

# Psychology, Law, and Justice

(PY 377-001) Spring 2011 (The University of Alabama)

TR 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

Gordon Palmer Hall, Room 208

**Instructor:** Tess M.S. Neal, MA

**Office:** Gordon Palmer Hall, Room 359C

**Office Hours:** Tues. 10:45a – 12p and by appointment

**Phone:** 205-348-5083 (Psychology Department)

**Email:** [tmneal@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:tmneal@crimson.ua.edu)

**Mailbox:** In Psychology Office, GP Room 348

---

## Prerequisites

Psychology 101 or 105. Prior upper-level psychology coursework is recommended.

## Required Text

Greene, E. & Heilbrun, K. (2010). *Wrightsmen's Psychology and the Legal System* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth – Thomson Learning. ISBN: 978-0-495-81301-9

## Course Overview

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the application of psychology to the criminal justice system. The interface between psychology and the law occurs at a variety of levels and research findings from the areas of cognitive, social, experimental, and clinical psychology often are of relevance. Psychologists who work within the legal system can assume a number of roles that include social scientists, consultants, and expert witnesses. Information provided via lecture and the text will provide you with a broad understanding of the impact psychology can have on any one individual within the criminal justice system, as well as the impact psychology can have within the legal system itself.

This course incorporates legal theory and criminal justice principles with research from many areas of psychology. Accordingly, prior coursework in criminal justice or psychology could deepen and enrich your understanding of some topics discussed in this course. Some of the topics covered in this course will include the basic structure of the legal system, the psychology of offenders, criminal investigations including the reliability of witnesses, the trial process, the psychology of juries, and discussions about punishment and sentencing. We will explore these topics by reviewing scientific research findings, discussing case examples from popular media, incorporating our past experiences and observations, and contemplating how we can apply what we learn to our daily lives and beliefs about the justice system.

## Course Objectives

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of psychological principles as they relate to the legal system.
- Recognize common myths and misperceptions about psychology and the legal system.
- Appreciate that there are times when psychology and the law are at odds with respect to what is “right vs. wrong” and at times legal precedent goes against prevailing morals and principles.
- Become familiar with the application of psychological principles to criminal investigation, and with various ways psychologists can assist police departments.
- Understand issues related to the involvement of psychologists at the trial level.
- Develop and refine writing and critical thinking skills.

Learning Outcome	Assessment
1. Understand the importance of laws.	1. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
2. Develop an appreciation for the role of psychologists in the legal system.	2. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
3. Be able to identify and describe various theories of crime and criminality.	3. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
4. Describe the concept of psychopathy. What are common traits?	4. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
5. Identify and discuss cases of mistaken eyewitness identification. Discuss reforms to the identification process that could lead to greater accuracy.	5. Exam, quiz, in-class activities, and written assignment.
6. State common issues that arise when children are witnesses in crimes. How should a child be treated differently than any other witness?	6. Exam, quiz, in-class activities, and written assignment.
7. Critically evaluate the veracity of repressed and recovered memories.	7. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
8. Outline the basic trial process.	8. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
9. Describe the process of jury selection.	9. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
10. Evaluate the efficacy of scientific jury selection and gain an understanding of ethical issues in jury selection.	10. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities..
11. Critically evaluate whether juries are able to do their job competently. Identify any reforms that may help juries do their job better.	11. Exam, quiz, in-class activities, and written assignment.
12. Discuss myths and truths about criminal profiling. Is TV accurate?	12. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
13. Discuss our ability to tell whether someone is telling the truth.	13. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
14. Gain an understanding of the interrogation process, Miranda rights, and confessions. What is the likelihood of false confessions?	14. Exam, quiz, in-class activities, and written assignment.
15. Accurately describe legal competence. State what happens to people found not competent to stand trial.	15. Exam, quiz, in-class activities, and written assignment.
16. Accurately describe the insanity defense. Point out common myths about this defense. Critically evaluate different legal standards.	16. Exam, quiz, in-class activities, and written assignment.
17. Discuss the purposes of punishment and how these purposes change depending on the population being discussed. Critically evaluate attitudes and beliefs regarding punishment for sexual offenders.	17. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.
18. Discuss the death penalty. Critically evaluate your beliefs about capital punishment. Provide support for your beliefs.	18. Exam, quiz, and in-class activities.

