

FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY: DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED NEW COURSE or MODIFICATION OF AN EXISTING COURSE

Department/School Psychology/College of Liberal Arts Date 09/15/2015
Course No. or Level 350 Title Forensic Psychology
Semester hours 3 Clock hours: Lecture 2.5hrs/week Laboratory n/a

Prerequisites PSY 206 or Departmental Permission

Enrollment expectation 25

Indicate any course for which this course is a (an)

modification _____
(proposed change in course title, course description, course content or method of instruction)

substitute _____
(The proposed new course replaces a deleted course as a General Education or program requirement.)

alternate _____
(The proposed new course can be taken as an alternate to an existing course.)

Name of person preparing course description Shannon Toney Smith, Ph.D.

Department Chairperson's/Dean's Signature _____

Provost's Signature _____

Date of Implementation _____

Date of School/Department approval _____

Catalog description:

This course provides an introduction to forensic psychology. Students will understand how the fields of psychology and law intersect in individual and public policy domains. Topics covered include roles of forensic psychologists, criminal responsibility and competence to stand trial, malingering, and trial consulting.

Purpose: 1. For Whom (generally?)

The course provides an introduction to forensic psychology, the application of psychology to the legal system. Students will learn roles of forensic psychologists (applied and research careers), distinctions between forensic and correctional psychology, seminal case law pertaining to U.S. legal standards (e.g., competence to stand trial,

criminal responsibility, scientific evidence admissibility standards), and relevant clinical constructs (e.g., the science of violence risk assessment, psychopathic personality).

Rationale: This course is designed primarily for psychology majors and minors who are interested in the application of psychology to the legal realm and who are potentially considering advanced graduate studies and/or careers in forensic psychology. Students in associated disciplines (e.g., Sociology, Pre-Law) will likely also be interested in this course. The course will add an additional Psychology Department elective.

2. What should the course do for the student?

Through this course, students will have the opportunity to gain an understanding of how the fields of psychology and law intersect in individual, social, and public policy domains. Specifically, course material will encompass seminal case law influenced by contributions from psychology as well as the impact of psychological testing, evaluation, and research on the ever-evolving U.S. legal system. Information will also be presented regarding the distinctions between forensic and correctional psychology and career paths associated with each professional realm.

Teaching method planned: Lecture, class discussion, class demonstrations

Textbook and/or materials planned (including electronic/multimedia):

Greene, E., & Heilbrun, K. (2013). *Wrightsmen's Psychology and the Legal System* (8th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Additionally, assigned readings and materials will include relevant journal articles and multimedia (e.g., news outlets; youtube) videos and articles.

Course Content: (Please also see the attached syllabus.)

Topics to be covered in this course include:

- Introduction to Forensic Psychology—This introductory section of the course will explore the following questions to set the stage for subsequent lecture topics: What is forensic psychology? What is forensic psychology *not*? What criteria are used by judges to evaluate and render rulings on the admissibility of psychological evidence? What are characteristics of sound scientific research?
- Forensic Assessment—Information will be presented regarding the various types of psychological assessment evaluations conducted by forensic psychologists and their role in civil and criminal proceedings. Distinctions between forensic (primarily applied vs. primarily research) and correctional psychology career paths will also be outlined.
- The Trial Process—Lectures will focus on the major components of the trial process, emphasizing psychological theories contributing to each. Questions addressed will include the following: How are juries selected? What

- psychological theories inform the jury selection process? What is trial consulting, and what role does psychology play in that process? What research exists regarding the accuracy of eyewitness identification and testimony? What are the prevailing legal rulings regarding child eyewitness testimony?
- Competence and Insanity—A brief review of severe mental illness disorders will set the stage for lectures on the following questions: What is competence to stand trial? How is it evaluated? What are the legal standards for determining competence? What does it mean to plead Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity? How are criminal responsibility evaluations conducted? What is the difference between ultimate and penultimate expert testimony, and under what circumstances is either admissible or defensible? How do psychologists evaluate whether someone is feigning psychological symptomatology?
 - Psychopathy—Lectures will be devoted to research on psychopathic personality, a disorder legally mandated to be assessed in some criminal proceedings, including current research and debates about the core features of this disorder.
 - Violence Risk and Punishment—The final sections of the course will address the following questions: How do psychologists evaluate risk for future violence? What assessment instruments are used to evaluate violence risk? What does the research literature reflect about the relative predictive accuracy of violence risk assessment? What theories support criminal punishment? What prevailing case law exists regarding capital punishment?

