	-Discussion Board #10 (Group B) -Presentation # 3 & 4 Due to Instructor via Email -Feedback for Presentation #1 & 2 Due to Instructor via Email
Week 12: 11/12/12-11/18/12	Correctional Psychology in Adult Settings	B&B Chapter 12 pp. 402-445	-Discussion Board #11 (Group C) -Quiz #6 (Chapters 10&11) -Presentation # 5 & 6 Due to Instructor via Email -Feedback for Presentation #3 & 4 Due to Instructor via Email
Week 13: 11/19/12-11/25/12	Happy Thanksgiving! There are no formal assigned readings or discussion board questions during this week. Please use this time to prepare for the final exam. I will be available as usual, via phone, email, and video conferencing.		-Presentation # 7 & 8 Due to Instructor via Email -Feedback for Presentation #5 & 6 Due to Instructor via Email
Week 14: 11/26/12-12/2/12	Juvenile Corrections	B&B Chapter 13 pp. 446-470	-Discussion Board #12 (Group D) -Feedback for Presentation #7 & 8 Due to Instructor via Email
Final Exam	Saturday December 8 th , 2012 at 10:30 am in Robinson Hall B202		