

PSYC 441: Criminal Behavior: Psychological and Neurological Aspects (3 credits)

Spring 2024

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Office hours: All available appointments can be viewed and made by logging on to the following website: <https://meetme.so/JustinRamsdell>

Course Description

Explore the individual psychological factors, and structural and functional neurological differences, that influence criminal behaviors by focusing on individual psychological development, the role of temperament, morality, and personality development, narcissism, evolution, psychopathy, and factors that influence specific criminal acts including murder, sexual violence, and mass casualty events.

Blackboard Login Instructions

Access to [MyMason](#) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Please make sure to update your computer and prepare yourself to begin using the online format BEFORE the first day of class. Check [the IT Support Center](#) website. Navigate to [the Student Support page](#) for help and information about Blackboard. In the menu bar to the left you will find all the tools you need to become familiar with for this course. Take time to learn each. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. Become familiar with the attributes of Blackboard and online learning.

Required Textbooks

- None – All material available online via the Blackboard website for the course.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Describe and classify individual psychological and neurological factors (structural and functional) that influence behaviors associated with various crimes.
2. Examine and appraise how individual psychological and neurological factors may interact with each other, and with other social factors, to influence the criminal behaviors of interest.
3. Demonstrate understanding of the complex interactions of individual psychological and neurological factors, as well as other social factors, through the application to real life criminal cases.
4. Critically evaluate and compare the acceptance and validity of psychological theories that explain the criminal behaviors of interest.
5. Design and construct various visual aids to outline and explain the individual psychological and neurological factors of interest.

Technology Requirements

Hardware: You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and access to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to hear recorded content and a headset with a microphone is recommended for the best experience. For the amount of Hard Disk Space required taking a distance education course, consider and allow for:

1. the storage amount needed to install any additional software and
2. space to store work that you will do for the course.

If you consider the purchase of a new computer, please go to [Patriot Tech](http://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel_dataPageID_4609=6233) http://itservices.gmu.edu/services/view-service.cfm?customel_dataPageID_4609=6233 to see recommendations.

Software: Many courses use Blackboard as the learning management system. You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the [myMason Portal](#). See [supported browsers and operating systems](#). Log in to [myMason](#) to access your registered courses. Some courses may use other learning management systems. Check the syllabus or contact the instructor for details. Online courses typically use [Acrobat Reader](#), [Flash](#), [Java](#), and [Windows Media Player](#), [QuickTime](#) and/or [Real Media Player](#). Your computer should be capable of running current versions of those applications. Also, make sure your computer is protected from viruses by downloading the latest version of Symantec Endpoint Protection/Anti-Virus software for free [here](#).

Students owning Macs or Linux should be aware that some courses may use software that only runs on Windows. You can set up a Mac computer with Boot Camp or virtualization software so Windows will also run on it. Watch [this video](#) about using Windows on a Mac. Computers running Linux can also be configured with virtualization software or configured to dual boot with Windows.

Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

Module 1: Anger		
Date	Task	Notes
1/16	Class	In-person class session
1/18	Class	In-person class session
1/21	Quiz	Module 1 Quiz due
1/21	Assignment	Module 1 Assignment due

Module 2: Fear and Disgust		
Date	Task	Notes
1/23	Class	In-person class session
1/25	Class	In-person class session
1/28	Quiz	Module 2 Quiz due
1/28	Assignment	Module 2 Assignment due

Module 3: Embarrassment, Jealousy, and Envy		
Date	Task	Notes
1/30	Class	In-person class session
2/1	Class	In-person class session
2/4	Quiz	Module 3 Quiz due
2/4	Assignment	Module 3 Assignment due

Module 4: Pride, Narcissism, and Empathy		
Date	Task	Notes
2/6	Class	In-person class session
2/8	Class	In-person class session
2/11	Quiz	Module 4 Quiz due
2/11	Assignment	Module 4 Assignment due

