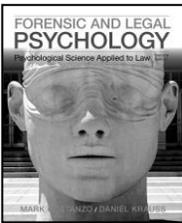




Forensic Psychology

Course Syllabus PSY330 Fall 2016

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Office hours: MW 1:00-3:30 and by appointment



Textbook:

Costanzo & Krauss (2nd ed.) Forensic and Legal Psychology
Other readings as assigned

Announcements and schedule changes will be posted on WesPortal.

Course Description and Objectives

"The courts will have to learn, sooner or later, that the individual differences of men can be tested to-day by the methods of experimental psychology far beyond anything which common sense and social experience suggest." ~ Hugo Münsterberg (1908)

This course provides an examination of the interface between psychology and legal issues. Research on judges, juries, and defendants are among topics covered, as well as the role of psychologists in the legal system. At the end of this semester, a student in this course should be able to

- Understand the various roles that psychologists may play in the legal system
- Identify key information and procedures of the legal system (e.g. how to read a USSC case summary, the steps of the judicial process, amendments common to course cases, guidelines for juries, etc.)
- Show awareness of the impact of psychological factors (e.g., memory, social cognition, stereotypes, etc.) in the legal system
- Critique the current practices in a number of areas (e.g., confessions, eyewitness identification, jury selection & deliberation, punishment, etc.), given the relevant psychological research
- Value the influence that any given psychology student (or citizen, interested party, etc.) can have on the legal system, as well as reflecting on her own responsibility for change

Classroom Expectations

Being in class is a very important part of the learning process and I *expect* you to be here. You have four “freebie” absences in this class, after which you will lose 5 points for each additional absence from your participation score.

In this classroom, we will treat each other with respect, faculty and students alike. Personal conversations, rude behavior, walking in and out of the classroom during class, use of cell phones, sleeping, working on other classes’ assignments, and other disruptive behaviors interfere with other students’ rights and with the instructor’s ability to teach. Therefore, anyone exhibiting unacceptable behaviors during the class may be asked to leave and will be counted absent for that class period. Failure to cooperate with this process will result in disciplinary action that may include withdrawal from the class or dismissal from the college.

Grading

Your grade for the course will be based on three exams, one paper, one activity, twenty discussion prompts, and participation. Opportunities for extra credit may be offered to the entire class, but individual requests for extra credit will not be honored. No late assignments will be accepted for this course. For written assignments, if you use something other than Microsoft Word, please save your file as a .pdf or .rtf so that I will be able to access it easily.

3 exams (x 75 pts each) = 225 pts

“Tell us more” paper = 32 pts

Letter-writing activity = 15 pts

16 discussion prompts (x 3 pts each) = 48 pts

Participation = 15 pts

Grades will be based on a scale of 335 points, as indicated below:

A = 300-335 (90-100%)

B = 267-299 (80-89%)

C = 233-266 (70-79%)

D = 200-232 (60-69%)

F = < 199 (< 60%)

Exams

Each exam will be comprised of a multiple choice section and an essay section. In order to allow for more in-depth responses, the essay section will be assigned at least 1 week ahead of time. On the exam day you will turn in the essay portion and then take the multiple choice portion of the exam. If you fail to bring the essay portion with you, you will be allowed to write essay responses during the class period, but without the use of outside resources. Make-up exams will be administered only when I consider the absence to be excused and proper documentation can be provided. If you know in advance that you must miss an exam for a legitimate reason (e.g., religious holidays, medical reasons), please contact me at least a week in advance. If you have an unforeseen emergency (e.g., severe illness, death in the family), contact me within 24-hours of the exam or you will not be able to make up the exam regardless of your reason for missing it.

“Tell us more” paper

For this assignment you will be choosing a topic that is something we haven't covered in class, or that goes beyond the level of our class coverage. For that topic you'll locate an additional article from psychological research, an article from the mainstream press, and interview someone with knowledge relevant to that topic. You'll gather those findings together to produce a short paper that tells us more about the topic. The paper should be 3-5 pages long, double-spaced, and should use normal indentation, margins, and font. This paper is due via the file upload system by class time on Nov 1st. Additional guidance will be provided.

