

PY 450: Psychology and Law
Spring 2011: TR 10:50-12:05
Cray-Seaberg 215

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-3:30
Or by appointment.

Texts:

1. Greene, E., & Heilbrun, K. (2011). *Wrightsmen's Psychology and the Legal System* (7th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
2. Articles in course packet, available at www.universityreaders.com

Course goals: This course takes an in-depth look at many aspects of the criminal and (to a lesser extent) civil systems of justice in the United States. The purpose is to encourage students to take the perspective of the psychologist, focusing on the individual's role and responses within those systems. Areas of focus include but are not limited to a study of the psychology and socialization of police officers; the identification and evaluation of criminal suspects; the psychological factors associated with eyewitness and jury experiences; issues of competency and insanity; and the death penalty.

Course objectives: By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Explain how the psychological study of the legal system differs from the sociological, anthropological, and philosophical approaches.
2. Describe the various roles that psychologists play in the legal system and evaluate the appropriateness of their involvement in each of those roles.
3. Discuss major Supreme Court decisions in light of social psychology research findings.
4. Evaluate the expectations that most people have for police officers, and discuss obstacles faced by police officers in living up to those expectations. Critique methods of interrogations used by police in light of false confessions research findings.
5. Using research findings from the cognitive perspective, assess the degree of accuracy of eyewitness memory. Discuss the role that psychologists have played in applying those research findings, and the courts' general level of acceptance of input from psychologists.
6. Discuss the competence of children within the legal system, both as victims and juvenile offenders.
7. Distinguish between the ways in which the legal system and the psychology profession use the terms "competence" and "insanity", and describe the consequences for defendants who are found either incompetent or insane.
8. Describe the ways in which attorneys' implicit personality theories guide their selection of juries and evaluate the effectiveness of those theories relative to scientific jury selection.
9. Name and evaluate common assumptions that the legal system makes about juries.
10. Discuss factors predicting death penalty sentences in the United States, and evaluate its continued use in light of empirical research findings.

Evaluation:

Exams. There will be a total of four exams in this course. Three exams will cover material from assigned chapters, additional readings, and all in-class material, and will be worth 100 points each. The final exam is comprehensive and is worth 150 points. All exams will be approximately 75% essay and 25% objective questions. If you know in advance that you will not be present on the day of an exam, you must schedule a time to take it before the rest of the class. If you are absent on the day of an exam, you must contact me *that day* to arrange for a make-up exam, which must be taken within three days of the original. The final exam must be taken at its scheduled time.

Additional readings. In addition to your text, there are four required readings available for purchase through www.universityreaders.com. Questions based on the reading can be found on the course site on Blackboard. Download the questions and email your responses to me. All responses are due in my email account (aposey@benedictine.edu) prior to the start of class on the day they are due. Responses to the additional readings are worth a maximum of 25 points each.

Disability: any student having a disability or special condition that may affect his/her performance should contact me as soon as possible, so that we can discuss accommodations or alternatives in completing the course requirements.

Attendance: The attendance policy for this course is consistent with that provided in the Benedictine College Catalog (i.e., you may miss no more than four classes throughout the semester).

Policy on academic honesty: The Benedictine College policy on academic honesty is provided in the catalog. Consistent with that policy, all instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Associate Dean and the student's advisor. Penalties will be administered as described in the catalog. Be honest.

Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic and Readings</u>
Jan. 13-20	Introduction to the course; Ch. 1: Psychology and the Law: Choices and Roles
Jan. 25	Ch. 4: Psychology of Police
Jan. 27- Feb. 3	Ch 5: Crime Investigation: Witnesses (Steve Titus; factors influencing the witness; recommended reforms) Go to http://www.innocenceproject.org/, click on Know the Cases, and select Search Profiles. Under Contributing Cause, choose Eyewitness Misidentification, then click on Search. Choose any case. Choose several cases. Read them to discover the role that erroneous identifications, and the police tactics that produce them, have played in these cases.
Feb. 3	1st additional reading: Odinot, Wolters, & van Koppen (2009). <i>Eyewitness memory of a supermarket robbery: A case study of accuracy and confidence after 3 months.</i> Located in course packet.
Feb. 8	Exam 1: Chs. 1, 4, 5, additional reading

Feb. 10-17 Ch. 6: Evaluating Criminal Suspects (profiling, polygraphs, interrogations)

Feb. 22- Ch. 8: Forensic Assessment in Criminal and Juvenile Cases

March 8

March 3 Reading #2: Moore, M. E., & Hiday, V. A. (2006). *Mental health court outcomes: A comparison of re-arrest and re-arrest severity between mental health court and traditional court participants*. In course packet.

March 10 Exam 2: Chs. 6 and 8, additional readings

March 14-18: Spring Break

March 22 Ch. 9: Forensic Assessment in Civil Cases (only responsible for pp. 249-251)
Reading #3: Levenson, J. S., Brannon, Y. N., Fortney, T., & Baker, J. (2007). *Public perceptions about sex offenders and community protection policies*. In course packet.

March 24-31 Ch. 11: Jury Representativeness and Selection (guest speaker: trial consultant Lisa Dahl of LCI)

April 5-12 Ch. 12: The Jury: Decision Processes and Reforms

April 14 Exam 3: Chs. 9, 11, and 12, additional reading

April 19, Ch. 15: Punishment, Sentencing, and Corrections

Apr. 26-May 3

(No class Apr. 21: Easter Break)

April 28 Reading #4: Miller, M. K., & Bornstein, B. H. (2006). *The use of religion in death penalty sentencing trials*. In course packet.

May 6, 10:00 Comprehensive final exam