

**Psychology 3710- Psychology and Law**  
**2:00-3:15pm on Mondays and Wednesdays in Gillham Hall 5300**  
**Spring 2012**

**Professor:**

*Dr. Kami London, PhD*

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Office hours: M 12:30-1:30 (or make an appt. The best way to do that is to email me.)

**Text:** Greene, E., & Heilbrun, K. (2011). *Wrightsmen's psychology and the legal system* (7th ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Other required readings for the class will be posted online. Readings will be announced in class. Guest speakers will be announced.

**Course Description:** The interface between psychological principles and our legal system will be explored. Topics include but are not limited to:

- a. Theories of criminal behavior
- b. Eyewitness identification and accuracy
- c. Competency to stand trial
- d. The insanity defense
- e. Analysis of victims and perpetrators

It is important that you remember that this is a 3000 level course. It is expected that you keep up with the readings and come to class fully prepared to discuss the relevant issues. The text will provide you with a broad theoretical background of the field while the articles will give you some real life examples of how psychology affects the real world. Classes will consist of lectures, videos, and discussions designed to expand on the material covered in the readings. **Regular class attendance and participation is expected.**

**Class Cancellations:** Although it is unlikely that a lecture will be canceled it is always a possibility. If something does happen where I need to cancel class I will send out an email to the email that is listed for you on the UT system.

**Course Requirements:**

Exams

There will be three non-cumulative exams, worth 100 points each.

Class Assignments

Activity assignments (Writing/Oral Assignments) (2 assignments- 50 points each) - There will be four different writing assignments that will correspond with in-class activities. You are to chose and complete 2 of the 4 assignments. Descriptions are provided later in the syllabus. Part of the graded portion of the work will be your oral participation in class on the day that the assignment is due. You will lose points on the assignment if you are not in class- NO EXCEPTIONS. Since you are allowed to choose 2 of 4 assignments participation in class should not be a problem.

Assignments have specific due dates that are listed on the class schedule. You will be docked 10% for every day that they are late. Because you have been told about these assignments in advance there will be no exceptions to this rule. If you will be attending a University sponsored event on the due date of an assignment, you will be expected to turn the assignment in early.

I expect that you will consult outside sources when you write your papers. It is VERY important that you cite things that are not your own thoughts. This includes, but is not limited to quotations. Make it clear which paper you have gotten the information from and if you do quote something give the page number. If you get information from your text book please cite the text as your source.

**The following grading criteria will be used for the class assignments (worth 50 points each)**

- ◆ Overall comprehension of articles and clarity of personal ideas, opinions, and thoughts (30 points)
- ◆ Spelling and grammar (10 points)
- ◆ Class participation on the activity day (10 points)

**Things to keep in mind when writing your assignments:**

- Do not use contractions (e.g., don't, can't, I'll), spell these words out (e.g., do not, cannot, I will...).
- Make sure that your thoughts make sense and that you have explained things in full.
  - Err on the side of giving too much information than not making it clear what your thought is by writing too little.
    - It is better to go over the page limit slightly than to be right on but not make sense.
- Do not simply give me a book report – I have read the articles already. I want to read about your thoughts and reactions to these issues.
- Do not use too many quotes – paraphrase!
- Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

**Grading:**

Your knowledge of the material covered in the lectures **and** in the book will be assessed with three exams. In addition there will be two class assignments.

Exams (3, each worth 100 points, for a total of 300 possible points)

- Their will be 3 non-cumulative exams.
  - **No make-up exams will be offered** unless your absence is excused by a University-sponsored activity or under unusual circumstances, such as personal hardship. Students are required to show proper documentation.
- Exams will cover the material from the lecture, videos, text book, readings, and in-class discussions. Keep in mind that some questions will expect you to apply learned information to real world situations.

In the event that you miss an exam or do poorly on one of the exams, you can take the optional Final Exam to replace your lowest or missing test grade. The Final Exam (Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>; 12:30-2:30) is completely optional and it can not hurt your grade. If your final exam grade ends up being your lowest grade, it will be dropped.

