

PSYC 380: Introduction to Forensic Psychology (3 credits)

Spring 2021

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Office hours: By appointment only. Please email with your availability to schedule a virtual (zoom) appointment.

Course Description

Explores the differing, yet varied facets of the field of forensic psychology. This asynchronous online course will cover landmark legal cases relevant to the field of forensic psychology, potential careers in forensic psychology, police psychology, expert testimony, legal consultation, forensic assessment in the justice system, psychological constructs of particular importance to forensic psychology, ethics, correctional psychology, and issues in working in the juvenile justice system.

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

1. Huss, M. (2014). Forensic Psychology: Research, Clinical Practice, and Applications 2nd Ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
2. Hare, R. D. (1999). Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths among Us. New York: Guilford Press.

Other Readings

1. Bureau of Justice Statistics (2006). Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates. United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

2. Dvoskin, J. A. & Spiers, E. M. (2004). On the role of correctional officers in prison mental health. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 1.
3. Faigman, D. L., Fienberg, S. E., & Stern, P. C. (2003). The limits of the polygraph, *20 Issues in Science and Technology*. 40.
4. Forero, C. G., Gallardo-Pujol, D., Maydea-Olivares, A., & Andres-Pueyo, A. (2009). A longitudinal model for predicting performance of police officers using personality and behavioral data, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Vol. 36, No. 6
5. Homant, R. J. & Kennedy, D. B. (1998). Psychological aspects of crime scene profiling, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Vol. 25, No. 3.
6. Kocsis, R. N., Hayes, A. F., & Irwin, H. J. (2002). Investigative experience and accuracy in psychological profiling of a violent crime. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 17, No. 8.
7. Pinizzotto, A.J., Davis, E. D., & Miller, C. E. (2006). *Suicide by cop. Violent Encounters: Felonious Assaults on America's Law Enforcement Officers*, U.S. Department of Justice, FBI Publication #0383.
8. *Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychologists*. (2012). American Psychological Association.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Describe the varied roles forensic mental health professionals occupy within mental health, correctional, law enforcement, and legal systems.
2. Demonstrate the ability to apply the psycho-legal concepts of risk of violent recidivism, criminal competency, and criminal insanity to real-life case examples.
3. Explain the various criteria and/or categories used to classify and identify psychopaths and sexual offenders
4. Define the basics of, and critically evaluate, the current state of lie detection and criminal profiling.
5. Create a learning activity that clearly outlines the progression of landmark case law on a topic relevant to forensic psychology that is understandable for individuals without specific or previous knowledge of these topics.

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](#) 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.

Course-specific Hardware/Software

Check the syllabus for your course or contact the instructor prior to the start of the course to find out about specific technical requirements for your class. Hardware or software required for your course or program may be available for purchase at [Patriot Computers](#) (the University's computer store that offers educational discounts and special deals).

Course Schedule

MODULES (Monday-Sunday)	READINGS/VIDEOS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Module 1 Mon 01/25-Sun 01/31 Syllabus/Introduction	Video Introduction to the Course “What is Forensic Psychology?” Huss, Ch1	Introductions Syllabus Quiz Due Sunday 01/31 by 11:59 pm EST
Module 2 Mon 02/01-Sun 02/07 02/01 Last Day to Add Correctional Psychology	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forensic-Psych-vs.-Correctional • Dvoskin-and-Spiers • Bureau-of-Justice-Statistics(pp.1-7) Videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jail: The Basic Layout • Suicide in Jail 	Discussion The Man Inside: Four Months as a Prison Guard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Thursday 02/04 • Responses by Saturday 02/06 • Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 02/07 Group Activity “Job Posting: Seeking Correctional Officer” Due Sunday 02/07 Module 2 Quiz Due Sunday 02/07
Module 3 Mon 02/08-Sun 02/14 02/12 Last Day to Drop (100% Refund) Police Psychology	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forero • Forero et al diagram • Pinizzotto Videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitness for Duty Evaluations • Officer Stress 	Discussion Suicide by Cop? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Thursday 02/11 • Responses by Saturday 02/13 • Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 02/14 Group Activity “Desirable/Undesirable Officer Traits” Due Sunday 02/14 Module 3 Quiz Due Sunday 02/14
Module 4 Mon 02/15-Sun 02/21 02/16 Last Day to Drop (50% Refund)	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Testimony Introduction • Chapter 3, Huss Videos:	Discussion “Who is the actual expert?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Thursday 02/18 • Responses: Saturday 02/20