### Useful Websites

Course Website: [www.elearning.ua.edu](http://www.elearning.ua.edu)

We will use elearning throughout this course. You sign into elearning using your mybama login and password. I will post announcements, the syllabus, and various other class-related information on the elearning site for this course. **Lecture notes WILL NOT be posted online**, so it is strongly recommended that you attend class and take appropriate notes. Good note-taking is a skill that will be beneficial in all classes as well as life beyond college.

Text Website: <http://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/ISBN/9780495813019?cid=APL1>

Relevant on-line materials such as quizzes, glossaries, and flashcards can also be found here. If you prefer, the textbook can either be rented or purchased as an e-book from.

### Useful Campus Resources

Even the best of students can feel overwhelmed by a heavy course load or stressed out from the demands of college life. There are numerous resources available to *all students* on campus that can help you progress through your coursework in a successful and timely manner. Such resources include:

**The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL):** Obtain academic tutoring services in a variety of subject areas, as well as assistance developing more effective study habits. Go to <http://www.ctl.ua.edu/default.asp> or call (205) 348-8854 to make an appointment.

**The University of Alabama Writing Center:** Obtain assistance with writing assignments. To find info about their available services, go to [www.as.ua.edu/writingcenter](http://www.as.ua.edu/writingcenter) or call (205) 348-5049.

**The University of Alabama Counseling Center:** Obtain a variety of emotional health services. The Center provides confidential private and group counseling sessions, as well as substance abuse counseling, crisis counseling, and psychiatric consultation. You can learn more about these services by visiting <http://www.sa.ua.edu/counseling/> or calling (205) 348-3863.

### Course Requirements

1. **Attendance and Participation:** Classroom attendance and regular participation are necessary to be successful in this course. Active participation in classroom discussions will improve the quality of the course for everyone, and has also been demonstrated to improve learning. You are therefore expected to attend and participate in all scheduled classes unless circumstances beyond your control prevent your attending. Formal attendance will not be taken; however, 20% of your grade will depend upon your completion of in-class assignments and reading quizzes (see below). On exams, you will be accountable not only for the information covered in the assigned readings, but also the information presented in classroom lectures (which may not be covered in the text). If you miss class, you should contact another student for the lecture notes to be properly prepared for an exam. I will not provide this information if you are absent.
2. **Assigned Readings:** Each week is text assigned for reading (see the course schedule for specific information). It is expected that everyone will complete the assigned readings **before** the class session in which they will be discussed. Completing the readings in advance will enable you to participate in an informed discussion of the material. You are responsible for and will be tested on all assigned readings regardless of whether they are covered during lecture. Please ask me to clarify any material in the readings you do not understand. I encourage you to read chapter summaries at the end of each chapter to aid in studying for exams.

3. **In-Class Activities (10%):** You will have the opportunity to participate in six in-class activities throughout the semester. The activities will be designed to supplement the topic of the day. These will **not** be announced ahead of time, and there will not be any opportunities for make-ups. Students can expect to do well on the activities only if they have read the assigned material for that day. These activities may include brief writing assignments, small group activities, and class debates. Each activity will be worth two points. You will receive full credit for each activity in which you thoroughly participate. Minimal effort during the in-class activity will result in a score of 0. You are expected to complete five in-class activities for full credit. Participation in the 6<sup>th</sup> available activity will result in extra credit (see below).
4. **Reading Quizzes (10%):** There will be four closed-book reading pop quizzes throughout the semester at the beginning of class. The purpose of these quizzes is to make sure you are keeping up with the required reading. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice questions similar to those which will appear on the exams. These quizzes will **not** be announced ahead of time, and there will be no opportunities for make-ups (or it would defeat the purpose of the quiz). Students can expect to do well on the quizzes only if they have read the assigned material for that day. Each quiz will be worth three points. To earn full credit, you need ten points; therefore, there is an opportunity to earn two points of extra credit on your final grade if you were to receive all available points.
5. **Writing Assignment (15%):** You are required to complete one writing assignment outside of class time. The purpose of the assignment is to expand your comprehension of the subject matter and its application to everyday life. The assignment will also help develop your critical thinking and writing skills – necessary skills for any major! The paper will be graded on a 15-point scale, and specific grading criteria will accompany the assignment. The assignment should be 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced, with 12-pt Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. The paper should demonstrate that you put considerable thought into the topic. A **HARD COPY** of the writing assignment will be due at the beginning of the class period as outlined in the schedule below. **No late writing assignments will be accepted!** Note: there will be multiple “due dates” for the paper – for the first draft, which will be edited/graded by a peer (and you will edit a peer’s paper), and a separate later date for your “final draft,” which I will edit/grade.
6. **Peer Writing Assignment Editing (5%).** You are expected to edit a fellow student’s first draft of their paper. Your grade will be based on the quality of your editorial feedback to your peer. The purpose of this assignment is 1) to allow you to develop your writing skills from a different perspective, 2) to think about the issues the paper requires from a different perspective, and 3) to enhance the overall quality of your paper. Just as you are editing a peer’s paper, your paper will be edited by a peer. You will then have the opportunity to incorporate that feedback into your final draft before you turn it in for your writing assignment grade. Your editorial feedback will be graded on a 5-point scale, and specific grading criteria will accompany the assignment.
7. **Exams (60%):** There will be **two non-cumulative exams** and a **non-cumulative final exam (three total)**. The final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 8:00 – 10:30 am. Any of

