

Forensic Psychology

Course Syllabus PSY 330.50 (Split B Term)

Instructor: Dr. Brooke Bennett-Day
Class meets: Online; Once-weekly live chat times TBA
Email: bbennettday@wesleyancollege.edu
Office hours: M 12:30-3pm, W 1:30-4pm and by appointment (virtual or in person)
Textbook: Costanzo & Krauss (3rd ed.) Forensic and Legal Psychology
Additional materials available via Canvas.

Course Description and Objectives

"The courts will have to learn, sooner or later, that the individual differences of men can be tested to-day by the methods of experimental psychology far beyond anything which common sense and social experience suggest."

Hugo Münsterberg (1908)

This course provides an examination of the interface between psychology and legal issues, particularly within the United States. Research on judges, juries, and defendants are among topics covered, as well as the role of psychologists in the legal system. At the end of this semester, a student in this course should be able to

- Identify key information and procedures of the legal system (e.g. the steps of the judicial process, amendments common to court cases, guidelines for juries, etc.)
- Appreciate the various roles that psychologists may play in the legal system
- Explain the impact of psychological factors (e.g., memory, social cognition, stereotypes, etc.) in the legal system
- Evaluate current practices in the legal system (e.g., confessions, eyewitness identification, jury selection & deliberation, punishment, etc.) using relevant psychological findings
- Compose professional documents with the intention to persuade or educate (e.g., letter to the editor, op-ed, letter to government official, etc.)
- Value the influence that any given psychology student (or citizen, interested party, etc.) can have on the legal system, as well as reflecting on one's own responsibility for change

Classroom Expectations

Online courses offer great flexibility for students who have busy schedules. Please keep in mind, though, that “online” does not equal easy! The most effective online courses are not self-paced independent studies but highly interactive, collaborative learning environments where we can hold in-depth conversations, ask hard questions, and share our work in progress—just as we would if we were meeting face-to-face. Being successful in an online course at Wesleyan requires careful time management, attention to detail, a willingness to ask for help when you need it, and the ability to read detailed instructions and work independently.

Because we will not be meeting together in a traditional classroom, you will be responsible for participating and demonstrating your understanding of course material in different ways: through our weekly live chat sessions, discussion forums, and online assignments.

To ensure that you are participating fully and successfully in this course, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- ✓ You should join each discussion forum and live chat activity on time and prepared to participate fully in class discussions and collaborative activities. Always have on hand your notebooks, pens/pencils, and any other materials requested by your professor. Frequent tardiness, absences, low participation, and/or unpreparedness may result in a lower course grade.
- ✓ Your professor will offer at a real-time meeting in our virtual classroom each week. These live chat sessions are a vital opportunity for you to ask questions, ensure you are on track with your understanding, and interact with your classmates and professor—just as you would in a face-to-face classroom. Weekly live chat attendance is flexible, but missing a live chat session is the same as missing class time. Please be aware you are responsible for all information, instructions, and discussion points covered during the sessions regardless of whether you attended. You should aim to attend a minimum of five live chats over the course of the term, but attending more often will boost your overall performance in this course. If for some reason you cannot attend a weekly live chat session, you should plan to review the recording and complete a Live Chat Exit Ticket by the end of the week. The recording and Live Chat exit ticket info will be linked from the same page where the weekly chat information is posted. A live chat scheduling poll and further instructions

will be provided prior to the start of class, with results shared in the first few days.

- ✓ You should initiate communication with your professor when help or extensions are needed and resolve any technical issues as soon as possible.
- ✓ You should check your Wesleyan email daily and respond to your professor's e-mail requests within 24 hours (sooner would be better).
- ✓ Every week you will have reading and assignments to be completed. As a rule of thumb, you should expect to spend 6–7 hours each week participating in forum discussions, attending (or reviewing the recordings of) live chat sessions, studying independently, and completing homework. Be sure to plan your weekly schedule carefully to ensure you have adequate time to complete course activities and assignments thoroughly and on time.
- ✓ Meeting scheduled deadlines is essential. You are expected to submit assignments in a timely and regular fashion without reminders from your professor. Don't wait until the last minute because computer problems, last minute disasters, and sudden outages DO happen!

Notice of Additional Campus-Wide Academic Policies

All other Wesleyan College Academic Policies will be upheld in this course. It is each student's responsibility to be familiar with these policies and abide by them. For more information, see the Campus-Wide Academic Policies handout posted alongside this course syllabus on our Canvas course site.

Academic Integrity

Wesleyan's Academic Integrity Policy will be upheld in this course. Refer to Wesleyan's Campus-Wide Academic Policies for more information. I do not tolerate plagiarism and cheating within my courses. Instances of either will result in a zero for that exam or assignment, with possible further repercussions as per college guidelines and instructor discretion. Be aware that your summaries of research findings should be in your own words, just like everything else.

Using Respondus LockDown Browser for Online Exams:

This course requires the use of Respondus LockDown Browser and video monitoring for online quizzes and exams. If you have not already registered with Respondus and paid the \$15 fee within the last twelve months, you will be required to do so for this course. Refer to Wesleyan's Campus-Wide Academic Policies for more information.

Virtual Classroom & Forum Behavior

Civility in the Academic Community:

Students, faculty, and staff are expected to treat one another with respect in all interactions. In the classroom, rude, disruptive and/or disrespectful behaviors as determined by a faculty member interfere with other students' rights and with the professor's ability to teach. Therefore, any student exhibiting unacceptable behaviors during a class will be asked to leave and will be counted absent for that class period. Failure to cooperate with this process will result in disciplinary action that may include withdrawal from the class or dismissal from the College. Violations will be reported to the Provost.