MODULES (Monday-Sunday)	READINGS/VIDEOS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Expert Testimony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What makes an expert witness? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 02/21 Video Quiz “Is This Person an Expert” Sunday 02/21 Module 4 Quiz Sunday 02/21
Module 5 Mon 02/22-Sun 02/28 Competency	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 8, Huss Post-Mac-CAT Audio: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview with Dr. C Interview with Dr. G Videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competency Introduction – Present Ability 	Discussion “Is This Guy Competent to Stand Trial?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial: Thursday 02/25 Responses: Saturday 02/27 Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 02/28 Module 5 Quiz Sunday 02/28
Module 6 Mon 03/01-Sun 03/07 Personal Injury	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Huss, Ch13 (pages 283-294) Videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a Tort? Damages 	Discussion “The McDonald’s Coffee Lawsuit” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial: Thursday 03/04 Responses: Saturday 03/06 Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 03/07 Module 6 Quiz Sunday 03/07
Module 7 Mon 03/08-Sun 03/14 Child Custody Evaluations	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Huss, Ch12 Videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Custody Options 	Discussion “Should Dad Get Custody?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial: Thursday 03/11 Responses: Saturday 03/13 Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 03/14 Module 7 Quiz Sunday 03/14
Module 8 Mon 03/15-Sun 03/21	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 9, Huss 	Discussion “John Hinkley Jr” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial: Thursday 03/18

MODULES (Monday-Sunday)	READINGS/VIDEOS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Criminal Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R-CRAS Videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Criminal Insanity • M’Naughten and the Insanity Standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses: Saturday 03/20 • Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 03/21 Group Activity “When ‘Not Guilty’ is a Life Sentence” Due Sunday 03/21 Module 8 Quiz Due Sunday 03/21
Module 9 Mon 03/22-Sun 03/28 Risk Assessment	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V-RAG • HCR-20 • Hass Ch5 Videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VRAG (how to use it) • HCR-20 (How to use it) • Introduction to Risk Assessment 	Discussion “Why Does Actuarial Risk Assessment Feel Strange?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Thursday 03/25 • Responses: Saturday 03/27 • Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 03/28 Module 9 Quiz Due Sunday 03/28
Module 10 Mon 03/29-Sun 04/04 04/01 End of Selective Withdrawal Period Homeland Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorist Profile? Bin Laden, McVeigh, Omar Mateen • PODCAST TUTORIAL 	Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Thursday 04/01 • Responses: Saturday 04/03 • Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 04/04 Module 10 Quiz Due Sunday 04/04
Module 11 Mon 04/05-Sun 04/11 Psychopaths	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hare Ch1 and 2 	Group Activity Due Sunday 04/11 Module 11 Quiz Due Sunday 04/11
Module 12 Mon 04/12-Sun 04/18 Sex Offenders	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huss Ch6 	Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Thursday 04/15 • Responses: Saturday 04/17

MODULES (Monday-Sunday)	READINGS/VIDEOS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 04/18 Module 12 Quiz Due Sunday 04/18
Module 13 Mon 04/19-Sun 04/25 Lie Detection	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faigman 	Group Activity Due Sunday 04/25 Module 13 Quiz Due Sunday 04/25
Module 14 Mon 04/26-Sun 05/02 Criminal Profiling	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kocsis • Homant • Crime Scene Profiling Activity 	Discussion "Profiling Activity" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Thursday 04/29 • Responses: Saturday 05/01 • Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 05/02 Module 14 Quiz Due Sunday 05/02
Module 15 Mon 05/03-Sun 05/09 Presentations Readings Days May 1 Exam Period May 3-10	Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychologists 	Discussion "Review 4 Podcasts" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial: Thursday 05/06 • Responses: Saturday 05/08 • Group Summary Only for Summarizers: Sunday 05/09

Assignments Description

1. **Weekly Quizzes (35%):** There will be quizzes each week on the material presented. These quizzes must be taken by the end of each week and will not be cumulative in nature.

