**Psychology of Crime Victims**

**(PSYC 382)**

**Fall 2018**

**Professor:** Dr. Justin Ramsdell

**Office:** David King Hall – Room 2020

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

**Email:** jramsde2@gmu.edu

**Phone:** 703-993-2189

**Lecture:** Monday and Wednesday, 12:00pm - 1:15pm, East 201

**Required Text:**

* Herman, J. (1997). Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror. New York, NY: Basic Books.

**Suggested Reading** (Provided by Professor in PDF format):

1. Bracha, H. S., Ralston, T. C., Matsukawa, J. M., Williams, A. E., & Bracha A. S. (2004). Does fight or flight need updating? *Psychosomatics, 45,* 5.
2. Pickel, K. S., Ross, S. J., & Truelove, R. S. (2006). Do weapons automatically capture attention? *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 20,* 871-893.
3. The Family Astor. Available: <http://nymag.com/news/features/18860/index1.html>
4. Taylor, B. J., Killick, C., O’Brien, M., Begley, E., & Carter-Anand, J. (2014). Older people’s conceptualization of elder abuse and neglect. *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect, 26,* 223-243.
5. Southern Poverty Law Center – Ku Klux Klan – A History of Racism. Available here: https://www.splcenter.org/20110301/ku-klux-klan-history-racism
6. Felitti, V. J., et al. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine, 14,* 245-258.

**Course Description:** Explores the immediate, short-term, and long-term psychological effects of crime on victims through interviews with survivors of childhood abduction, elder abuse, intimate partner violence, and child abuse. Draws links between the experiences of the individuals interviewed and victims of other, more common crimes in order to foster empathy. Describes the physiological and psychological reactions to victimization and evaluates treatment options for survivors. Evaluates the roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals and law enforcement officers when interacting with victims of crime.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Describe and understand the experience of the victims of various and differing crimes through in-depth interviews with survivors.
2. Understand the potential immediate, short-term, and long-term psychological ramifications of being a victim of crime.
3. Explore the similarities between victim experiences of crimes ranging from childhood abuse to burglary.
4. Critically evaluate the roles of professionals such as law enforcement officers and mental health professionals as they pertain to their interactions with victims of crimes and the treatment of the subsequent psychological issues.

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| **Week** | **Date** | **Topic** | **Assignment Due** | **Reading** |
| 1 | 8/27 | Introduction/Syllabus/Defining Victim |  |  |
| 8/29 | Talking About Victimization |  | Chapter 1 |
| 2 | 9/3 | **No Class** |  |  |
| 9/5 | PTSD: Historical Context and Diagnosis | **Campus Treatment Options Paper** | #1 |
| 3 | 9/10 | Robbery/The Development of PTSD – Victim: Joe |  | #2 |
| 9/12 | Robbery/The Development of PTSD – Victim: Dana |  |  |
| 4 | 9/17 | Robbery/The Development of PTSD – Victim: Beth |  |  |
| 9/19 | A Guide to Writing Your Fictional Story Ending | **Fictional Story Choice Due (via Blackboard Groups)** |  |
| 5 | 9/24 | Police/Victim Disconnect |  | #3 |
| 9/26 | Elder Abuse (Brooke Astor Interview – Phillip Marshall) |  | #4 |
| 6 | 10/1 | Elder Abuse Discussion |  |  |
| 10/3 | Elder Abuse/Rape |  | #5 |
| 7 | **10/9** | Hate Crimes (Interview – Patrick) |  |  |
| 10/10 | Hate Crimes Discussion |  |  |
| 8 | 10/15 | **Exam I (No Hate Crime information)** |  |  |
| 10/17 | Family Systems and Victimization |  |  |
| 9 | 10/22 | Murder (Interview – Dionne Wilson) |  |  |
| 10/24 | Murder (Interview Continued) |  |  |
| 10 | 10/29 | Guest Lecture – Angie Hattery – Women and Gender Studies | **Fictional Story Ending Due (last name A-H)** |  |
| 10/31 | Murder (Interview – Ayoola Mitchell) |  |  |
| 11 | 11/5 | Murder - Discussion | **Fictional Story Ending Due (last name H-P)** |  |
| 11/7 | Offenders as Victims |  |  |
| 12 | 11/12 | Effects of Childhood Trauma into Adulthood | **Fictional Story Ending Due (last name P-Z)** |  |
| 11/13 | Offenders/Childhood Trauma (Continued) |  |  |
| 13 | 11/19 | Child Abuse (Interview – James Dold) |  | #6 |
| 11/21 | **No Class** |  |  |
| 14 | 11/26 | Child Abuse (Continued) |  |  |
| 11/28 | Legal Process and Options |  |  |
| 15 | 12/3 | Victims Services (Nancy Uveges – FBI Office of Victims Assistance) |  |  |
| 12/5 | Treatment Options |  |  |
| 16 | 12/17 | **Exam 2 – 12:00pm (Including Hate Crime Information)** |  |  |
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**Disclaimer:** Due dates and assignment details are subject to change by the lecturer. The only way to stay current with respect to these aspects of the class is to ensure that you attend class. Failure to do so may result in missed announcements with respect to the details of class assignments and/or assignment due dates.