Module 5: Media Influences and Temperament		
Date	Task	Notes
2/13	Class	In-person class session
2/15	Class	In-person class session
2/18	Quiz	Module 5 Quiz due
2/18	Assignment	Module 5 Assignment due

Module 6: Evolutionary Aspects of Behavior and Upbringing		
Date	Task	Notes
2/20	Class	In-person class session
2/22	Class	In-person class session
2/25	Quiz	Module 6 Quiz due
2/25	Assignment	Module 6 Assignment due

Module 7: White Nationalism		
Date	Task	Notes
2/27	No Class	No In-person class session
2/29	Class	In-person class session
3/3	Quiz	Module 7 Quiz due
3/3	Assignment	Module 7 Assignment due

Spring Break		
Date	Task	Notes
3/4 – 3/10	No Class	Enjoy Spring Break

Module 8: Mass Attackers and Terrorists		
Date	Task	Notes
3/12	Class	In-person class session
3/14	Class	In-person class session
3/17	Quiz	Module 8 Quiz due
3/17	Assignment	Module 8 Assignment due

Module 9: Psychopaths		
Date	Task	Notes
3/19	Class	In-person class session
3/21	Class	In-person class session
3/24	Quiz	Module 9 Quiz due
3/24	Assignment	Module 9 Assignment due

Module 10: ...Even More Psychopaths		
Date	Task	Notes
3/26	Class	In-person class session
3/28	Class	In-person class session
3/31	Quiz	Module 10 Quiz due
3/31	Assignment	Module 10 Assignment due

Module 11: Last of the Psychopaths and Murder		
Date	Task	Notes
4/2	Class	In-person class session
4/4	Class	In-person class session
4/7	Quiz	Module 11 Quiz due
4/7	Assignment	Module 11 Assignment due

Module 12: Sadistic Murder		
Date	Task	Notes
4/9	Class	In-person class session
4/11	Class	In-person class session
4/14	Quiz	Module 12 Quiz due
4/14	Assignment	Module 12 Assignment due

Module 13: Sex Offenders		
Date	Task	Notes
4/16	Class	In-person class session
4/18	Class	In-person class session
4/21	Quiz	Module 13 Quiz due
4/21	Assignment	Module 13 Assignment due

Module 14: A Bunch of Other Crimes		
Date	Task	Notes
4/23	Class	In-person class session
4/25	No Class	No in-person class session
4/28	Quiz	Module 14 Quiz Due
4/28	Assignment	Module 14 Assignment Due
5/3	Assignment	Remaking The Aggressive Behavior Guide

Assignments Description

1. **Weekly Quizzes (42% total):** There are 14 weekly quizzes during the course of the semester.
 - a. Online quizzes must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm each week.
 - b. These quizzes are untimed, and you may use whatever resources you wish to answer the questions, including online content from the Blackboard site and the posted PowerPoint presentations.
 - c. Each quiz is worth 3% of your overall grade in the course.
 - d. Quizzes not completed by the due date will be subject to a 5% per day late penalty. Exceptions can be made in accordance with the late policy.
2. **Weekly Assignments (42% total)** – There will be an assignment every week posted to Blackboard (instructions will also be on Blackboard). The assignment must be completed by Sunday night.
3. **Redraw the “Aggressive Behavior Model” (16% total)** – Given what you have learned in the course, and how we have been using the “Aggressive Behavior Guide,” there are bound to be some parts of the aggressive behavior guide that do not make sense to you or feel out of place.
 - a. Your assignment is to draw your own version of the “Aggressive Behavior Guide” with the changes that you think make the most sense. There are several ways to go about doing this:
 - i. Redesign the entire thing taking all variables into account. Literally delete it and start from scratch.
 - ii. Remakes the current guide but add (or remove) variables, move lines around, really... it’s up to you.
 - b. Your re-designed guide can be made in any computer program of your choosing, or can be hand drawn as long as it is legible and understandable.