**PSY 350: Forensic Psychology
Syllabus**

Professor: Shannon Smith, Ph.D.
Office: CEMC 109I
E-Mail: ssmith@fmarion.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:30pm and by appointment

Required Readings

1. Greene, E., & Heilbrun, K. (2013). *Wrightsmen's Psychology and the Legal System (8th Ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
2. Assigned readings on *Blackboard*
3. PowerPoint slide shows on *Blackboard*

Course Objectives

- 1. Gain an understanding of how the fields of psychology and law intersect in individual, social, and public policy domains.**
2. Become familiar with how the courts and the legal system influence the practice of psychology and mental health at both the individual and systemic level.
3. Gain an understanding of how the fields of psychology and mental health influence the legal field at both the individual and public policy level.
4. Become familiar with important case law that has helped shape the relationship between the mental health fields and the legal system.
5. Gain an understanding of the applications of psychology to various criminal justice and correctional issues.

Evaluation

Four tests will be administered that consist of 40 multiple-choice items each. These exams will be equally weighted, and the fourth will be non-comprehensive. Exam content is weighted heavily towards information covered in lectures but also will include questions related to information in the text and readings that are not reviewed in class. Please note that exams require both memorization as well as the application of theories and principles covered in class and the textbook. The grade ranges are as follows:

A	144-160
B+	140-143
B	128-139
C+	124-127
C	112-123
D+	108-111
D	96-111
F	0-95

These grade ranges are non-negotiable (e.g., if your cumulative points total is 143.99, you will receive a “B+” for the course; No exceptions).

Extra Credit Opportunity

Students will have the opportunity to gain 1 point of extra credit (equivalent to 1 multiple choice exam question) by completing and turning in a brief written assignment by no later than the end of class on [date to be determined]. Instructions for this assignment will be posted on Blackboard and described in class on the first day.

Attendance

You are expected to follow the attendance policy as described in the student rules. Noted earlier, information is presented in lectures that is not covered in the text. This information is fair game for exam questions. *Throughout the semester, class lectures will be important in terms of the coverage of information that appears on the exams.* Further, I reserve the right to amend the syllabus during the course. Announcements will be made during class regarding any changes made to the syllabus during the semester. **Please turn off your cell phones during class.**

Missed Exams

Students are expected to take the tests when they are scheduled. For students with documented university-approved absences that will occur on exam days, contact me before missing the test so that alternate arrangements can be made. All make-up exams will be in essay format.

Academic Honesty

If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing any portion of your assignments you will receive a zero for that assignment (in case of a group assignment all the group will receive a zero) and will be reported to the Francis Marion University administration for scholastic dishonesty.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Counseling and Testing 843-673-9707. I will need documentation from their office in order to provide the necessary accommodations.

Schedule

The outline below is tentative and serves only as an orientation to the ordering of topics to be covered. An updated syllabus will be provided if significant changes are made.

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Topic:</u>	<u>Readings:</u>
08/25:	Course Overview/ Orientation to Forensic Psychology	Wrightsman ch. 1; Brigham (1999) (Optional)
08/27:	Roles of Forensic Psychologists	Wrightsman ch. 2
09/01:	Forensic Assessment* Last Day to Turn in Extra Credit	Otto & Heilbrun (2002) *Extra Credit due by end of class
09/03:	Scientific Methodology	No assigned readings
09/08:	Correctional Psychology	Boothby & Clements (2000)
09/10:	Understanding Criminality	Wrightsman ch. 3
09/15:	Understanding Criminality	Wrightsman ch. 3
09/17:	<i>Exam 1</i>	
09/22:	Legal Decision Making: Trials	Wrightsman ch. 12-13
09/24:	Legal Decision Making: Trials	Strier (1999); Wrightsman ch. 12-13
09/29:	Legal Decision Making: Witnesses	Wrightsman ch. 5
10/01:	Legal Decision Making: Witnesses	Wrightsman ch. 5
10/06:	Legal Decision Making: Witnesses	Wrightsman ch. 5
10/08:	<i>Exam 2</i>	
10/13:	Fall Break (No Class)	

10/15:	Severe Mental Illness and Legal Decision-Making	No assigned readings
10/20:	Criminal Competency	Wrightsman ch. 10; <i>Dusky v. U. S.</i> (1960)
10/22:	Criminal Responsibility	Bonnie (1983) article
10/27:	Malingering	Rogers (1997) chapter
10/29:	Malingering	Rogers (1997) chapter
11/03:	Malingering	Rogers (1997) chapter
11/05:	<i>Exam 3</i>	
11/10:	Psychopathic Personality and the Legal System	Berg et al. (2013) article
11/12:	Psychopathic Personality and the Legal System	Skeem et al. (2011) article
11/17:	Psychopathic Personality and the Legal System	Skeem et al. (2011) article
11/19:	Understanding Violence	<i>Thapar v. Zezulka</i> (1999)
11/24:	Understanding Violence	<i>Thapar v. Zezulka</i> (1999)
11/26:	Thanksgiving Break (No Class)	
12/02:	Punishment & the Law	Wrightsman ch. 14; Testa & West (2010)
12/04:	Juvenile Justice	No assigned readings
12/15:	<i>Exam 4</i>	8:30-10:30am