

Psych 405-003 & 004
Mystery, Madness, and Murder
Spring 2021

Instructor: Erika De Los Santos

Office Hours: By Appointment

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Course Overview

Psychology 405 is an exciting course where you will learn to apply psychological principles to areas related to mystery, murder, and madness! The course covers psychological topics related to season 1 of the Serial Podcast, serial killers Richard Kuklinski & Luka Magnotta, and the vigilante Batman. The end of the semester will consist of student group presentations on a semester long project.

Materials

Serial Podcast (season 1) – Available on Spotify, YouTube, or the official website (<https://serialpodcast.org/season-one>)

Journal Articles – Posted on blackboard under “Journal Articles.”

Netflix Examples – There is some content that I may have you view on Netflix. If you do not have access to a Netflix account, please let me know ASAP so we can figure something else out.

Final Project – Students are expected to give a final presentation to the instructor through Zoom. It is preferential for students to have a webcam available for this presentation.

Grading Scheme

Lecture Summaries- 25%

Each week that I post a lecture, I will also create a Forum on the discussion board for that lecture. Within the forum, please create a thread. In the subject line of the thread enter your first and last name. In the message portion, submit a 1-2 paragraph summary of the lecture. The purpose of this is to ensure you are watching and paying attention to the lectures.

Journal Article Summaries- 20%

Each week that I have assigned a journal article(s), I will also create a Forum on the discussion board for that week's journals article(s) (just one Forum for all journal articles). Within the forum for a particular week's journal articles, please create a thread. In the subject line of the thread enter your first and last name, and in the message portion, submit one paragraph for each journal article. Within each paragraph, summarize the journal article and relate it to topic(s) from the podcast (you may relate information from the journal article to information from any episode of the podcast).

Discussion Board Classroom Discussions- 20%

Most weeks I will also create a forum on the discussion board where we discuss, as a class, topics related to that week's material. I will create the forum, but you will create threads within those forums. These threads are meant to spark discussions on how the particular psychological principles we are discussing that week relate to topics from the podcast. In order to engage in a discussion within a current thread please reply to other student's posts. Each student is required to post at least two threads a semester and contribute at least 3 replies a week. You are certainly welcome to post and reply more often! Forums for a specific week will only be open for that week.

Final group presentation- 35%

In the middle of the semester, you will form groups (about 4-5 people) and begin working on a project within your individual group. The project is to create a 25-minute presentation in which you psychologically analyze a topic related to mystery, murder, and/or madness. I will give more information about this when the time comes.

Mental Health Resources

In this course, there may be some material that evokes some negative emotion. For that reason, I wanted to make students aware of the resources available through GMU. Additionally, students are more than welcome to reach out to me via email if they are uncomfortable with a specific topic so that we can make an alternate plan together.

CAPS:

Individual and group counseling, crises support, virtual mental health workshops, etc.

<https://caps.gmu.edu>

(703) 993 – 2380

Student Support and Advocacy Center:

Patriot pantry, financial well-being, substance abuse, & domestic violence

<https://ssac.gmu.edu>

(703) 993 – 3686

Important Dates

- Last Day to Drop with 100% Tuition Refund: February 12th
- Last Day to Drop with Partial Tuition Refund: February 16th
- Last Day to Drop with No Tuition Refund: March 1st

It is your responsibility to drop yourself from the course

Grading Policy

Grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number percentage at the end of the semester. For example, if a student gets 88.5% or higher, their grade will be rounded to 89%. If a student gets 88.4% or lower, their grade will be rounded to 88%. Whole number percentages will not be rounded to a higher grade. For example, 89% will not be rounded to a 90%. **This is non-negotiable.**

Disability Services

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. If you have a Faculty Contact Sheet, please be sure to give that to me at the start of class or as soon as possible so that we can work together to make the semester as smooth as possible for you.

Honor Code

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. It is every student's responsibility to familiarize himself or herself with the Honor Code. The Honor Code is available at: <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/> . All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

Technology Usage

Communications regarding class, assignments and other important announcements will be disseminated through Blackboard and GMU email accounts. Students are expected to regularly check both Blackboard and their GMU email accounts. All email correspondence with the instructor must be done via GMU email accounts. This is to make sure that I know the email is coming from you. Emails that do not include the course and section number in the subject line and the student's name in the body of the email may not receive a response.

Religious Holidays

Please refer to George Mason University's calendar of religious holidays and observations(<http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/>). It is the student's

responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance should their religious observances impact their participation in class activities and assignments.

Student Privacy

George Mason University strives to fully comply with FERPA by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from those records. Please see George Mason University's student privacy policy <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/privacy/>

Mason Diversity Statement

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

Instructor reserves the right to change any items on this syllabus at any time