**PSYC 380 DL 1: Introduction to Forensic Psychology (3 credits)**

**Spring 2023**

**Instructor**:  Dr. Sybil Smith-Gray Email: ssmithgr@gmu.edu (preferred contact)

**Office**: David King Hall – Room 2044

**Office hours**: Please contact me directly with your request so that I may accommodate you.

**Course Description**

This course 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.

**Readings (These readings are embedded within the relevant course modules.)**

1. Bureau of Justice Statistics (2006). Mental health problems of prison and jail inmates. United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. 2

 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 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 exclusive deals).

**POINTERS FOR SUCCESS: In order to perform optimally in this class, you must follow every single link that is located within each module. You will not be able to navigate the course successfully by only relying on the syllabus. The course format is redundant. Once you get the hang of it, you will find it runs quite smoothly. However, you must go to each module and complete every task as instructed in each link contained in the module. Directions and videos for completing special assignments and tasks are located within the modules.**

**\*\*\*If you encounter technical difficulties (and many are likely to arise) or other general complications, please post your inquiry to Ask the Professor. This is because it is more efficient for me to answer in a forum that all sixty students can see at the same time, instead of me trying to answer the same question repeatedly by individual email. Also, many times, I have found that your classmates will offer a solution before I get a chance to troubleshoot the issue. This is just more efficient. Again, post general inquiries to Ask the Professor.\*\*\* If you email me directly, I will redirect you to post your inquiry on Ask the Professor.**

**If you have a question about *your specific grade*, you should email me directly as I am not allowed to discuss student grades in a public forum.**

**Course Schedule**

**\*\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE: There are two major changes to the course syllabus. The “Summarizer” assignments are no longer relevant. Every effort has been made to remove any reference to “Summarizer” assignments and due dates. If you encounter a reference to a “Summarizer” assignment, you do not need to sign up or complete this task. It will not be credited. It will not impact your grade. DISREGARD. The same applies for the “group activities.” I have removed those tasks from the syllabus. Unfortunately, when I receive the course platform shell, sometimes these activities still show up. That is a technical issue that is beyond my control at this time. When that happens, I simply make sure that it is NOT included in the calculation of your grade. Again, the “Summarizer” assignments, and the “Group Activity” assignments are can be disregarded\*\*\*\***

**ALL MODULES OPEN ON MONDAY AND CLOSE ON SUNDAY**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| MODULES | READINGS/VIDEOS | ASSIGNMENTS DUE |
| Module 1**Syllabus/Introduction**Begins January 23rd | Video Introduction to the Course“What is Forensic Psychology?”  | Introductions posted by Friday* Syllabus Quiz

Due Sunday |
|  Module 2**Correctional Psychology**January 30th | Readings:• Forensic-Psych-vs.-Correctional• Dvoskin-and-Spiers• Bureau-of-Justice-Statistics(pp.1-7)Videos:• Jail: The Basic Layout• Suicide in Jail | Discussion The Man Inside: Four Months as a Prison Guard:• Initial comments by Friday • Responses by Sunday* Module 2 Quiz Due Sunday
 |
| Module 3**Police Psychology**Begins Feb 6th | Readings:• Forero• Forero et al diagram• Pinizzotto Videos:• Fitness for Duty Evaluations• Officer Stress | Discussion Suicide by Cop?Initial comments by Friday • Responses by Sunday * Module 3 Quiz Due Sunday
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| Module 4**Expert Testimony**Begins Feb 13th   | Videos:• What makes an expert witness? | Discussion “Who is the actual expert?”• Initial comments by Friday • Responses by Sunday * Video Quiz “Is This Person an Expert” Due Sunday
* Module 4 Quiz Due Sunday
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| Module 5**Competency**Begins Feb 20th | Readings:• Post-Mac-CAT Audio:• Interview with Dr. C• Interview with Dr. G Videos:• Competency Introduction – Present Ability | Discussion “Is This Guy Competent to Stand Trial?” • Comments by Friday • Responses: SundayModule 5 Quiz Due Sunday |
| Module 6**Personal Injury**Begins Feb 27th |  Videos:• What is a Tort?• Damages | Discussion “The McDonald’s Coffee Lawsuit”• Initial comments: due Friday• Responses: due Sunday * Module 6 Quiz Due Sunday
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| Module 7**Child Custody Evaluations**Begins March 6th | Videos:• Child Custody Options  | Discussion “Should Dad Get Custody?”Initial: due Friday• Responses: due Sunday * Module 7 Quiz Due Sunday
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| WEEK OF MARCH 13 SPRING BREAK | WEEK OF MARCH 13 SPRING BREAK | WEEK OF MARCH 13 SPRING BREAK |
| Module 8**Criminal Responsibility**Begins March 20th |  Reading:• R-CRASVideos:• Introduction to Criminal Insanity• M’Naughten and the Insanity Standard |  Discussion “John Hinkley Jr”• Initial comments: due Friday • Responses: due Sunday* Module 8 Quiz Due Sunday
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| Module 9**Risk Assessment**Begins March 27th | Readings:• V-RAG• HCR-20 Videos:• VRAG (how to use it)• HCR-20 (How to use it)• Introduction to Risk Assessment | Discussion “Why Does Actuarial Risk Assessment Feel Strange?”• Initial comments: due Friday * Responses: due Sunday
* Module 9 Quiz Due Sunday