**Attendance:** Although weekly attendance will not be taken, coming to class is important. Material will be presented that is not included in the assigned readings, but will be included in tests. Missing class also means that you will miss discussions about assignments and difficult test material. You are responsible for all announcements made in lecture and lab regardless of whether or not you attend class.

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| **Grading Scale:** | | | | A+ | 98 - 100% |  |  | C | | 73 - 76% | | | |
|  |  |  |  | A | 93 - 97% |  |  | C- | | 70 - 72% | | | |
|  |  |  |  | A- | 90 - 92% |  |  | D | | 60 - 69% | | | |
|  |  |  |  | B+ | 87 - 89% |  |  | F | | Less than 60% | | | |
|  |  |  |  | B | 83 - 86% |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | B- | 80 - 82% |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  | C+ | 77 - 79% |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| **Grading Criteria:** | | | | **Assignment** | **Grade Percentage** |
|  |  |  |  | 2 Exams (2 x 30%) | 60% |
|  |  |  |  | Fictional Story | 30% |
|  |  |  |  | Campus Resources for Treatment Paper | 10% |
|  |  |  |  | **Total Percentage:** | 100% |

**Assignments:**

* **Exams:**
  + There will be two exams that will be administered on the dates outlined in the schedule. Please bring a pencil and a green scantron sheet. The exam format will be multiple choice questions.
* **Campus Treatment Options Paper:**
  + We will be discussing some difficult topics in this class and listening to some truly tragic stories as told by the people who have lived them. Due to this, you may find that you need to speak to a mental health professional as some point in the semester. Your first assignment is to make a list of the mental health treatment (and support) options available to you as a student. Please provide a list of all campus resources for mental health treatment and crisis de-escalation. You also need to provide an explanation how you plan to receive resources off campus, in the form of a therapist, should you need one.
  + These resources should be broken down into two categories; Immediate help (crisis phone lines, etc.) and treatment options (counseling center, etc.).
  + Please provide the name, contact information, hours of operation, a brief description of the services provided, and how you can make an appointment.
  + This is due on the date listed on the syllabus and should be emailed to me.
* **Fictional Story**
  + - * Your story is to be turned in via Blackboard (under the “Assignments” tab).
      * **We are going to be working through this assignment together… so please do not let it freak you out.**
      * You will be asked to choose ONE of four fictional stories that are posted on the Backboard website for the class. Once you have read all four, you are to choose one that you will “finish.” After you have chosen your story, you will be given information that occurs with respect to a crime in the story. The crime will occur at the end of the story and you will not know what crime will be committed or who in the story will be the victim of the crime. Once you have made a decision with respect to which story you choose to finish, you will not be allowed to change unless the crime that the fictional character experiences is personally distressing to you. In that case, just ask, and you can choose another story.
      * To be clear… you will not be graded on your ability to write fiction. I am not looking for a Pulitzer Prize winning short story here… So don’t worry about that.
      * This cannot be done in a night (or even a week). Crafting a story requires time to understand the characters, the story line, twists, turns, etc. Please do not leave this to the last minute as your grade will undoubtedly suffer.
      * This assignment happens in two parts as following:
  + Choosing the fictional story beginning
    - * First, as previously described, you must choose a story to complete. When doing this, chose the story that you feel you may have written. If the style of the story agrees with your own personal style, completing the story later will be much easier.
      * Make sure you really understand the characters in the story. Each character has his or her own unique quirks and relationships that make them tick. You are going to want to consider the following:
        + Personality
        + Interactions with others/family/friends
        + Hopes and dreams
        + Significant relationships
        + Employment
        + Current struggles/decisions to be made
        + Finances
        + Any current struggles
        + What do they do for fun?
        + How do they handle stress?
        + What are their flaws?
        + Are they particularly good/bad at something?
        + Does the character have any adversaries?
        + What is their current level of self-esteem?
        + Does the main character, or someone else in the story, have some sort of pre-existing mental health condition that is of importance?
        + Etc.
  + Fictional Story Ending –
    - Once the beginning to your story has been chosen and you feel as though you understand the fictional world and life for your characters, you will be randomly assigned a crime that happens.