Letter-writing activity

For the second activity, you'll be drafting a letter to a selected individual or organization on some matter relating to forensic psychology. It should be 1-2 pages, single-spaced, in a formal letter style. If you're unsure how to write a formal letter to someone with this sort of content, google something along the lines of “how to write a letter to your state representative” or “how to write a persuasive letter.” I expect you to really send out a copy of this letter, but for the purpose of grading you should submit a copy to me via the file upload system by class time on Dec 1st. In the comments section, write a short paragraph detailing how you decided on the particular topic and content for the letter. Please note that this is a personal letter, and not something you are writing on behalf of the college, your professor, or any other students in the class. Your grade will not be based on the extent to which you write a letter that I might have written (i.e., it's okay if our perspectives disagree), but you do need to include valid research support in your letter.

Discussion prompts

For most typical class sessions, you'll prepare a short list of three questions or comments that you've drawn from the readings (or podcasts, websites, etc.) that could be used to prompt discussion within the larger class. These are to be **submitted by 9am** on our course site using the file upload method. Simply turning something in does not guarantee points though, so we'll talk more in class about appropriate and inappropriate examples. There are 20 sessions in which these will be due; 16 will count toward your grade. I want to be clear that I expect you to ALWAYS do the reading and be prepared for discussion, regardless of whether you submitted that session's discussion prompt.

Participation

A small portion of your grade is made up of participation points. The assumption is that if you share your ideas in class, complete the readings, and take part in discussions, you will earn all 15 points. Due to the relationship between being in class and actively participating, excessive unexcused absences (>4) will result in a deduction of 5 participation points for each absence.

Academic Honor Code

"The Honor Code is the foundation upon which life in the Wesleyan College community is built. It is based upon the idea that individual freedom is a right founded upon responsibility. A student is expected to tell the truth, respect others and their property, and maintain academic integrity and honesty in all areas of college life."

I will not tolerate plagiarism and cheating within my courses. Instances of either will result in a zero for that exam or assignment, with possible further repercussions as per college guidelines and instructor discretion. *Be aware that your summaries of research findings and court cases should be in your own words, just like everything else.*

Students with Disabilities

Wesleyan College is committed to equal education, full participation and access to facilities for all students. Any student who requires reasonable academic accommodations, use of auxiliary aids or facility access for a class must first register with Disability Resources by contacting Christy Henry, Assistant Dean of Academic Resources at chenry@wesleyancollege.edu or (478) 757-5219. If reasonable accommodations are established, students should request Accommodation Letters from Disability Resources then schedule an appointment to meet with the professor to determine how the accommodations will be implemented for each class as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations require advance notice to implement and will not be retroactively administered for the semester. Accommodations that decrease the integrity of a course will not be approved.

Course Overview

	Tuesday	Thursday
Aug 16/18	Syllabus – Introduction	Psych in the legal system *
Aug 23/25	Psychology of crime *	Interrogations & confessions *
Aug/Sept 30/1	Interrogations & confessions *	Bail & plea bargaining *
Sept 6/8	Lie detection *	Entrapment (Reading a USSC case) *
Sept 13/15	Forensic identification *	Exam 1
Sept 20/22	Criminal profiling *	Eyewitnesses *
Sept 27/29	<i>Murder on a Sunday Morning</i>	
Oct 4/6	Eyewitnesses *	Competency/Insanity *
Oct 11/13	Fall break	Victim trauma *
Oct 18/20	<i>One Minute to Nine</i>	
Oct 25/27	Exam 2	Jury selection *
Nov 1/3	<i>12 Angry Men</i> “Tell us more” paper due Tues	
Nov 8/10	Juries & judges *	Risk assessment *
Nov 15/17	Corrections *	*
Nov 22/24	Thanksgiving break	
Nov/Dec 29/1	<i>Angola: The Farm</i> Letter activity due Thurs	
Dec 6/8	Death penalty *	

Note: all class sessions marked with * are days that you should be submitting discussion points/questions. I reserve the right to make changes to the course plan as needed. Any changes will be announced in class and on the course website. The final exam will take place on _____.

Extended readings guide

Introduction

How is psychology related to the practice of law? What are the similarities and differences in how these fields operate? Why should I, as a student, care about these issues?

Aug 18th – Ch 1

Psychology of crime

What do we consider to be the basic motivations for criminal behavior? How might age play a role in criminal behavior?

Aug 23rd – Read this article in the New York Times about juvenile offenders (maybe even read some of the comments, if you dare):

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/12/us/justices-ruling-allows-illinois-man-jailed-at-14-to-reconsider-his-future.html>

Interrogations & confessions

How does the interrogation process work? Why would people confess to crimes they didn't commit and how commonly does this happen? What factors make this more or less likely to happen?