## Summary of Course Requirements and Grading:

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percentage of grade</u>
Exams	300	75
Class Assignments	100	25
TOTAL	400	100%

### Letter Grades

A	93+% > 370 points	C	73-76%	290-305
A-	90-92% 358-369	C-	70-72%	278-289
B+	87-89% 346-357	D+	67-69%	266-277
B	83-86% 330-345	D	63-66%	250-265
B-	80-82% 318-329	D-	60-62%	238-249
C+	77-79% 306-317	F	< 60%	<237

**IMPORTANT GRADING POLICY-** If you are on the borderline between two grades, do not ask me to bump your grade. After the entire class is done (including the final) I may bump a particular grade but only if the student has done everything possible to get the higher grade. This includes having taken the final exam.

### **Statement of academic honesty:**

It is important that all students do independent original work. Cheating on exams or other acts of dishonesty will be grounds for failure on a particular exam, an F grade for the course, and/or expulsion from the University.

### **Special needs:**

Students with special needs should contact the instructor about possible accommodations within the first few days of class.

**Studying:** If the grade you receive on an exam or a paper is not what you expected based on the amount of effort you put into studying, please EMAIL ME! I would be more than happy to go over your study habits with you and possibly give you some ideas for how to study more efficiently. However, I cannot give you help if you do not tell me that you need it.

**THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE INSTRUCTOR'S DISCRETION. CHANGES WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN CLASS. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL CLASS ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

### Tentative Class Schedule/Outline

Date	Topic	Assignments
Jan 9	Introduction	
11	Legal Dilemmas	Chap 1
16	<i>No class- MLK day</i>	
18	Legal Dilemmas/Psychologists and the legal system	
23	Psychologists and the law	
25	<b><u>ACTIVITY DAY- ASSIGN #1 DUE</u></b>	
30	The Legal System	Chap 2
Feb 1	Attorneys	
6	Attorneys/Police	Chap 4
8	Police	
13	Video "Witchhunt"	
15	Psychology of Crime	Chap 3
20	<b><u>ACTIVITY DAY-ASSIGN #2 DUE</u></b>	
22	<b>EXAM #1</b>	
27	Guest speaker attorney Lorin Zaner	
29	Repressed memory	Loftus
Mar 5	<i>Enjoy spring break!</i>	
7	<i>spring break</i>	
12	Eyewitness memory	Chap 5
14	Video- "The mind of a serial killer"	
19	Profiling as a criminal investigation tool	Chap 6
21	Lie detection	
26	Confessions and false confessions	
28	Competence and NGRI	Chap 8
Apr 2	<b><u>ACTIVITY DAY- ASSIGN #3 DUE</u></b>	
4	<b>EXAM # 2</b>	
9	Juries	Chap 12
11	Children and the law	London
16	Children and the law	
18	Punishment and Sentencing	Chap 14
23	<b><u>ACTIVITY DAY- ASSIGN #4 DUE</u></b>	
25	<b>Exam 3</b>	

Optional final exam is scheduled for  
 May 3<sup>RD</sup> 12:30- 2:30pm.

## **Writing Assignment #1 - Analyzing the ethical dilemmas associated with recent changes in the law.**

Below are four legislative issues that have made news. Analyze one of the issues in a 4-5 page typed paper.

In your paper, identify which legal dilemmas are relevant to the current issue. For each relevant legal dilemma, describe the argument that could be made for each side. Is there any scientific evidence to support one side or the other? (To answer this you'll have to do some outside research). Provide a dialectic analysis of the current issue (i.e., the decision in the case leaned toward which ethical view?) Then describe how you, yourself, would lean on each of the legal dilemmas that you identify. Explain your reasons.

