

Psychology and Law Syllabus

Psychology 480 & 580 Spring 2003

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Course Description and Goals: This course will survey the interface of psychology and the law. Since the 1600s, experts have testified in court proffering opinions to judges and juries. Today, the use of mental health experts is at an all time high in both federal and state court systems. We will look at the organization of the legal system, particular cases, the theoretical and practical foundations of psychology and psychiatry, and how this multifaceted mosaic fits together. To accomplish this, we will depend upon my training and experience as both a psychologist and an attorney, plus we have two fine textbooks, and we will at times turn to the published empirical literature for information and inspiration as to the directions this interface may take in the future. These subjects are both extremely interesting in their own right, and combined, the issues and implications become fascinating. I believe, if nothing else, you will find this sojourn extremely interesting! Welcome to the study of psychology and law.

Required Texts:

1. L. S. Wrightsman, *Forensic Psychology* (2001)
2. Wrightsman et al, *Psychology and the Legal System*, 5th ed. (2002)

Computer Requirements: The use of our ample MU computer facilities, or your own personal computer with internet access, is required in order for you to download research articles in PsycINFO. Alternatively, you may use the hardcopy version in the library, *Psychological Abstracts*.

Attendance. Required. I take roll randomly. Sometimes, I realize, you have to be somewhere else; that's understandable. Some absences may be excused if excuses are authenticated and are for a legitimate reason, e.g., serious medical illness (as determined by me). If you miss more than three classes (10%), you will not be eligible for the semester curve. Additional misses may cause letter grade reductions, e.g., four misses will cost you one-half a letter grade, five misses will cost you a full letter grade, etc. This policy is designed to prepare you for the professional workplace, where you certainly would not want your surgeon to skip your scheduled surgery, or your attorney to be absent on your trial date!

Learning Assessment of Students: Course grades will be determined through a variety of objective assessment measures. Students are all different, and each of you will learn differently and therefore should be afforded the opportunity to demonstrate your learning through different means. In the interest of fairness, I have selected several methods to assess your learning. These methods will include oral participation in class, expository writings, and essay exams which require novel thinking and integration of a variety of materials.

Class Participation: Assigned readings are made as we progress through the topics in the textbooks. I expect all students to be fully prepared at the beginning of each class to discuss the readings. I will call on students to explain to the class the concepts and issues and to answer specific questions. The prepared student can earn extra credit if she or he provides an accurate answer. An excellent response can earn several semester points! Don't discount this opportunity, it can make a letter grade difference. Points are awarded only to prepared students who are able to meaningfully contribute to the class discussion.

Writings. These may be completed in class or, alternatively assigned as homework, and will be based upon an important concept or issue in psychology and law based upon lecture, readings, or assignments in PsycINFO. Writings are designed to afford the student the opportunity to engage the material, think critically about a topic, and then express their knowledge and understanding in a personal manner that incorporates their expectations, impressions, & reactions to the material. While these are short and typically focus upon only a single issue, they are nonetheless a critical learning exercise.

Exams. Examinations will be administered in class on the materials covered through readings, writings, PsycINFO, discussion, and lecture. There will be two such exams, each counting equally. We will discuss example questions before the exams are given so you can be prepared and relaxed. Both exams are take-home exams, and as such they are all essay. The first exam will be passed out at approximately mid-term, and the second exam will be passed out during dead week. You will have one week to complete the exam, and they must be type, 12 point font, double-spaced, and in proper English. The second exam is not cumulative. These exams, like the writings, require the student to engage the material and issues, and to think critically and actively, so they too are important learning exercises.

Grade Determination:

<u>Weightings</u>		<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Course Percentage</u>
		A	90 – 100
Class Participation	Extra Credit	B	80 - 89
Writings	40%	C	70 - 79
Exam 1	30%	D	60 - 69
Exam 2	<u>30%</u>	F	0 - 59
	100% +		

Caveat. The grade determination may look deceptively simple. Be aware that each part of the weightings do indeed count, for instance, if you fail to submit a writing you will obtain a zero. If five writings are assigned during the semester, and you earn a median A (95%) on the other four, your writings grade will only be a C (76%). Thus, the writings portion of your semester grade will be computed using the 76% score, and this could lower your overall semester grade, all because you failed to submit one writing assignment!

Meetings: We meet twice weekly on Tuesday and Thursday in Harris Hall, room 134, from 2:00 – 3:15 PM.

Office Hours: Mon 12:30 – 2:30; 5:15 – 5:45
Tue 3:15 – 4:15
Wed 1:00 – 2:30; 5:15 – 5:45
Thur 3:15 – 4:15

Important Dates: You are responsible to be aware of and act in your own best interests concerning important dates, e.g., last day to withdraw.

Honor Code and Discipline: Students are expected and required to comply with the MU code of student conduct as set forth in the Student Book of Marshall University. This includes, but is not limited to, arriving promptly, not leaving until dismissed, not cheating, being polite and courteous, not disturbing the class or the instructor, following reasonable verbal instructions, complying with the requirements in this Syllabus, and adherence to dishonesty policy on pp. 83-85 of your undergraduate catalog.

§504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. I comply with the intent of the ADA, and as such if you have a qualifying disability, plan to inform me early in the semester so that proper verification and accommodation can be arranged.

Scheduling of Assignments. We will begin with Chapter 1 in both texts, and we will proceed at a pace comfortable for the class. Expect to cover one or two chapters a week. We may not discuss all portions of the assignments, but you are nonetheless responsible for all material assigned.

Philosophy: I enjoy a relaxed and informal classroom style. Questions are always appropriate, so don't hesitate to ask if I am unclear on a point or issue. I do not have all the answers – many of the answers lie within you, the student! Stay abreast of the readings, complete your writings on time, attend class regularly, and you will do well grade-wise, plus you will enjoy this course. Let's begin our sojourn.

Note: Syllabus available at www.psychologyandlaw.com. Click on Class Materials.