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| Module 10 **Homeland Security**Begins April 3rd |  • PODCAST TUTORIAL | DiscussionTerrorist Profile? Bin Laden, McVeigh, Omar Mateen* Initial comments: due Friday
* Responses: due Sunday
* Module 10 Quiz Due Sunday
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| Module 11 **Psychopaths**Begins April 10th | Review all material embedded in the module | * Module 11 Quiz Due Sunday
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| Module 12**Sex Offenders**Begins April 17th  | Review all material embedded in module | Discussion* Initial comments: due Friday
* Responses: due Sunday
* Module 12 Quiz Due Sunday
 |
| Module 13**Lie Detection**Begins April 24th  | Readings:• Faigman | * Module 13 Quiz Due Sunday
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| Module 14**Criminal Profiling**Begins May 1st  | Readings:• Kocsis• Homant• Crime Scene Profiling Activity | Discussion “Profiling Activity”• Initial Comments: due Friday  Responses: due Sunday Module 14 Quiz Due Sunday |
| Module 15  Begins May 8th**Readings Days and Exam Period (Podcast submissions and review)**ALL WORK IS DUE BY 11:59 pm ON MAY 14.   | Readings:Forensic Specialty Guidelines | Discussion “Review 2 Podcasts”• Post individual podcast by Friday• Responses to PodCasts: due Sunday   **Note: There is no exam for module 15** |

**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. 8

 2. Discussion Assignments (30%): There are 12 discussion assignments during 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%): 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 o Title of case o Date of case o Court(s) in which the case was ultimately decided o 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 for them to understand it the first time they hear it. Remember, your listeners have not 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. Do not wing it… it will sound like you did and no one wants that.

b. Use the entire 15-minutes but do not 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 difficult. You need to have all the requires information present to get full credit for the assignment. Make a checklist if you must.

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 do not 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 Garage band software is useful, has sound effects, and allows you to layer sounds 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 should not 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

o Rouse v. Cameron (1966)

o Wyatt v. Stickney (1972)

o Youngberg v. Romeo (1982)

▪ Right to refuse psychiatric treatment

o Application of the President and Directors of Georgetown College Incorporated (1964)

o Rennie v. Klein (1983)

o Sell v. United States (2003)

▪ Informed consent

o Natanson v. Kline (1960)

o Canterbury v. Spence (1972)

o Kaimowitz v. Michigan DMH (1973)

▪ Domestic Violence/Stalking

o Baker v. City of New York (1966)

o Thurman v. City of Torrington (1985)

o United States of America v. Matusiewicz (2015)

▪ Discrimination law

o Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

o Loving v. Virginia (1967)

o Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (1978)

▪ Duty to protect o Tarasoff v. Regents of University of California (1976, 1978)

o Jablonski v. United States (1983)

o Naidu v. Laird (1988)

▪ Confidentiality

o In re Lifschutz (1970)

o Doe v. Roe (1977)

o Jaffe v. Redmond (1996)

▪ Prisoner’s rights o Baxstrom v. Herold (1966) 11

o Estelle v. Gamble (1976)

o Farmer v. Brennan (1994)

▪ Civil commitment o Lake v. Cameron (1966)

o Fasulo v. Arafeh (1977)

o Addington v. Texas (1979)

▪ Diminished capacity

o People v. Patterson (1976)

o Ibn-Tamas v. United States (1979)

o Montana v. Engelhoff (1996)

▪ Psychology and the death penalty

o Estelle V. Smith (1981)

o Barefoot v. Estelle (1983)

o Atkins v. Virginia (2002)

▪ Sexual harassment

o Meritor Savings Bank FSB v. Vinson (1986)

o Harris v. Forklift Systems Inc. (1993)

o Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services Inc. (1998)

**Course Policies**

**Completing Assignments:** You will need to follow the specific instructions and guidelines in each module to fully understand and complete your assignments. The syllabus serves as a general template of the course, but the specific steps you must take to complete and submit your assignments are outlined in the modules. All due dates and times are listed in the modules for each activity noted. Please begin completing your assignments on the Monday that the module starts. If you do not follow the module instructions, you run the risk of failing to complete some work and you will receive a zero. Please, start the process of reviewing and completing assignments on Monday and work your way through the entire module over the course of the week as indicated by the due dates and times posted within the module.

**Hate Speech**: The University setting fosters and supports free speech and the civil expression of differing viewpoints. However, hate speech, speech that incites violence, intimidating speech that fosters fear and disrupts the educational process will not be tolerated. Individuals who violate this course policy, verbally or in writing, will be reported to the appropriate authorities for review and determination of consequences.

Late Assignments: Late work will **not** be accepted for this course. If there is a legitimate emergency, your score of zero will be exempted from your total average. This exception will be allowed only **once** during the semester. After applying this exception, all grades of zero will be included in calculating your final grade.

Students will not be allowed to “catch up” numerous missed assignments as the semester ends. If you find you are having difficulty keeping up in the class, please contact me right away. These are unprecedented times and there are some circumstances that require individual students to contemplate dropping the course due to other significant stressors. You will be counseled to drop the course if you find you have missed three or more assignments, late assignments will not be accepted.

Covid and other medical exceptions: Please contact me directly and provide proof of your positive covid status if you are unable to complete assignments due to Covid illness. Similarly, if you have been hospitalized, or have experienced another health emergency that prevents you from completing an assignment please provide documentation from your medical provider. You do not need to disclose your private health information. Simply provide documentation from your medical provider that you are receiving medical care that precludes your participation in class.

**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 feature. Feel free to respond to other students in the Ask Professor forum if you know the answer, it is incredibly helpful when your classmates can access information directly from you before I have had a chance to figure out a solution.

**Technical Requirements:**

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 65-69%

F Less than 65%

University Policies and Resources

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing
4. 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).
5. 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 essential 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.
6. 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.
7. 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 scan only be made in cases in which proper documentation has been provided through the Office of Disability Services.
8. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
9. 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.
10. 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.