2. **Discussion Assignments (30%):** There are 12 discussion assignments during the course of the semester (Modules 1, 11, and 13 do not have discussion assignments). Instructions for completing the discussion assignments, and grading criteria, can be found on the Blackboard site for the course.
3. **Participation Assignments (15%):** Some modules will have assignments graded for participation only. This includes modules 2, 3, 8, 11, and 13. You must complete these assignments on time to receive credit for the assignment.
4. **Landmark Legal Case Podcast (20%):** You will be randomly assigned a topic in Module 10 of the class from the “Landmark Legal Cases” list below. You must create a 15-minute “podcast,” to be made available to the class, on your assigned topic. Details about the assignment can be found in this syllabus (directly below) and on the Blackboard site for the class.

Landmark Legal Case “Podcast”

1. You will be randomly assigned one of the categories from the “Landmark Legal Cases” list below (i.e. informed consent, discrimination law, etc.) during Module 10 of the course.
2. You are to create a 15-minute audio “podcast” (which will not be distributed outside of this course) to post in a discussion board for your classmates (and me) to listen to. Think of the podcast like a news report on the cases you have been assigned.
3. THE podcast should be posted to Blackboard in an Mp3 format so everyone can listen without issue.
4. Your 15-minute audio podcast will need to cover all three legal cases listed in your category. NOT one case... all three cases in the category.
5. For each of the three cases presented, you must cover the following topics:
 - Background Information
 - Title of case
 - Date of case
 - Court(s) in which the case was ultimately decided
 - Type of case
 - Facts of the case
 - Legal issue to be decided
 - Contentions of BOTH parties in the case
 - Decision of the court and reasoning behind that decision
 - Implications of the verdict for either psychological practice, legal practice, law enforcement, or society in general
6. The trick here is to make the cases accessible to everyone. Most court cases are filled with “legalese” (another name for legal terminology that is difficult to understand for non-lawyers). However, the hard part is converting the cases to plain language without dumbing down the content. Think to yourself “how would the average person need this case explained in order for

them to understand it the first time they hear it. Remember, your listeners haven't spent the time reviewing the cases that you have and only have one shot to hear, and understand, what happened.

7. Not everyone is born a presenter... but the podcast format will allow you to write a script, edit, practice, and then make a final product that you feel comfortable putting up on Blackboard for everyone. Here are some guidelines to help make this the best presentation possible and help you get a good grade"
 - a. Write a script. Don't wing it... it will sound like you did and no one wants that.
 - b. Use the entire 15-minutes but don't go over. The trick here is to be concise... which is much harder than it sounds. The cases that you will be assigned are complex (and so are some of the legal issues) so fitting all of that into 15 minutes can be really difficult. You need to have all the required information present in order to get full credit for the assignment. Make a checklist if you have to.
 - c. Above all else, your podcast needs to teach your classmates the material... so think of this as education and not entertainment. Entertainment is great, and the more you can engage the listener the better, but do not do so at the expense of quality information.
 - d. You have listened to several podcasts (or watched videos) during the course... use them as a guide. Feel free to add different voices (maybe have a friend read something that is a direct quote from the court), use music (but music with words makes it hard to pay attention to what you are saying), use sound effects or other background noise, and/or tell the stories in a unique format (rather than telling one case, then the next, then the next, maybe try and fit all three together in a cohesive narrative. Really, the possibilities are endless and the overall finished product is only limited by your imagination.
 - e. There are several software programs that are easy to use that will allow you to record the podcast. You don't need to buy expensive microphones to make this work... you can simply use the microphone on your computer. If you are a Mac/Apple user, the Garageband software is really useful, has sound effects, and allows you to layer sounds pretty easily. If you have a windows computer... there is free software available, that does the same thing as Apple's Garageband, called "Audacity." But feel free to use whatever you are comfortable with... this assignment shouldn't be an exercise in frustration with software. Content and education first, polish the podcast up and make it nice second.
 - f. You only get one shot at the podcast, so it needs to be good. This is not an "easy A." If you want to earn an "A" follow the guidelines.
 - g. Presentations will be graded on the following criteria:
 - i. Information provided (x3 cases for a total of 75 points)
 1. Background information (4 points)
 2. Facts of the case (6 points)
 3. Legal issue to be decided (2 points)
 4. Contentions of BOTH parties (4 points)
 5. Decision of the court and reasoning behind that decision (5 points)
 6. Implications of the verdict for either psychological practice, legal practice, law enforcement, or society in general (4 points)

