

PSYCHOLOGY 405: Mystery, Madness, and Murder
Fall 2012

Instructor: Jessica Dunn

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Office Hours: David King Hall, 1004G MW 10:30-11:30

Class Times/Location: 405-002: MW 12:00-1:15pm, Planetary Hall 124

REQUIRED TEXT:

Bartol & Bartol. (2011). *Criminal Behavior: A Psychological Approach* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall. ISBN-10: 0135050502 | ISBN-13: 9780135050507.

(Please note that some in-class assignments may use the textbook. It is recommended that you have the book to succeed in the course, but as we do not have exams it is not *absolutely* required. Older editions are acceptable as well.)

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS:

The purpose of the synthesis course is to provide students with the opportunity to synthesize the knowledge, skills and values gained from the general education curriculum. Synthesis courses strive to expand students' ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills across the disciplines. Assigned readings and the independent research required for engaged participation will utilize and expand on research, communication, and writing skills acquired in other courses.

TECHNOLOGY:

Students will be expected to access and use Blackboard on a regular basis (<https://courses.gmu.edu/>). Important class information, such as the syllabus and assignments, will be posted here.

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 e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss and apply the material. Students are required to read any texts that may be assigned for that week. Class reading assignments will be posted on Blackboard. You are responsible for being prepared to discuss the material, and are expected to actively participate in discussion with your classmates about the material.

IN-CLASS PRACTICE DEBATES:

Throughout the semester, you will meet with 3-5 classmates (which will eventually be your debate group) to practice presenting. You will be provided a summary of a real-life case or a current topic of interest to review (e.g. insanity defense, serial killers, etc.), and will argue how the prosecution and defense would handle the case, or why individuals would be for/against a topic of interest. These 5 practice debates will be held in class, and will be worth 5 points each (25 points total).

IN-CLASS CASE PRESENTATION:

At the beginning of the semester, you will select a class period during which you will present on a relevant, real-life case. You will provide information about the type of crime, individuals involved, and connect the information to the topic of the class period. You will need to send me a brief summary/outline of what you will say during your presentation –this is due hard-copy during the class period prior to your presentation. This presentation should be between 5-10 minutes. Think of it as an article search weekly summary (described below), but in a presentation format that encourages class discussion.

ARTICLE SEARCHES FOR CHAPTER TOPICS:

Throughout the semester, you will choose 3 weeks/chapters to find a relevant case study/article/video (2 points each). There will be a place on Blackboard to upload the links for these. You will have to submit a brief synopsis/description (one paragraph long), followed by a brief description of the case’s relevancy to the week’s topics (one paragraph long). I will go through them to pick and choose which ones I share with the class. Summaries need to be posted by midnight on Friday, and be based on the current week’s class topics. These will be worth 10 points of your total grade.

DEBATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Each student will take a turn as primary presenter in one of the main debates, which will require independent research and written work. The main debate presentation grade will be composed of two parts: your written preparation of your argument and the debate itself.

Written preparation:

Synopsis (15 points): 3-5 pages, will be graded on: 1 page outlining of your role in the group and how the parts fit into the whole group, 1 page detailing how your part of the debate fulfills all three modes of persuasion, and 1 to 3 pages demonstrating the direction of their research to support your debate (which must include at least 5 references)

Research paper (30 points total): 8-10 pages, will be graded on: research of the debate topic of interest (should cover an explanation of issues, the context of the topic/position you are presenting, research evidence for support, and conclusion; 20 points), cross-examination prep (acknowledgement of the other stances on the issue) (5 points), and a reference list in APA format (5 points).

Debate itself (20 points): will be graded on: 3 modes of persuasion (6 points, up to 2 points each), and the debate performance (10 points for being prepared for cohesive performance, which includes your ability to represent your research, the breadth of said research, and your ability to respond if cross-examined; 4 points for professionalism, which includes your appearance, your ability to interact respectfully with your team mates, and your ability to pick up on your cues.

**Attendance at all debates is expected. You will serve as jury for your classmates’ debates, and you will be casting votes. An unexcused absence from a final debate class period will result in a one point deduction from your own presentation grade.

**An additional 5 points extra credit is available for groups (each student would earn their own 5 points) who demonstrate creativity in their assignment.

**The above are the only extra-credit opportunities, so it is *strongly* recommended that you take full advantage of both.

GRADES:

In-class practice debates = 5 debates x 5 points per debate = 25 points

In-class case presentation = 1 presentation x 4 points = 4 points

Article searches = 3 posts with synopses x 2 points per search = 6 points

Debate assignment = 15-pt synopsis + 30-pt research paper + 20-pt debate = 65 points

Total Possible Points: 100 points (not including any extra credit points earned)

GRADE CALCULATION:

For simplicity, the points have been assigned such that a student can track their own grade without any confusing arithmetic acrobatics (hence the even 100 points). I round to the second decimal, so a grade of 91.49 is considered a 92 (A-), and a grade of 96.03 is a 96 (A).

Grade Breakdown:

A+ 101 and up	B+ 89 – 87	C+ 79 – 77	D 69 - 60
A 93 – 100	B 86 – 83	C 76 – 73	F 59 and below
A- 92 – 90	B- 82 – 80	C- 72 - 70	

RETENTION OF MATERIAL:

It is the student’s responsibility to retain a copy of all work given to the instructor (as well as returned materials) should the student wish to appeal or correct a grade.

HONOR CODE:

All provisions of the GMU Honor Code will be followed in this class. Information regarding the Honor Code and what constitutes academic dishonesty can be found in the 2011-201 University Catalog or online at the following website: <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/>.

DISABILITY HELP:

If you are a student with disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 709-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

*Topics subject to change as needed to ensure that the majority of students are comfortable with material covered prior to moving to the next topic.

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS (to be read before class)
Week 1 1/21 (no class) – 1/23	No class Monday Introduction to course	Review syllabus
Week 2 1/28 – 1/30	Introduction to criminal behavior Developmental factors	Chapter 1 Chapter 2 *Rank top 3 scenarios for mock trial
Week 3 2/4 – 2/6	Biological Factors Modes of Persuasion	Chapter 3
Week 4 2/11 – 2/13	Learning and situational factors Human aggression and violence	Chapter 4 Chapter 5
Week 5 2/18 – 2/20	Juvenile delinquency	Chapter 6
Week 6 2/25 – 2/27 (no class)	Criminal psychopathy *No class on Wednesday – meet with groups	Chapter 7 *Meet with groups!
Week 7 3/4 – 3/6	Criminal psychopathy	*Synopsis is due at the beginning of Wednesday’s class, hard copy
Week 8 3/11 – 3/13 (no class)	No class, Spring break!	Relax ☺
Week 9 3/18 – 3/20	Crime and mental disorders	Chapter 8
Week 10 3/25 – 3/27	Crime and mental disorders Homicide, assault, and family violence	Chapter 9
Week 11 4/1 – 4/3	Multiple murder, school and workplace violence Psychology of terrorism	Chapter 10 Chapter 11
Week 12 4/8 – 4/10	Wednesday: Group prep for debate – no class*	Meet with groups
Week 13 4/15 – 4/17 (no class)	Monday: Final debates begin (1)* Wednesday: Group prep for debate – no class*	Meet with groups
Week 14 4/22 – 4/24	Monday: Final debates (2) Wednesday: Final debates (2)	
Week 15 4/29– 5/1	Monday: Final debates (2) Wednesday: Final debates (2)	Research papers due on Monday

