

PSYC 441: Criminal Behavior: Psychological and Neurological Aspects (3 credits) Spring 2021

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

Course Description

Explore the individual psychological factors, and structural and functional neurological differences, that influence criminal behaviors by focusing on individual psychological development, the role of temperament, morality, and personality development, narcissism, evolution, psychopathy, and factors that influence specific criminal acts including murder, sexual violence, and mass casualty events.

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

- None – All material available online via the Blackboard website for the course.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Describe and classify individual psychological and neurological factors (structural and functional) that influence behaviors associated with various crimes.
2. Examine and appraise how individual psychological and neurological factors may interact with each other, and with other social factors, to influence the criminal behaviors of interest.
3. Demonstrate understanding of the complex interactions of individual psychological and neurological factors, as well as other social factors, through the application to real life criminal cases.
4. Critically evaluate and compare the acceptance and validity of psychological theories that explain the criminal behaviors of interest.
5. Design and construct various visual aids to outline and explain the individual psychological and neurological factors of interest.

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.

Module 1		
All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm		
Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Course Introduction/Why Do We Like This Stuff?
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction –Section 001	Genes
3	Take	Module 1 Quiz

Module 2		
All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm		
Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction –Section 002	The Brain
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction –Section 001	Moral Decision Making
3	Submit	Map – Moral Decision Making
4	Take	Module 2 Quiz

Module 3		
All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm		
Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Temperament
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Personality
3	Submit	Map – Adding Temperament
4	Take	Module 3 Quiz

Module 4		
All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm		
Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Affective Experience: Narcissism/Autism
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Psychopaths: Part 1
3	Submit	Map – Adding Personality
4	Take	Module 4 Quiz

Module 5		
All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm		
Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Psychopaths: Part 2
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Psychopaths: Part 3
3	Submit	Map – Adding Affective Experience
4	Take	Module 5 Quiz

Module 6		
All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm		
Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	DSM Diagnoses and Violence
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Antisocial Personality Disorder
3	Submit	Map – Adding DSM Disorders
4	Take	Module 6 Quiz

Module 7

All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm

Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Historical Cultural and Environmental Influences on Violence
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Immediate Situational Influences on Violence
3	Submit	Map – Adding Historical Cultural/Environmental Influences
4	Take	Module 7 Quiz

Module 8

All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm

Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Evolutionary Theory and Murder
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Murder
3	Submit	Map – Adding Immediate Situational Influences
4	Take	Module 8 Quiz

Module 9

All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm

Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Sex Offenders (Adult Victims)
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Sex Offenders (Child Victims)
3	Review	All Mr. B Material on Blackboard
4	Take	Module 9 Quiz

Module 10

All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm

Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Kidnapping/Hostage Scenarios
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Robbery/Burglary
3	Submit	Mr. B Paper #1 – What is the “Real” Diagnosis?
4	Take	Module 10 Quiz

Module 11

All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm

Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Making a Terrorist
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Mass Casualty Events
3	Submit	Self-grading for Mr. B Paper #1 (with corrections)
4	Take	Module 11 Quiz

Module 12

All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm

Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Hate Crimes
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Stalking
3	Submit	Mr. B Paper #2 – Why Did Mr. B Commit Arrestable Offenses While Hospitalized?
4	Take	Module 12 Quiz

Module 13

All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm

Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Domestic Violence
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Arson
3	Submit	Self-grading for Mr. B Paper #2 (with corrections)
4	Take	Module 13 Quiz

Module 14		
All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm		
Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	Financial Crimes
2	Class Attendance – Section 002 Virtual Instruction – Section 001	Group Behavior/Gang Participation
3	Submit	Mr. B Paper #3 – Is Mr. B Really “Better?”
4	Take	Module 14 Quiz

Module 15 (Exam Period)		
All tasks must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm		
Order	Task	Online Course Material
1	Class Attendance – Section 001 Virtual Instruction – Section 002	No Class No Quiz
2	Submit	Self-grading for Mr. B Paper #3 (with corrections)

Assignments Description

1. **Weekly Quizzes (42% total):** There are 14 weekly quizzes during the course of the semester.
 - a. Online quizzes must be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm each week.
 - b. These quizzes are untimed, and you may use whatever resources you wish to answer the questions, including online content from the Blackboard site and the posted PowerPoint presentations.
 - c. Each quiz is worth 3% of your overall grade in the course.
 - d. Quizzes not completed by the due date will be subject to a 5% per day late penalty. Exceptions can be made in accordance with the late policy.