Privacy in the Classroom:

In order to promote an environment in which ideas may be freely expressed, the interior office and classroom spaces at Wesleyan are private spaces. The unauthorized creation of photographic images, audio, or video recordings of students or faculty in these spaces is considered to be disruptive behavior which may result in a student's removal from class according to the professor's discretion. The distribution of any such recordings of students or faculty without the express written permission of the College is strictly prohibited and is subject to disciplinary action by the Provost of the College.

Personal Electronic Devices:

Electronic devices (such as televisions, cell phones, tablets, and iPods) may not be used during live chat time, group work, or individual appointments. All devices must be turned off (or in silent mode) and stowed out of sight. Remember to stay with your professor in the virtual classroom at all times (no toggling between Internet windows!) unless instructed to do otherwise.

Grading and Exams

Exams (225 pts total). There will be three equally weighted exams (75 points each). Each exam will consist of a timed objective item section (1/3 of exam grade) and a take-home essay section (2/3 of exam grade). In order to allow for more in-depth responses, the essay section will be assigned at least 1 week ahead of time. The timed portion will be available during a provided window of time. If

extenuating circumstances impact your ability to take it within that window, please contact me ASAP.

Be sure to give yourself enough time to complete each exam so that you don't get locked out of the system. I will send an email reminder regarding each exam. Given that the window in which to take the exam is pretty broad, I can't guarantee that I'm always right by my phone should an issue arise. However, I will plan on checking in frequently to the extent that I can. Texts or emails sent after 10pm may not receive a response until the next day.

Professional writing (50 pts total). As an applied psychology course, one of the objectives that we incorporate is some aspect of "giving psychology away." For this class, you'll be completing two written assignments aimed at allowing you to share your understanding of the field, as well as your ideas for change, with a larger audience. These may include a letter to the editor, an op-ed, or a letter to a government or agency official. Additional details will be provided on these, including class time on how to do this type of writing.

Discussion board (80pts total). Each full week there will be a question to respond to on the discussion board. For our class, these posts are just a way to get to know each other a little better, and check in with your thoughts on the material. Each week's participation on the discussion board can earn a potential 10 points, including your initial post and two responses as requested for that week. Initial posts are due on Mondays, in order to give everyone time to respond to each other's ideas before the week closes out on Thursday night. See the separate guidelines for discussion board posts on Canvas.

Live chat (80 pts total). Each week will have a live chat associated with it. Within each week's module on Canvas, you'll notice that I have a feature topic. Make sure that you've reviewed that material prior to the chat, as we'll be working primarily with that. Depending on the week, we might also be incorporating some exam review, reflection about a past exam, or preparation for an upcoming assignment. There will be more info on how to participate in the live chat on Canvas, along with details on how to earn your points if you have to miss a chat.

Grading Scale

The grading scale in the class will be as follows:

A=90-100%

B=80-89%

C=70-79%

D=60-69%

F=59% And Below

You may track your running point total throughout the term via our Canvas course site. Please be aware, however, that the course grade you see in Canvas will reflect only assignments and activities you have already completed and that your professor has graded.

Late Work, Make Up, and Extensions

It's a good idea to go ahead and put deadlines on your calendar so that they won't surprise you. Should you find that you miss a major deadline, written responses (including the exam essays) may be turned in up to 3 days late for a 10% per day penalty. Discussion Board Posts are not accepted late for credit, as their purpose is to help prepare for our class sessions. In extenuating circumstances*, individual plans may be made regarding the completion of course assignments. If you feel this applies to you, please check in with me as soon as you are able.

* This would require relevant documentation and typically consultation with someone outside of this course, such as the Provost, Dean of Students, Director of Disability and Advocacy Services, etc.

Class schedule

Our typical online week will run Friday through Thursday to allow you the weekends for independent reading and studying as you choose. Each Friday morning, you will find all of the upcoming week's course work posted on our course site. Make it a habit to take some time on Fridays to log in to our course site and look over your next set of readings, assignments, and deadlines so you may plan your study time accordingly.

Week 1

Getting acquainted with each other and our course and the basics of psychology as applied to the legal system.

Chapter: 1

Graded assignments: Discussion Board; Live Chat

Week 2

Causes of crime, creating change within a system, and confessions

Chapter: 2

Graded assignments: Discussion Board; Live Chat

Week 3

Evaluating evidence; lie detection; forensic identification

Chapters: 3 & 4

Graded assignments: Discussion Board, Live Chat, Exam 1

Week 4

Eyewitnesses

Chapter: 7

Graded assignments: Discussion Board, Live Chat

Week 5

Competence and the insanity defense

Chapters: 8 & 10

Graded assignments: Discussion Board, Live Chat, Written Assignment 1

Week 6

Juries and jury decision-making

Chapter: 9 & 12

Graded assignments: Discussion Board, Live Chat, Exam 2

Week 7

Risk assessment and corrections

Chapters: 15 & 16

Graded assignments: Discussion Board, Live Chat, Written Assignment 2

Week 8

Death penalty and wrapping up the semester

Chapter: 17

Graded assignments: Discussion Board, Live Chat, Exam 3

Potential Changes to Course Schedule

The week-to-week schedule is a general plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary and will be announced in advance via announcement and/or email. Students should check their Canvas course site announcements and Wesleyan Gmail accounts at least once every twenty-four hours throughout the term to watch for updates regarding this course.