the material covered in class lectures, class activities, and assigned readings will be fair game for the exams. However, the majority of the exam questions will cover what was discussed during class. Each exam will be worth 20% of your final grade. Make-up exams will **ONLY** be allowed in the case of extreme circumstances such as hospitalization or death in the immediate family. Common illnesses and prior travel arrangements do not qualify for a make-up exam. Proper documentation **will** be required for missing an exam. Proper medical documentation includes (a) date and time of visit, (b) clear description of why the student could not take the exam at the scheduled time, and (c) name and phone number of the physician. Further documentation may be requested. Make up tests may be in a different format than the original exam and will be given at the time of final exam. To qualify for a make-up exam, I must be notified either prior to the exam (highly preferable) or as soon as possible afterward. If you miss an exam without appropriate documentation, you will receive a score of zero for the exam.

### Extra Credit

- 1) There are six opportunities for in-class assignments and only five are required for full credit, so you may earn up to two points of extra credit if the 6<sup>th</sup> activity is completed. This extra credit is worth raw credit toward your final grade in the class.
- 2) There are 12 available points for quizzes, and you are only required to obtain 10 points. If the additional two points are earned, they will count as extra credit toward your final grade.

### Grading System

Final grades consist of participation during in-class activities (10% total), reading quizzes (10%), the completion of a writing assignment (15% total), editing a peer's writing assignment (5%) and three exams (60% total). Final grades can be determined by completing the following chart:

	Points		
	<u>Earned/ Possible</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Percent</u>
In-class assignments	____ / <u>10</u> =		_____
Reading quizzes	____ / <u>10</u> =		_____
Writing assignment	____ / <u>15</u> =		_____
Peer editing	____ / <u>5</u> =		_____
Exam 1	____ x .20 =		_____
Exam 2	____ x .20 =		_____
Exam 3 (Final Exam)	____ x .20 =		_____
	<b>FINAL GRADE*</b> = _____		
	(total from above)		

## Grading Scale

A+.....	97-100	B+.....	87-89	C+.....	77-79	D+.....	67-69	F.....	≤59
A .....	93-96	B .....	83-86	C .....	73-76	D .....	63-66		
A-.....	90-92	B-.....	80-82	C-.....	70-72	D-.....	60-62		

Disputes regarding grading should be addressed by making an appointment with me **within one week** of receiving the grade. If you would like to discuss your course grade, please come to my office hours or schedule an appointment to do so **before** finals week.

## Classroom Expectations

- **Electronic Devices:** Please turn off or silence cell phones and electronic devices for class. Do not send texts or check email, Facebook page, etc. during class. You may bring a computer to class to take notes, but if you are using it for any other purpose I will ask you to leave class for the day and leave your computer at home for future classes.
- **Class Time:** Class meets from 9:30 until 10:45. Please arrive on time. If you are late, enter quietly and sit in the back to minimize disruption. I will not lecture past 10:45, so do not begin packing up until I dismiss you. This is distracting and disrespectful to me and your fellow students. If you have a reason to leave class early tell me prior to the start of class and sit in the back to minimize distractions as you leave.
- **Classroom Civility:** One of the most valuable aspects of college is exposure to a variety of life experiences and differing viewpoints. Please be respectful of other students. Some topics of discussion may be sensitive or controversial. Keep this in mind as you share your opinions, and be considerate of others when they are sharing.
- **Social Networking Sites:** Professionalism, in part, entails maintaining fairness, equity, and impartiality in the instructor-student relationship. Social Networking Sites can blur this relationship. Therefore, I will not accept "friend requests" or respond to messages sent via any online SN sites.
- **Review the Syllabus:** Prior to turning in assignments or preparing for exams, *review the syllabus*. Many of your questions can be answered there.

