

**Psychology 461 – Introduction to Forensic Psychology**  
**Course Syllabus – Fall 2006**  
**Theresa Lichtman, Ph.D.**

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Class Location: Robinson Hall A248  
Class schedule: Thurs. 7:20 – 10:00pm  
Office Hours: Thurs. 6:15 – 7:15pm

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is intended for advanced undergraduate psychology majors who are interested in forensic psychology. The focus of this course will be to examine the relationship between psychology and the legal system. Particular emphasis will be given to specific psychological evaluations conducted for the criminal and civil courts.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Course readings, assignments, and class discussions facilitate the following goals:

- To survey the major areas of interest shared by psychology and law
- To become familiar with different types of forensic psychological evaluations conducted in criminal and civil cases.
- To become familiar with some of the landmark legal cases that impact forensic psychologists.
- To be introduced to various career opportunities in forensic psychology.
- TO be able to utilize web-based resources for psycho-legal issues

**COURSE FORMAT**

The format of this course is designed to be a combination of lecture and in-class discussion. Films/documentaries and professional work samples will also be utilized.

**TEXT**

Bartol, C. R. & Bartol, A. M. (2004). Introduction to forensic psychology. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

**Attendance and Participation:** Class attendance is required and student participation is essential. Some class lectures will closely parallel information in the assigned readings. However, there will be many weeks where additional information, information not in the text, will be presented in class. Should you miss a class for any reason, it is your responsibility to arrange to obtain notes from another student in the class. The instructor will not provide notes for missed classes. Attendance will be graded as follows: 0-1 absence = A, 2-3 absences = B, 4 absences = C, 5 absences = D, 6 or more absences = F.

**Assigned Reading:** Unless otherwise specified, all assigned readings should be completed prior to that week's class.

**Retention of Material:** It is the responsibility of the student to retain an electronic copy of all work that has been handed into the instructor. It is also the responsibility of the student to retain returned papers and exams in case the student wishes to request that the course grade be corrected or to appeal a grade.

**Late Assignments and Missed Presentations:** Any case law summary that is not received by the beginning of the class on the day of the presentation is considered late. Penalties for lateness: one decrease in letter grade on the assignment per every day late. Case law summaries will not be accepted more than four days late from the due date and an F will be entered for the assignment. The penalty for not being present and participating in the team's case law presentation will be a two letter grade deduction on the assignment.

**Missed Exams:** You are strongly encouraged not to miss either of the exams. If it is essential for you to miss the test for any reason, a make-up examination will be given at the end of semester. It will be entirely essay and apt to be difficult. It will also be given at a time when you will want to be preparing for the final, so it is in your best interests to avoid the make up examination. If you are going to miss an exam, you are expected to contact the instructor prior to the exam to inform of your upcoming absence.

**Honor Code:** The Honor Code of George Mason University deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Students should be familiar with the code and connected policies (<http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies>). The course will be conducted in accordance with those policies.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** It is the policy of the University to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) @ 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

Grades will be assigned as follows: 93-100 = A; 90-92 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-; 77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72=C-; 65-69 = D; below 65 = F.

Grades will be made up of:

|                                    |       |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Case law presentation and write-up | - 20% |
| Midterm exam                       | - 35% |
| Final exam                         | - 35% |
| Attendance and participation       | - 10% |

**Exams:** Exams will consist of a combination of multiple-choice, true-false, matching, and/or short answer questions. All material covered in the class, assigned readings, films shown in class, and the case law summaries is fair game for exams.

**Case Law Summary:** Each student will be required to read one piece of case law in the original. He/She will be expected to write a 3-5 page summary of the case and give a 10-15 minute presentation to the class explaining the case. Students will work in teams of 2-3 for the presentation. However, the written summary should be completed independently and is due at the beginning of the class on the day of the presentation. The written summary and presentation should include: 1) the basic facts of the case, 2) what the court ruled, and 3) the significance and/or implications of the case. Cases will be assigned on the first day of class and can be found on-line at [www.FindLaw.com](http://www.FindLaw.com) (click on *cases and codes*, click on *case summaries search*, enter party name, search for correct date).

**Add/Drop Deadline:**

Last day to Add - September 12, 2006

Last Day to Drop - September 29, 2006

Elective Withdrawal Option - September 30<sup>th</sup> through October 27<sup>th</sup>; you are strongly encouraged to speak with your advisor before choosing this option.

**CLASS SCHEDULE & READINGS**

| <b><u>Date</u></b> | <b><u>Topics</u></b>                                                                                                | <b><u>Reading</u></b>                      |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| August 31          | Introductions<br>Review of course objectives & syllabus<br>Case law assignments<br>The field of forensic psychology | Chapter 1                                  |
| September 7        | Overview of the legal system<br>Ethical considerations                                                              | Chapter 9                                  |
| September 14       | Police psychology                                                                                                   | Chapter 2                                  |
| September 21       | Investigative psychology<br>Serial, mass, and other types of murder                                                 | Chapter 3<br>Ch. 5 (pp. 138-151)           |
| September 28       | Stalking<br>Malingering<br><u>Case presentation:</u><br><i>U.S v. Greer</i>                                         | Ch. 5 (pp.151-155)<br>Ch. 10 (pp. 284-285) |
| October 5          | Habitual Offenders                                                                                                  | Chapter 4                                  |
| October 12         | <b>**MIDTERM EXAM**</b>                                                                                             |                                            |

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                      |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| October 19  | Competency to stand trial<br><u>Case presentation:</u><br><i>Godinez v. Moran</i><br><i>Jackson v. Indiana</i>                                                                          | Ch. 10 (pp. 276-288) |
| October 26  | Criminal responsibility<br><u>Case presentation:</u><br><i>Riggins v. Nevada</i><br><i>Sell v. U.S.</i><br><i>Singleton v. Norris</i>                                                   | Ch.10 (pp. 288-299)  |
| November 2  | Criminal responsibility (cont.)<br>Death penalty<br><u>Case presentation:</u><br><i>Ring v. Arizona</i><br><i>Jones v. U.S.</i><br><i>Atkins v. Virginia</i><br><i>Roper v. Simmons</i> |                      |
| November 9  | Sex offender evaluation/treatment<br>Risk assessment<br><u>Case presentation:</u><br><i>Barefoot v. Estelle</i><br><i>Kansas v. Hendricks</i><br><i>Kansas v. Crane</i>                 | Chapter 6            |
| November 16 | Child Custody Evaluations<br>Civil commitment/involuntary treatment<br><u>Case presentation:</u><br><i>McKune v. Lile</i>                                                               | Chapter 11           |
| November 23 | ***NO CLASS***Thanksgiving Holiday                                                                                                                                                      |                      |
| November 30 | Family violence, abuse, & victimization<br><u>Case presentation:</u><br><i>In re Gault</i>                                                                                              | Chapter 8            |
| December 7  | Arson                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      |
| December 14 | <b>**FINAL EXAM** 7:30 – 10:15pm</b>                                                                                                                                                    |                      |

**Enjoy your well-deserved break!**