      * You then have to finish the story, using the information you learned in class, to paint an accurate picture of what happens to your character following the crime. Be sure to include information about how (or not) the factors listed above are affected by the crime. You will also need to address the following:
        + Immediate physiological and psychological consequences of the crime for the character.
        + Short-term physiological and psychological consequences of the crime for the character.
        + Long-term physiological and psychological consequences of the crime for the character… This means that you story must cover a relatively significant amount of time so you may need to get creative with your story telling.
        + The impact the crime has on the family and friends of the victim. Families and personal relationships are like delicate ecosystems. Once something changes in one part of the scenario, something else changes. It would be highly unlikely for someone to experience a crime like the one you will be assigned with their behavior changing significantly. Once his or her behavior changes, that is going to affect all of the relationships in his or her orbit. So how would the main character react? Once you have determined that… how would the other people in the story react to those changes? This is complicated stuff and requires time to think about it and figure out what will happen.
        + You should also cover the treatment options available for the relevant physiological and psychological issues related to the crime and the character’s acceptance or reluctance to participate in treatment (and why). This means that there needs to be a character in the story (either already present, or one you create and introduce into the story) that understands the relevant treatment options and can explain them to the character (or the character can proactively look these up themselves).
        + What do other characters in the story say to the victim that are helpful or hurtful? Does someone say something well-intentioned, but in the end, actually highlights his or her own misunderstanding of the circumstances?
      * This will not, most likely, be short. I’m not putting a page minimum or maximum on this, you just need to be sure to include everything… this may mean that you need to include, what seem like, irrelevant details so that the relevant details make sense.
      * Dialogue is important… You need to have conversations between people to make the story happen. You can say that the victim of the crime begins to feel isolated… but it is much more effective if you communicate that information through dialogue. Have the character interact with as many people as possible.
      * I’m looking for authenticity here. Not fairy tales. That doesn’t mean the main character needs to end up circling the proverbial drain either. However, they are going to miss out on something as a result of the crime… either a relationship, a work opportunity, schooling, etc. Or they may move forward with their plans and simply not be as successful as they would have been before the crime.
      * Once you get about year out from the crime... feel free to end the story unceremoniously. You are likely going to get to a point where everything in the story is just “ok” and then you may be lost for where to go next. That realization, may be the unfortunate product of the crime. And that is ok. This is fictional but it needs to be real.

**Late Work Policy:** In-class assignments cannot be accepted late (i.e. will receive a zero). These assignments will not necessarily be announced prior to their occurrence. All other 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.

**Academic Integrity:** 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.

**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.

**Accommodations:** 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 scan only be made in cases in which proper documentation has been provided through the Office of Disability Services.

**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.

**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.

**Electronic Devices and Computers:** The use of electronic devices, including tablets and computers, is allowed in class for note taking purposes. The use of cell phones or other communicative devices is not permitted during class. Please keep these devices silent and stowed away. Remember, placing a device on "vibrate" is not the same as it being silent.

**Extra-Credit Assignments:** There will be no extra credit assignments in this course. Please prepare for the tests and classroom assignments accordingly.

**Enrollment:** Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes (available from the Registrar - registrar.gmu.edu). Please contact the Registrar's Office with any specific questions.

**Cancelled Classes:** If classes are cancelled due to inclement weather or other unforeseeable reasons, you will all receive an email from the professor outlining the process and timeline for making up the missed material. Please sign up for “Mason Alerts” at <https://ready.gmu.edu/masonalert/> to receive timely notifications via email and directly to your cell phone.