## How to Succeed in PY 371

- Take the class seriously.
- Attend class regularly.
- Take good notes in class.
- Get organized and manage your time (do not procrastinate!)
- Read the assigned text *before* coming to class.
- Complete all assignments. On time.
- Be active and engaged in class discussions.
- Ask questions.
- Draw examples from your personal experiences to illustrate the topics.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions in class or come to office hours.
- Utilize all available resources. Each other, the instructor, campus resources, etc.
- HAVE FUN!!!

**Academic Misconduct**

All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student. The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

**Special Needs**

If you require assistance in the classroom due to a disability of any type, please contact Disability Services at (205) 348-4285 during the first week of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made. After initial arrangements have been made with Disability Services, or if you are already registered with the Office of Disability Services, contact me immediately. The UA Office of Disability Services website address is <http://ods.ua.edu>.

## Tentative Course Schedule\*

Class meeting	Topic(s) that will be covered	Reading(s) to be completed
Thurs 1/13	Introduction and Overview	-----
Tue 1/18	Psychology & Law: Importance & Choices	Ch. 1
Thurs 1/20 (Last day to drop without "W")	Q & A: Jury Selection with an Expert: <i>Dr. Stanley Brodsky, Forensic Psychologist and Professor of Psychology</i>	-----
Tue 1/25	Psychologists' Roles in the Legal System	Ch. 1
Thurs 1/27	Psychology of Crime: Offenders	Ch. 3
Tue 2/1	Psychology of Crime: Theories of Crime	Ch. 3
Thurs 2/3	Criminal Investigations: Eyewitness Reliability	Ch. 5
Tue 2/8	Witnesses: Reforming Procedures	Ch. 5
Thurs 2/10	Child Witnesses and Recovered Memories	Ch. 5
Tue 2/15	Review	-----
Thurs 2/17	Exam 1	-----
Tue 2/22	Evaluating Criminal Suspects: Profiling	Ch. 6
Thurs 2/24	Evaluating Suspects: Detecting Deception	Ch. 6
Tue 3/1	Evaluating Suspects: Confessions	Ch. 6
Thurs 3/3	Forensic Assessment: Competence <i>Dr. Karen Salekin, Forensic Psychologist and Assistant Professor of Psychology</i>	Ch. 8
Tue 3/8	Forensic Assessment: Insanity	Ch. 8
Thurs 3/10	Other Forensic Assessments	Ch. 8
Tue 3/15	NO CLASS – SPRING HOLIDAY	-----
Thurs 3/17	NO CLASS – SPRING HOLIDAY	-----
Tue 3/22 (23: Last day to drop with "W")	The Trial Process	Ch. 10
Thurs 3/24	Review Day	-----
Tue 3/29	Exam 2	-----
Thurs 3/31	Jury Selection: Representativeness	Ch. 11

---

Tue	4/5	Jury Selection: <i>Voir Dire</i>	Ch. 11
Thurs	4/7	The Jury: Are They Competent?	Ch. 12
Tue	4/12	The Jury: Bias	Ch. 12
<b><u>First Draft of Writing Assignment Due!!!</u></b>			
Thurs	4/14	The Jury: Research and Summary	Ch. 12
<b><u>Receive Peer Paper to Edit!!!</u></b>			
Tue	4/19	Punishment: Purposes	Ch. 14
<b><u>Peer Editing Due!!!</u></b>			
Thurs	4/21	Sentencing: Process and Special Populations	Ch. 14
Tue	4/26	The Death Penalty	Ch. 14
Thurs	4/28	Review Day 3	-----
<b><u>Final Draft of Writing Assignment Due!!!</u></b>			

---

<b><u>FINAL EXAM</u></b>	<b><u>8:00 am – 10:30 am**</u></b>	<b>**Make-Up Exams will be made up on 5/3 after the final has been completed.</b>
<b><u>Tues 5/3</u></b>		

---

\* The course schedule may change during the semester. We may spend more or less time on each topic depending on the level of comprehension the class demonstrates. You will be notified of any changes.