Course Policies

- **Late Assignments:** Late work will be penalized at 5 percent per day. If an assignment is worth 100 points, and is 5 days late, 25 points will be automatically deducted, and grading will start at 75. If there is a legitimate emergency, non-penalty extensions will be considered.
- **Make-up Policy:** Make-up exams will only be administered in special circumstances. Prior approval should be obtained if circumstances allow. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time.
- **Extra-Credit Assignments:** There will be no extra credit assignments in this course. Please complete assignments and quizzes accordingly

- **Instructor-Student Communication:** I will respond to your emails within 48 hours. If I will be away from email for more than one day, I will post an announcement in the Blackboard course folder. Before sending an email, please check the following (available on your Blackboard course menu) unless the email is of a personal nature: 1) Syllabus, 2) "Ask the Professor Forum," (feel free to respond to other students in the Ask Professor forum if you know the answer) or 3) On-demand Blackboard videos on how to use Blackboard features, and Technical Requirements.
- **Technology.** You will need a reliable computer and internet access to view course materials in Blackboard. You will need to video record your two role-plays and you can do that with a smartphone or other video camera, such as Kaltura CaptureSpace in Blackboard.

Grading Scale

A+	97-100%
A	93-97%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D	65-69%
F	Less than 65%

University Policies and Resources

- Academic Honesty:** GMU seeks to foster a spirit of academic honesty and integrity. This is as important to your professional development as the knowledge you gain in your course work. Violations of academic integrity includes: cheating on exams or homework assignments (e.g. copying the work of others), passing off someone else's ideas as your own (plagiarism), and engaging in dishonesty of any kind with respect to your classroom participation and assignments. Failure to uphold these standards will result in immediate consequences (i.e. not a warning) commensurate with the violation, which may include a failing grade on the assignment and/or referral to the appropriate University resources. You are expected to be familiar with and abide by the University's Honor Code. The Code can be found [here](#).
- Plagiarism:** Any work submitted by a student must represent original work produced by that student. Any source used by a student must be documented through normal scholarly references and citations. The extent to which any sources have been used must be apparent to the reader. Everything used from other sources - ideas from other's or actual language - must be cited. This policy includes the use of materials from the World Wide Web. With respect to plagiarism, it is always best to err on the side of caution. If you are caught plagiarizing material, the assignment will receive a failing grade and you will not have the opportunity to re-submit

the assignment. Additionally, depending on the severity of the violation, you may be referred to the appropriate University resources.

- c. Students must follow the university policy for [Responsible Use of Computing](#)
- d. <http://summer.gmu.edu/registration/> Student services: The University provides range of services to help you succeed academically and you should make use of these if you think they could benefit you. I also invite you to speak to me (the earlier the better).
- e. [Privacy and Communication](#): Student privacy is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). As a result, students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important information about this class, including any communication with the professor via digital communication. Please allow 24 hours (48 on weekends) for a response to email messages. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- f. [The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. Counseling Center: Student Union I, Room 364, 703-993-2380.
- g. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the [George Mason University Office of Disability Services \(ODS\)](#). If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Room 4205; 703-993-2474) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me by the second week of class to discuss your accommodation needs. Accommodation can only be made in cases in which proper documentation has been provided through the Office of Disability Services.
- h. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- i. [The George Mason University Writing Center](#) staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. University Writing Center: Robinson Hall Room A114, 703-993-1200. The writing center includes assistance for students for whom English is a second language.
- j. [Diversity](#): An emphasis on diversity and inclusion is essential to achieve our goals as a campus community. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds, and practices have to opportunity to be heard and respected. This commitment to diversity is included in all University settings. GMU promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment with respect to diversity and seeks to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group, and organization to make improvements as needed. If you feel, in any way, that any aspect of your personal characteristics, viewpoints, or perspectives are not being respect, please talk to me. I will listen.