2. **“Map” Assignments (28% total):** There will be a total of 7 “Map” assignments.
- a. The “map” assignments are designed to get you thinking about the information in a new way; primarily as a visual representation of the concepts discussed in the first half of the class.
 - b. Each “Map” assignment is worth 4% of your total grade in the course.
 - c. The “Maps” will be submitted to a discussion board on the Blackboard site for the course. You must submit your own post before you are able to view the posts of your classmates.
 - d. When it comes to making your “maps” there are several options:
 - i. Draw it by hand, take a photo (or scan it) and upload it to Blackboard.
 - ii. Use PowerPoint (or Google Slides). There are many available shapes, colors, and lines available in PowerPoint that can be used to make your “map.” This has the added benefit of allowing you to type text into each shape and PowerPoint even has “smart art” which are pre-set shapes that can be used.
 - iii. Literally any other program that works for you... There are many free online tools that do something similar (or better) like <https://www.diagrameditor.com>
 - e. I do not expect that the “maps” will be prefect... but I do expect you to try hard to include all the information. These are graded primarily on timeliness, perceived effort, and whether or not you managed to include all the relevant material.
 - f. The “Map” assignments are as follows:
 - i. Module 2: Moral Decision-Making Map – This is just the moral decision-making process we outlined in class. Feel free to copy the map I presented in class to get you started.
 - ii. Module 3: Adding Temperamental Traits – Each map will add information to the initial “moral decision-making map.” For this assignment, find a way (or place, or places) to add the information on temperamental traits that was covered in class. Remember, moral decision-making is a process that happens in the moment... whereas temperamental traits existed before the moment of moral decision making but still influence the moment. The point is, some things are situational (“now” variables) while others are more “historical” and represent “tendencies” to do things (but not always).
 - iii. Module 4: Adding Personality Variables – Add all the personality variables to your Module 3 “map.” Do this however you see fit, but remember, not every personality variable needs to be added in the same place.
 - iv. Module 5: Adding Affective Experience – This variable likely influences the WAY in which a person makes moral decisions. It is present before the situation but influences the decision-making process.
 - v. Module 6: Adding DSM Disorders – You need to find a place to add all the DSM disorders discussed in class. Some of these may influence different points in the “moral decision-making model.”

- vi. Module 7: Adding Historical/Cultural Environmental Influences – You understand the drill by this point. Rinse and repeat what you’ve done before.
- vii. Module 8: Adding Immediate Situational Influences – Again... you know what to do. Just be sure to consider “time” as a factor.

3. The “Mr. B” Papers (30% total)

- a. Now we get a chance to actually apply the information from this semester... Enter Mr. B. Mr. B is a very real person and a very real case that I worked years ago. He’s got quite the history.
- b. All of the information you need for the papers on Mr. B, as well as the links to turn in these papers, can be found on the Blackboard website for the class on the left-hand side of the screen under “Mr. B.”
- c. There are three papers in this series, each is worth 10% of your grade.
- d. Plot twist... these papers are self-graded. That’s right. You are going to write the paper and grade it. This is how it works...
 - i. You turn in your paper by the due date on the syllabus.
 - ii. Once you turn in your paper, you will get access to the grading rubric for that paper.
 - iii. Grade your own paper according to the rubric. If you like your grade, great. If you want make corrections to your paper to increase your grade, there in a link for a second paper submission.
 - iv. Enter the grade for the corrected paper into Blackboard.
 - v. I’ll check the last submitted draft of the paper against the rubric.
- e. Detailed instructions for each paper are located on the Blackboard site for the course in the “Mr. B” tab on the left side of the screen.
- f. The three papers are:
 - i. What is the “Real” Diagnosis?
 - ii. Why Did Mr. B Commit Arrestable Offenses While Hospitalized?
 - iii. Is Mr. B Really “Better?”

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 complete assignments and quizzes 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 the Professor Forum,” (feel free to respond to other students in the Ask Professor forum if you know the answer) or 3) On-demand Blackboard videos on how to use Blackboard features, and Technical Requirements.
- **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 at 3% each)	42%
Map - Moral Decision Making	4%
Map – Adding Temperamental Variables	4%
Map – Adding Personality Variables	4%
Map – Adding Affective Experience	4%
Map – Adding DSM Disorders	4%
Map – Adding Historical Cultural/Environmental Influences	4%
Map – Adding Immediate Situational Influences	4%
Mr. B Paper #1 – What is the “real” diagnosis?	
Mr. B Paper #2 – Why did Mr. B commit arrestable offenses in the hospital?	
Mr. B. Paper #3 – Is Mr. B really “better?”	
Total:	100%

Grading Scale

A+	97-100%
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	65-69%
F	Less than 65%

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.