* **PSYCHOLOGY 405 (Section 004) – Spring 2020**

**Mystery, Murder, Madness**

R 7:20-10:00 p.m., Krug Hall 005.

**Course Instructor**: Ali Momen

**Office Hours**: By appointment only

**Email:** amomen@gmu.edu

Psychology 405 is an exciting course where you’ll learn to apply psychological principles to areas related to mystery, murder, and madness! The course will be split up into 3 sections. The first section we will do a deep dive into season 1 of the highly addictive Serial Podcast. Serial Season 1 is a true crime story about the 1999 murder of Hae Min Lee, an 18-year old student at Woodlawn High School in Baltimore, Maryland. The aim of this section is to learn how principles from different areas of psychology (Cognitive psychology, social psychology, clinical psychology, etc) can be applied to and used to help understand mystery, murder, and madness topics. During a typical week, I will lecture during the first half of class and the second half of class will consist of student groups presenting assigned articles and facilitating classroom discussion on how the articles relate to themes from Serial Season 1.

The second section of the course we will learn about theories and principles of psychopathology and how they relate to mystery, murder, and madness topics. Specifically, I will lecture on pertinent principles from psychopathology and then we will do a couple in class character analyses while watching movies. One will be a movie/character analysis on serial killer Richard Kuklinski, and the other on Bruce Wayne in Batman Begins.

The third section will consist entirely of student group presentations and facilitation of classroom discussions on a semester long project.

**Attendance- 20%**

Attendance will be taken every class and make up 15% of your grade. You are allowed to miss 2 classes before I start subtracting a percentage point from your grade.

**Participation- 15%**

A large portion of this class will be driven by contributions from class participation. It is imperative that you participate and participate often in order to receive full credit here.

**Discussion Board posts- 15%**

For the first section of this course you will post weekly in the discussion thread for each assigned journal. Due dates vary—please see calendar below. Each post should be about a paragraph long and relate the article to topics discussed in the Serial Podcast. The purpose of the posts are so I can make sure you read the articles, have thought about how they relate to themes from the podcast, and to stimulate classroom discussions. I will also sporadically assign discussion posts during the second and third section of the course. For these posts, I will let you know, the week of, what is required of you in the posts.

**Group Journal Article Presentations- 15%**

For the first section of the course, on every Thursday, two groups will present an assigned journal article and also facilitate a classroom discussion on how the principles from the article relate to themes from the Serial podcast. I will do the first presentation on February 6th to help you understand what is expected of you.

**Final group presentation- 35%**

This class will equip you to learn how to apply psychological principles in order to understand topics related to mystery, murder, and madness. As such, you will work on your own group projects throughout the semester and at the end of the semester you will give a 25-minute presentation on your project. I will give more information about this in class.

The project will be a psychological analysis on some topic related to mystery, murder and madness, similar to what we will be doing in class with the Serial Podcast and other media. I will give more information about this in class.

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| Class | Topic | Reading/Podcast Due (Due before class) | Work Due (Due date vary. See specific assignments) |
| 1/23 | * Introduction to course * Assign groups |  |  |
| 1/30 | * Serial and Constructive Nature of Memory- * Serial and Constructive Nature of Memory- Journal Article presentation | Episodes 1-4  Loftus, 1975 | Journal Article Discussion thread post-Due Wednesday (1/29) by 11:59 pm |
| 2/6 | * Serial and Social Cognition- lecture * Serial and Social Cognition- Journal Article presentation | Episodes 5-6  Nisbett & Wilson, 1977;  Graham & Lowery, 2004 | Journal Article Discussion thread post -Due Sunday (2/5) by 11:59 pm |
| 2/13 | * Serial and Police Questioning- Journal Article Presentations * Serial and Police Questioning- Making a Murder Episode 3 analysis | Episodes 7-8.  Kassin and Kiechel 1996; Kassin, Drizin, Grisso 2005 | * Journal Article Discussion thread post -Due Wednesday (2/12) by 11:59 pm |
| 2/20 | * Serial and Social Perception- lecture * Serial and Social Perception- Journal Article Presentations | Serial Episode 9  Findley, 2006; O’Brien, 2009 | Journal Article Discussion thread post -Due Wednesday (2/19) by 11:59 pm |
| 2/27 | * Serial and Juror Decision Making * Serial and Juror Decision Making- Journal Article Presentations | Serial Episode 10  Berman & Cutler, 1996; Jones & Kaplan, 2003. | Journal Article Discussion thread post -Due Wednesday (2/26) at 11:59 pm |
| 3/5 | * Personality Disorders Lecture * In-class Character analysis of Richard Kuklinski |  |  |
| 3/12 | **No class- Spring Break** |  |  |
| 3/19 | * Serial Wrap-up lecture and discussion * Group/Class Debate on whether Adnan Syed is a psychopath | Serial Episodes 11-12  Hare Psychopathy Checklist | Journal Article Discussion thread post-Due Wednesday (3/25) at 11:59 pm |
| 3/26 | **No class** |  |  |
| 4/2 | Character analysis of Bruce Wayne in Batman Begins |  |  |
| 4/9 | Group time |  |  |
| 4/16 | **No class** |  |  |
| 4/23 | Group presentations |  |  |
| 4/30 | Group presentations |  |  |

**Disability Resource Center**

\*\* If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center(DRC) at 703-993-2474.  All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

**Honor Code**: The Honor Code of George Mason University deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Students should be familiar with the code and connected policies, set out at <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/> This course will be conducted in accordance with those policies.

**Add/Drop and Withdrawal Deadlines**

Last day to add a class – January 28th

Last day to drop a class (No tuition Penalty) – February 5th