- ii. Creativity of podcast (5 points)
- iii. Clarity of information... getting rid of the “legalese” (5 points)
- iv. Preparation/level of overall “polish” (5 points)

Landmark Legal Cases:

- Right to receive psychiatric treatment
 - Rouse v. Cameron (1966)
 - Wyatt v. Stickney (1972)
 - Youngberg v. Romeo (1982)
- Right to refuse psychiatric treatment
 - Application of the President and Directors of Georgetown College Incorporated (1964)
 - Rennie v. Klein (1983)
 - Sell v. United States (2003)
- Informed consent
 - Natanson v. Kline (1960)
 - Canterbury v. Spence (1972)
 - Kaimowitz v. Michigan DMH (1973)
- Domestic Violence/Stalking
 - Baker v. City of New York (1966)
 - Thurman v. City of Torrington (1985)
 - United States of America v. Matusiewicz (2015)
- Discrimination law
 - Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
 - Loving v. Virginia (1967)
 - Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (1978)
- Duty to protect
 - Tarasoff v. Regents of University of California (1976 and 1978)
 - Jablonski v. United States (1983)
 - Naidu v. Laird (1988)
- Confidentiality
 - In re Lifschutz (1970)
 - Doe v. Roe (1977)
 - Jaffe v. Redmond (1996)
- Prisoner’s rights
 - Baxstrom v. Herold (1966)

- Estelle v. Gamble (1976)
- Farmer v. Brennan (1994)
- Civil commitment
 - Lake v. Cameron (1966)
 - Fasulo v. Arafah (1977)
 - Addington v. Texas (1979)
- Diminished capacity
 - People v. Patterson (1976)
 - Ibn-Tamas v. United States (1979)
 - Montana v. Engelhoff (1996)
- Psychology and the death penalty
 - Estelle V. Smith (1981)
 - Barefoot v. Estelle (1983)
 - Atkins v. Virginia (2002)
- Sexual harassment
 - Meritor Savings Bank FSB v. Vinson (1986)
 - Harris v. Forklift Systems Inc. (1993)
 - Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services Inc. (1998)

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 prepare for the tests and complete discussion and participation assignments 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 Professor
3. On-demand Blackboard videos on how to use Blackboard features, and Technical Requirements.

Feel free to respond to other students in the Ask Professor forum if you know the answer.

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 Criteria

Assignment	Grade Percentage
Weekly quizzes (14 quizzes, 2.5% each)	35%
Weekly discussion posts (12 discussion assignments, 2.5% each)	30%
Participation assignments (6 participation assignments, 2.5% each)	15%
Landmark Legal Case Podcast	20%
Total Percentage:	100%

Grading Scale

A+	98-100%
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	60-69%

A+	98-100%
F	Less than 60%

University Policies and Resources

- a. 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](#).
- b. 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. 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.