Aug 25th – “False confessions” chapter from *Actual Innocence* (.pdf on WesPortal)

Aug 30th – Ch 2

Bail & Plea bargaining

Does the current system of bail and plea-bargaining fit within the expectations we have for our judicial process? How might psychology inform our views on this?

Sept 1st – Read “The Case against Plea Bargaining”, here:

<http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/regulation/2003/10/v26n3-7.pdf>

Lie detection

Can we accurately tell (personally or by using equipment) if people are lying?

Sept 6th – Ch 3

Entrapment

What is entrapment? When reading court cases, to what should I be paying attention?

Sept 8th – <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/503/540/> (Jacobson v. US; select and download .pdf for best formatting.)

You can also listen to the full case here (this is optional, reading the linked version above and bringing a printed copy to class is mandatory): http://www.oyez.org/cases/1990-1999/1991/1991_90_1124

Forensic identification

How has the advent of DNA evidence affected the legal system? How do jurors interpret this sort of evidence? What is the impact on those individuals who have been exonerated by DNA evidence? What does current research tell us about other types of evidence?

Sept 13th – Ch 4

Criminal profiling

How are criminal profiles created? Are they useful?

Sept 20th – Ch 5 and read this article:

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/11/12/071112fa_fact_gladwell

Gladwell writes, “A profile isn’t a test, where you pass if you get most of the answers.”

What does he mean by this statement? How is it illustrated by the research into profiling?

Select one other quote from this article that you find noteworthy, and explain why you chose it.

Eyewitness memory

What does psychological research tell us about the reliability and accuracy of eyewitness evidence? Is it possible to create situations that increase or decrease this accuracy?

Sept 22nd – Ch 7, pgs 133-144 and “Seeing things” chapter from *Actual Innocence* (on WesPortal)

While reading the description of the crime and subsequent investigation, take notes on your reactions to any pertinent events; what things stand out as being related to concepts from the textbook?

Sept 27th – Sept 29th – film viewing

Oct 4th – Ch 7, pgs 144-153

Competence & Insanity

What does it mean to be declared competent? What does it mean to be declared insane?

Are these psychological terms; if not, how are psychologists involved? Is this just an “easy way out” for defendants?

Oct 6th – Ch 9; read

<http://www.law.duke.edu/shell/cite.pl?10+Duke+J.+Gender+L.+&+Pol%27y+1>

Excluding footnotes, this is somewhere around a 30 page article (60 page .pdf, but so much of that is taken up by footnotes). I think it’s a fairly good read all the way through, but I readily admit we don’t need all of it for a good discussion. It’s okay if you skim this one for interesting discussion points, which are most likely going to be in the latter half of the document. Don’t print all this, but bring useful notes to class.

Victim Trauma

Violent events experienced by victims can have lingering effects. How does battered woman syndrome form and how might it be viewed by the legal system? Similarly, what do we know about rape trauma syndrome and its legal interpretation? How do either of these compare to the more commonly heard diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder?

Oct 13th – Ch 10

Oct 18th – film viewing

Jury selection & decision-making

What does the jury selection process include; how are psychologists involved? What influences jurors in their decision-making processes? How does the public opinion of trials impact us?

Oct 27th – Ch 6

Nov 1st-3rd – film viewing

Nov 8th – Ch 13

Risk assessment

How can we determine if people will be dangerous in the future; are laypeople and scientists accurate in their current determinations?

Nov 10th – Ch 14; read <http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Effect-of-Dr-Death-and-his-testimony-lingers-1960299.php>

Corrections

What are the different views on the purpose of sentencing and imprisonment? How do history and political climates influence these views? What does research tell us about the efficacy of sentencing and imprisonment? What is restorative justice and does it have a place in our current system?

Nov 15th – Ch 16

Nov 17th – Read this article in the Atlantic:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/08/a-different-justice-why-anders-breivik-only-got-21-years-for-killing-77-people/261532/> and this one in the New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/06/magazine/can-forgiveness-play-a-role-in-criminal-justice.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

Nov 29th – Dec 1st – film viewing

Death penalty

What are the guiding principles (in theory and in practice) behind the death penalty? Is it efficacious in its purpose? What is death qualification and how does it affect the jury?

Dec 6th – Ch 17