

**Mystery, Madness, and Murder
Fall 2021**

Psych 405-001:

Monday & Wednesday
10:30AM – 11:45AM
Krug Hall Room 204

Psych 405-002:

Monday & Wednesday
1:30PM – 2:45PM
Nguyen Engineering Building Room 1109

Instructor: Erika De Los Santos

Email: edeloss@gmu.edu

Office Location: David King Hall Room 1004C (basement of David King in the Centec Room)

Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 12:00PM – 1:00PM or by appointment

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 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 on Mondays, whereas the other day 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 Jeffrey Dahmer, and the other on Batman, The Dark Knight.

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

Required 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 – There is some content that I will have you view on Netflix. If you do not have access to a Netflix account already, consider it like your textbook for this course.

Grading Scheme

Attendance- 15%

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. In order to excuse an absence after the two unexcused absences, students must obtain written documentation and contact the instructor within one week of the missed class. These absences will be considered on a case-to-case basis.

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 Classroom Discussions- 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 to ensure you have 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 Wednesday, two groups will present an assigned journal article and facilitate a classroom discussion on how the principles from the article relate to themes from the Serial podcast. I will do the first presentation to help you understand what is expected from you.

Final Group Annotated Bibliography – 20%

This class will equip you to learn how to apply psychological principles in order to understand topics related to mystery, madness, and murder. As such, you will work on your own group projects throughout the semester for the final presentation. Before your presentations, I will be requiring each group to submit an annotated bibliography to surmise and discuss the relevant source material and its application to the chosen topic. I will give more information about this later on in the course.

Final Group Presentation- 20%

In the middle of the semester, you will form groups (about 4 people) and begin working on a project within your individual group. The project is to create a 15-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. It is up to the student to create their groups.

Grading Policy/Scale

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.

I will assign final grades based on the following 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+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
F Below 60			

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: September 7th
- Last Day to Drop with Partial Tuition Refund: September 14th
- Last Day to Drop with No Tuition Refund: September 27th

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