Introduction to Forensic Psychology (PSY-461)
Online Course -- Summer 2011
George Mason University

Professor: L. Alvin Malesky, Jr., Ph.D.
Phone: (828) 227-3357
Email: lmalesky@gmu.edu
Website: http://paws.wcu.edu/malesky/

NOTE: The best way to communicate with me during this course is via Blackboard.


Course Description: This course is an introduction to the field of forensic psychology. We will start by defining forensic psychology and discuss the field’s history. We will then study various types of evaluations that are performed by forensic psychologists as well as discuss expert testimony and ethical issues in the field.

Learning Objectives:
1. Define forensic psychology and identify the various professional roles of forensic psychologists.
2. Develop an understanding of the ethical issues faced by forensic psychologists.
3. Develop an understanding of the basic components of forensic evaluations/reports.
4. Become familiar with the most common types of criminal forensic evaluations (i.e., competence to stand trial and criminal responsibility).

Course Expectations:
1. We will be covering intense subject matter during the semester. It is likely that there will be multiple and perhaps conflicting views expressed regarding the subjects we discuss online. It is imperative that even if you do not agree with your classmates’ views you respect their right to hold them.
2. Be an active online participant by contributing to the discussion board.
3. Keep up with all assignments.
4. Success in the class is in YOUR hands. Take advantage of the online resources and contact me if you are unhappy with your performance at ANY time during the semester. The sooner you tackle problems the better. Don’t wait until the end of the summer to come for help.

Course Format: Given the online format of the class, you will not attend classroom lectures. However, I will post two or three (30 - 45 min) video lectures on WEBCAT each week. I will also post links to online resources such as Youtube videos and movies when appropriate. I strongly suggest that you watch and take notes on these clips before you take the tests. You will also be required to contribute to the discussion board at least twice a week.
**Technology Competency:** This is an online course. Thus, you will need regular access to a computer and the Internet over the summer. Basic familiarity using WEBCAT is required. This is a fairly self-explanatory platform and we will have time during the first week to “play around” with it before you do any graded assignments.

You will need to download *Quicktime* on your computer to watch the posted video clips. A link to download this program is included on the Course Content Webpage. This is a free program.

There is IT telephone support for this course.

**Attendance:** Given the online nature of this course I will not take attendance in the traditional fashion. However, your “attendance” will be apparent in your participation in the discussion board.

**Course Activities:**

**Exams:** There will be three exams during this course. The exams will be given online (Blackboard) and will be in a multiple choice & true/false format. Each exam will contain approximately 50 questions and will be worth a maximum of 100 points. The exams will not be cumulative but will contain questions on the material covered that week and the preceding two or three weeks. You will have **ONE** hour to take the exams once you start; however, you can start the exams at anytime during the day (24 hours – midnight to midnight) when the exam is listed on the schedule. Given that you can take the exam ANYTIME during the day I will **NOT** give makeup exams. **NOTE:** The exams are not open book or open notes. Using your notes or the textbook during the exam is considered cheating!

**Discussion Board:** I will post a question/topic on the discussion board each week. The discussion board is set up to be a “reflection loop.” In other words you will need to respond to my initial question (post) on Monday or Tuesday of each week. You will then need to respond to one of your classmates’ posts on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. Each of these postings is worth a maximum of five (5) points. Thus, you could earn a maximum of 10 points per week by participating on the discussion board. We will use the discussion board for all ten weeks of this class. Maximum points for the discussion board are 100 (5 for each of the two postings per week for a maximum total of 10 points per week). Below is the grading rubric for the discussion board postings. **NOTE:** You will only be able to post for the current week. In other words, if you forget to post the previous week then you lose your opportunity to earn any points for that week. **ALSO NOTE:** You can post as many times as you like each week. The more you post the more you participate and the higher your grade will be. The discussion board will open on Sunday morning at 4am and will close Saturday morning at 10 am.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 Points</th>
<th>1 Point</th>
<th>2 Points</th>
<th>3 Points</th>
<th>4 Points</th>
<th>5 Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not respond to postings; does not participate freely. No effort to participate in learning community as it develops.</td>
<td>Does not respond to most postings. Does not make effort to participate in learning community as it develops; seems indifferent.</td>
<td>Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group.</td>
<td>Frequently attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group; interacts freely.</td>
<td>Consistently responds to posting; demonstrates good self-initiative. Frequently attempts to motivate the group discussion; presents creative approaches to topic.</td>
<td>Exceeds all expectations when responding to posts.</td>
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**Netiquette:** You will be communicating with one another via the discussion board. It is likely that you will not always agree with the opinions of your fellow group members. Disagreement is fine but you will need to respect others’ views. Thus, personal attacks and derogatory comments will not be tolerated. If, however, you do disagree with someone, then I expect you to state your position in an articulate fashion on the discussion board.

I will not use your comments for any purpose other than what is stated in the syllabus. I will also delete all comments at the end of the semester. However, it is important for you to understand that given the public nature of the discussion board, no posted comment is considered confidential. With this said, it is my expectation that the only individuals with access to the posted comments will be members of the discussion group.

**GRADES:**

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380 - 400 & = 95 - 100 = A \\
360 - 379 & = 90 - 94 = A- \\
348 - 359 & = 87 - 89 = B+ \\
332 - 347 & = 83 - 86 = B \\
320 - 331 & = 80 - 82 = B- \\
308 - 319 & = 77 - 79 = C+ \\
292 - 307 & = 73 - 76 = C \\
280 - 291 & = 70 - 72 = C- \\
240 - 279 & = 60 - 69 = D \\
< 239 & = < 59 = F
\end{align*}
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**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**
http://accessibility.gmu.edu/studentservices.html

**Online Links of Help/Interest:**
- **Writing Center:** http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/
- **Library:** http://library.gmu.edu/
Note: The following schedule is tentative and subject to change as the semester progresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapters/Topics</th>
<th>Videos</th>
<th>Exams</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to the Class &amp; History of Forensic Psychology (Chapter 1)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Roles/Responsibilities of the Forensic Psychologist (Chapter 1) &amp; Ethical Issues in Forensic Psychology (Chapter 2)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Common Mental Illnesses in Forensic Settings &amp; Malingering &amp; Video: <em>Many Faces of Mr. Greene</em></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Assessment of Psychological Injury (Chapter 7)</td>
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<td>TEST ONE – June 24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (Friday) – Exam open 24 hours</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Forensic Evaluations / Forensic Report Writing (Chapter 3)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Competence to Stand Trial Evaluations (CST) (Chapter 4)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Criminal Responsibility Evaluations (CR) (Chapter 4) &amp; CR Case Study &amp; <em>Video: Mad or Bad</em></td>
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<td>TEST TWO – July 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (Friday) – Exam open 24 hours</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Forensic Evaluations of Competence to be Executed &amp; <em>Video: Sentenced to Die</em></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Forensic Evaluation of Sex Offenders &amp; <em>Video: Sexual Predators Among Us</em></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Correctional Psychology (Chapter 6) &amp; <em>Video</em></td>
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<td>TEST THREE – August 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (Friday) – Exam open 24 hours</td>
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