

Psychology 581  
Psychology and the Law

Summer, 2001  
Prof. Elaine Cassel  
Email: [elaine-cassel@erols.com](mailto:elaine-cassel@erols.com)  
540-667-0097  
Office: Room 105, Rowley

## **1. REQUIRED TEXT**

Forensic Psychology. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. L.S. Wrightsman. Wadsworth Publishing. 2001.

## **2. BROAD PURPOSE OF THE COURSE**

Students will learn to describe and analyze the interdependence and interrelationships between psychology and the legal system in criminal, civil, and family law settings.

## **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE**

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles and systems of American jurisprudence, including how laws are made, the organization of state and federal courts, and the basics of civil and criminal court procedures.
2. Be able to integrate knowledge of mental health diagnoses and assessment instruments with understanding of how diagnoses and evaluations are used in legal proceedings.
3. Apply psychological principles to aid in understanding the psychology of law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, and defense and civil attorneys.
4. Apply psychological principles so as to understand the psychology of evidence, including interrogation methods, lineups, assisted memory, repressed memory, and competency of witnesses and testimony.
5. Analyze the role of psychologists in the jury selection process.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of the similarities and differences in the basic roles that psychologists may play in civil, criminal, family law, and juvenile cases, and how roles differ.
7. Through integration and synthesis of knowledge of psychology and the legal system, demonstrate an understanding of how psychology can help improve the

legal system and how the law can aid psychology in advocacy for and delivery of mental health services.

#### 4. TEACHING METHOD

This is a graduate seminar. The instructor will lead the discussions and provide students with the necessary background to prepare for each class meeting, but the students will be an integral part of the teaching process. Active class participation is an integral part of the grading process. The instructor utilizes the law school "Socratic method," introducing the topic with a brief lecture, followed by class discussion of the assigned reading. Students may be challenged (and/or assigned) to debate controversial topics on an impromptu basis.

#### 5. GRADING METHOD

Midterm (in-class)	20 points
In-class Final	15 points
Final Exam (take home-case studies)	25 points
Journal	10 points (5x2)
Project	20 points
Attendance	10 points (5 x 2)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 points</b>

NOTE: You cannot get an A without attending all classes, and remaining for the entire class period.

Letter grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C- will be given pursuant to the Marymount University Policy. The grade of "D" is not given at the graduate level. The grade of "C" is not consider passing at the graduate level.

#### GRADING SCALE

100-95	A
94-90	A-
89-86	B+
85-83	B
82-80	B-
79-76	C+
75-73	C
72-70	C-

6. MIDTERM AND FINAL - Midterm and in-class portion of final exam will be in class objective, multiple choice, fill-in-the blank, matching, and short answer (any or all of these). Take home exam based on case studies (current events or

instructor's case files) to be due 2 weeks after last class and emailed to instructor. Open books, open notes, and independent research. The exam should be considered a project. Graded on completeness, documentation of sources, critical and original thinking, accuracy, and writing. No late exams will be accepted. See instructor for examples of take home exams of "A" or "A+" quality.

7. **JOURNAL** - For the four class meetings after the first class, bring in articles, taped onto lined paper, with your typed one-half to one page analysis describing the article's relationship to psychology AND law and how psychology might contribute to the situation or help explain the situation. References from textbooks or other sources recommended.

These contributions may come from newspapers like the New York Times and Washington Post (online or print), or from web sites dealing with the law. Maximum points on appropriateness of topic, adequacy of discussion, and attention to detail.

The articles **MUST BE CURRENT** - i.e., within the past week. No maximum on number submitted each week, but a minimum of 5.

8. **ATTENDANCE** - Two points for attending each class AND participating. Students must attend the entire class for the points.
9. **PRESENTATION** - In-class presentation, maximum of 15 minutes, demonstrating/discussing how forensic psychologist would be involved in remedying or preventing what you read about in your chosen book. This requires synthesis and independent research and thought. Choose your book from list below. No duplicate topics allowed. Graded on thoroughness, insightfulness, attention to latest research, accuracy of information, and use of visual aids in presentation (PowerPoint, overheads, videos, posters, handouts).

**CHOICES FOR BOOK/PRESENTATION** - Choose one of these books dealing with the intersection of law and psychology. Read the book. Your written report should include the following:

- Write a brief synopsis of the book.
- Discuss the psycholegal issues in the book (all of them).
- Address how psychology and law were used, abused, misused.
- Explain the harm done both from the legal and psychological perspective (i.e. a family destroyed, an innocent man imprisoned).
- Discuss how psychologists and lawyers (if appropriate) breached ethical codes of conduct (for lawyers code of conduct visit the ABA web site; for psychologists, the APA web site).
- Explain what should have happened in these cases, in a perfect and just world.
- Discuss what you learned about psychology and law from reading the book and doing the research for your presentation.
- Cite liberally and appropriately from our texts and other reliable sources.

- Use APA citation format.
- Time limit for presentation must be strictly adhered to: 15 minutes. No page limit on your written report. Obviously your class presentation must be a distillation of this report, since you can't cover the report's requirements in 15 minutes.
- Go to amazon.com for a synopsis of the books to see which one you might like to read. I must have your choice by June 2. .Outline of presentation due June 9.

Choices:

- Dead Run (innocent man put to death in Virginia)
- Spectral Evidence (recovered memories)
- Remembering Satan (recovered memories)
- Witch Hunt (Kathryn Lyon, false memories)
- The Roots of Treason (insanity plea - Ezra Pound)
- Stories of Scottsboro (innocent black men accused of rape)
- God of the Rodeo (Angola State Penitentiary)
- Contempt of Court: The Turn Of-The-Century Lynching That Launched 100 Years of Federalism (innocent man lynched after U.S. Supreme Court stay)
- Hurricane (Hurricane Carter)
- Actual Innocence (innocent men released from death row)
- Gideon's Trumpet (pro se petitioner wins right to counsel)
- Damages (civil medical malpractice case)

### TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Note: "Mid-term" exam at the beginning of class, May June 9: In class portion of final given June 23. Take home final give out June 23. Due by email (MS Word Attachment) July 9, 2001.

Date	Topic	Chapter in Text (W=Wrightsman)
May 19	Introduction- What is Law? What is Psychology? What is forensic psychology? Roles of forensic psychologists Ethics for forensic psychologists	W=1, 2
June 2	Selection and Training of Police, Investigative Techniques, Criminal Profiling	W=3, 4, 5
June 9	Eyewitnesses Identification, Interrogation, Trial Preparation, Jury Selection	W=6, 7, 8, 9 DOJ guidelines (online)
June 16	Insanity & Incompetence, Civil Commitment, Predicting Dangerousness, Sentencing Death Penalty Trials and Appeals	W=10, 11, 13, 17
June 23	Domestic Violence, Sexual Abuse of Children, Child Custody Evaluations, Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, Discrimination, Harassment	W=14, 15, 16