CHOOSE FROM ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. In 1996, Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) introduced a measure to Congress that extended the ban on gun purchases and ownership to people convicted of a domestic violence offense. The legislation passed and was signed into law by Pres. Bill Clinton. Individuals convicted of domestic violence offenses cannot own or purchase firearms.
2. Over 166 communities in the United States have specific curfews for minors. For example, a midnight curfew exists in Houston for adolescents under the age of 17. A similar curfew existed in Washington DC. On Oct. 29, 1996 federal Judge Emmet G. Sullivan ruled that DC's curfew law was unconstitutional.
3. Recently the communities across the country have enacted a smoking ban in all public places. In many communities, a ban was enacted but there was an attempt by elected council members to repeal and/or modify the ban after it went into effect. In Toledo, the attempted repeal was not successful.
4. On July 28, Congress passed the Fair Sentencing Act (S.1789) to restore fairness to Federal cocaine sentencing. The legislation is aimed at reducing the sentencing disparity for those convicted of possession of crack cocaine versus powder cocaine and eliminating mandatory minimum sentencing. Under the current sentencing guidelines, conviction on a charge of possession of five grams of crack cocaine draws a mandatory prison term of five years and possession of 10 grams draws a mandatory 10-year prison sentence. In order to get a 5 year sentence for cocaine, one would have to possess 500 grams of cocaine.

The sentencing differences between crack and cocaine lead to more African Americans spending long amounts of time in jail for crack while white, affluent cocaine users spent less time in jail for a possessing a drug that is essentially the same as crack. Judges had no discretion to mitigate the sentence for first-time or nonviolent offenders. The new law has moved to reduce any mandatory minimum sentence and makes cocaine and crack possession more similar.

**Writing/Reading assignment #2:**

Read two articles available on myut:

Beyond all reason. Case study of Bobby Thompson, a 10-year old murderer

John Wayne Gacy Case study of a serial killer.

Turn in a 4-5 page paper which does the following:

Use the information from Chapter 3 to attempt to explain the crimes of John Wayne Gacy and Bobby Thompson. Which theories of criminality best explain each murderer? Are there similarities and differences in the backgrounds of the two?

**Writing Assignment #3 NGRI Assignment:**

Read: "A suitable punishment: The future of the insanity defense."

AND two of the following articles that are case studies of a killer:

"The jury trial of Mac the Knife"

"Land of Opportunity"

"Razor fruitcake"

"Psycho Killer- *Que'est-Ce Que C'est?*"

These readings are from

Woychuk, D. (1996). *Attorney for the damned: A lawyer's life with the criminally insane.* Free Press: New York.

In your 4-5 page paper:

1. Briefly describe the case studies you read (either "The jury trial of Mac the Knife", "Land of opportunity", "Psycho Killer- *Que'est-Ce Que C'est?*" or "Razor fruitcake").

Describe how they matched (or did not match) your view of the NGRI defense.

2. We now have two different systems to employ in dealing with individuals who deviate from societal norms (the criminal justice system and the mental health system). Each uses a different model to deal with deviance. Discuss at least 3 advantages you can think of for using a criminal justice model. Then discuss at least 3 advantages for a mental health model.

3. If you could create a perfect world, which of the two systems would you use and when? Or since you are creating a perfect world, can you think of a better system? Describe it.

#### Writing Assignment #4: Death Penalty Issues

For this writing assignment you chose a topic and are given the task of arguing for and against a position. Construct the best arguments for the position and then construct the best arguments against your position. In other words, present both sides of the argument in your 4-5 page paper.

Hint: As you argue your case you might want to keep in mind the main criteria that people use to support the death penalty.

1. Should juveniles (those under the age of 18) be given the death penalty? I am not asking you to argue in favor or against the death penalty but whether it should apply to people who commit crimes before becoming an adult.
2. Should mental retardation be a sufficient reason for a murderer NOT to be considered for the death penalty?
3. In Arizona, a panel of judges (not jurors made a determination about whether or not a person should receive the death penalty). The Supreme Court struck down this practice and required that jurors make that decision.
4. In your book, there was considerable discussion about how procedures for death qualification might result in a biased jury. One proposed solution is to have bifurcated death penalty trials where "regular" jurors decide on guilt or innocence, and death qualified jurors convene only to decide on sentencing of those who are found guilty.