

- **PSYCHOLOGY 405 – Spring 2024**
Mystery, Madness, and Murder

Course Instructor: Noushin Jamaatlou
Office Hours: By Appointment Only
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Course Overview:

Psychology 405 is an exciting course where you'll learn to apply psychological principles to areas related to mystery, murder, and madness! The course covers psychological topics related to season 1 of the Serial Podcast, serial killers Richard Kuklinski & Luka Magnotta, and the vigilante Batman. The end of the semester will consist of student group presentations on a semester long project.

This class is entirely online. There are no required meeting times. Please read this syllabus very carefully to be sure you understand all aspects and requirements of the class

Grading Scheme:

Lecture Summaries- 25%

Each week that I post a lecture, I will also create a *Forum* on the discussion board for that lecture. Within the forum, please create a *thread*. In the subject line of the thread enter your first and last name, and in the message portion submit a 1-2 paragraph summary of the lecture. The purpose of this is to ensure you are watching and paying attention to the lectures.

Journal Article Summaries- 20%

Each week that I post a journal article(s), I will also create a Forum on the discussion board for that week's journal article(s) (just one Forum for all journal articles). Within the forum for a particular week's journal articles, please create a thread. In the subject line of the thread enter your first and last name, and in the message portion, submit **one** paragraph for **each** journal article. Within each paragraph, summarize the journal article and relate it to topic(s) from the podcast (you may relate information from the journal article to information from *any* episode of the podcast)

Discussion Board classroom discussions- 20%

Most weeks I will also create a forum on the discussion board where we discuss, as a class, topics related to that week's material. The way this will work is, I will create the forum, but *you* will create threads within those forums. These threads are meant to spark discussions on how the particular psychological principles we are discussing that week relate to topics from the podcast. In order to engage in a discussion within a current thread, within that thread *reply* to other people's posts. Each student is required to post at least (but post as much as you would like) **two threads a semester** and contribute at least **2 replies a week**. Forums for a specific week will only be open for that week.

Final group presentation- 35%

In the middle of the semester you will form groups (of about 4-5 people) and begin working on a project within your individual group. The project is to create a 25-minute presentation in which you

psychologically analyze a topic related to mystery, murder, and/or madness. I will give more information about this when the time comes.

Grading Scale

Grades will be calculated as follows: 98% - 100% = A+, 93-97 = A, 90 – 92 = A-, 87 – 89 = B+, 83 – 86 = B, 80 – 82 = B-, 77 – 79 = C+, 73 – 76 = C, 70 – 72 = C-, 60 – 69 = D, < 60 = F

Class Cancellation Policy:

In the event that class is cancelled, I will notify you via email. I will also include information regarding make up assignments.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Podcast episodes/Reading(s)/Watching(s)	Work Due (Due dates at bottom*)
Week1_1/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Syllabus Walkthrough video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce yourself (answer the questions) <p>Due 1/21 by midnight</p>
Week2_1/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serial, Memory, and Constructive Nature of Memory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episodes 1-4 Loftus, 1975 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal Article Summary Lecture Summary Discussion Board classroom discussions <p>Due 1/28 by midnight</p>
Week3_1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serial and Social Cognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episodes 5-6 Nisbett & Wilson, 1977 Graham & Lowery, 2004 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Summary Journal Article Summary Discussion classroom discussions <p>Due 2/4 by midnight</p>
Week4_2/05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serial and Police Questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episodes 7-8. Kassin and Kiechel, 1996 Kassin, Drizin, Grisso, 2005 Making a Murder, Season 1, episode 3 (on Netflix) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal Article Summary Discussion Board classroom discussions <p>Due 2/11 by midnight</p>

Week5_2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serial and Social Perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episode 9 Findley, 2006; O'Brien, 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Summary Journal Article Summary Discussion Board classroom discussions <p>Due 2/18 by midnight</p>
Week6_2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serial and Juror Decision Making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episode 10 Berman & Cutler, 1996 Jones & Kaplan, 2003. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Summary Journal Article Summary Discussion Board classroom discussions <p>Due 2/25 by midnight</p>
Week7_2/26	Personality Disorders and Serial Killers	The Iceman interview—Richard Kuklinski Analysis (via YouTube)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Summary Discussion Board classroom discussions <p>Due 3/03 by midnight</p>
3/04-3/10	Spring Recess (No Classes)		
Week9_3/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personality Disorders and Serial Killers 	Don't F*ck with Cats (via Netflix)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Board classroom discussions <p>Due 3/17 by midnight</p>
Week10_3/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serial Wrap-up lecture and class Debate on whether Adnan Syed is a psychopath (Conducted within the Discussion Board—more information will be given on this) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Episodes 11-12 Hare Psychopathy Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal Article Summary Discussion Board classroom discussions <p>Due 3/24 by midnight</p>
Week11_3/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batman and Psychopathology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batman Begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture Summary Discussion Board classroom discussions <p>Due 3/31 by midnight</p>
Week12_4/01	Work on Group Projects	.	
Week13_4/08	Work on Group Projects		
Week14_4/15	Work on Group Projects		
Week15_4/22	Work on Group Projects		Group projects is due on 4/29

*Partial credit for work after the due date.

Important Dates:

First day of Spring Classes: Tuesday, January 16

Last day to add: Tuesday, January 23

Last day to drop (No tuition Penalty): Tuesday, January 30

Unrestricted withdrawal period: February 07 – February 20

University Closed: March 04- March 10 (Spring Break)

General Policies**Official Communications via GMU E-mail**

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Technology

Since this class is exclusively held online, you must have access to a computer and Blackboard. All assignments will be available on Blackboard.

Title IX Statement

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

The Honor Code

Students in this course are expected to behave at all times in a manner consistent with the GMU Honor System and Code. (<http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>). Students are encouraged to study together as much as possible throughout the course, however, no assistance, sharing of information, or discussion of exam items or answers between students may take place. For all work, the name that appears on the paper must be the author. Violations of the Honor Code will not be tolerated in this course and will be immediately reported according to GMU procedures. The instructor reserves the right to use software to determine the extent to which the work is the student’s. The instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation.

Disability Help

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Miscellaneous:

Official Communications via GMU Email: Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their mason email account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly. As a tip, please include your G-number and the course section in the subject of the email in all email correspondences with all instructors. Recording of classroom lectures is not allowed without explicit permission by the instructor.

Students may not reproduce (including uploading to the Internet) any portion of the exam. Students who attempt to photograph or in any way capture information about the exam for others' use will be reported for an honor violation.

Life is stressful and we all need a little support sometimes. Students are encouraged to contact Counseling & Psychological Services (3129 Student Union Building I, <http://caps.gmu.edu/>) at 993-2380 for assistance with any kind of psychological/life problem or crisis situation. I can help with referrals for students with particular counseling needs so please feel free to talk with me for help with anything.