



PSY420 – Psychology & Law



Summer 2006
CRN: 44181 (4 credits)
Monday-Thursday 8:00am-9:50am, ESL 112
06/26/06 – 07/20/06

Instructor: Christina Sheppler, M.S.
Email: sheppler@uoregon.edu
Office: Straub 325
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 10:00am – 11:00am
I am also available by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Christi-Ann Emous, B.A.
Email: cemouspe@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment (email to make arrangements)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will focus on the examination of topics that are of interest to both psychology and the law. We will discuss many issues that arise during the different stages of the legal process and examine how social science methods can be applied in legal contexts. For example, we will cover issues concerning identity (interrogation, lie detection, eyewitness identification, profiling), state of mind (competence, insanity, mental health), the trial process (jury selection, jury decision making) and social policy (legal sanctions, capital punishment).

SUMMER COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This 4-week summer class will cover the same amount of material that is normally presented over the course of a regular term. During a normal 10-week course, it is expected that you spend approximately 3 hours per credit each week attending class and completing course-related work (for a standard 4-credit class, this translates into a total of 12 hours per week and 120 hours over the course of the term). Because this course condenses 10 weeks into 4, it is expected that you will spend approximately 30 hours per week engaged in course-related activities (attending class, reading, completing assignments, preparing for exams, etc.). The pace at which information is covered and the amount of reading assigned each week will reflect this expectation.

COURSE MATERIALS

Blackboard

A blackboard site has been created for this course. This site will contain announcements, general course information, lecture slides, additional readings, grades, etc. You should make yourself familiar with the course site immediately. You should also monitor blackboard for new information and announcements on a regular basis. Be sure to ask me if you have any questions about accessing/using blackboard.

Readings

The required text for this course is available in the campus bookstore:

Wrightsmann, L., Greene, E., Nietzel, M., & Fortune, W. (2002). *Psychology and the Legal System* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Additional readings will also be assigned and posted on blackboard. The outlined reading for each day should be completed before you come to class.

Lectures

I will make my lectures slides available on blackboard each day after class. Note that these slides serve to outline the lecture and are by no means comprehensive. You should not rely on these slides for your course notes; rather, you should use them as a way to organize the notes that you take during class.

COURSE EVALUATION

Grades will be awarded based on (1) the requirements that you choose to complete and (2) the quality of your work. In addition, your grade will be determined by your *average* performance across the different course requirements. This means that you cannot simply combine points to determine your grade; an “A” student is one that does well in all aspects of the course (not just the exams or the papers, but both).

- C / Pass** To earn a “C”/Pass in this course, you must (a) earn at least 65% of the participation points, AND (b) average 65% or higher on the two exams.
- B** To earn a “B” in this course, you must (a) earn at least 75% of the participation points (b) average 75% or higher on the two exams, AND (c) average a “B-” or better on two out of the three case papers.
- A** To earn an “A” in this course, you must (a) earn at least 85% of the participation points, (b) average an 85% or higher on the two exams, AND (c) average an “A-” or better on two out of the three case papers.
- + / -** Only “whole” grades can be earned.

Participation

Participation points may be earned in a variety of ways. You may be asked to participate in class discussions and/or activities, seek the answer to a question posed during lecture, submit questions prior to class, write short reactions to the material presented in class, etc. Participation opportunities are not predetermined, so it is important that you attend class and monitor blackboard announcements to learn about these opportunities as they arise.

Examinations

There will be both a midterm and a final examination in this course. The midterm will address the material (from readings, lectures, and guest speakers) covered through July 6. The final will be comprehensive and will cover material presented over the course of the entire term. Both exams may be composed of multiple-choice, true-false, and/or short-answer questions. The two exams are *not* weighted equally; the midterm will count as 40 percent your exam performance, and the final will count as 60 percent. The two exams scores will be weighted and then averaged to determine your overall exam performance.

Case Papers

If you are aiming for an “A” or a “B” in this course, you must complete the case paper requirement. Throughout the course of the term we will discuss several court cases. During weeks 2, 3 & 4, one case will be selected as the focus of that week’s case paper. There are three opportunities to write the papers, but only two out of the three will be used to calculate average performance. It is highly recommended that you complete the first two case papers and then decide whether or not to complete the third (based on your average performance at that point). See the section entitled “Case Paper Requirements” for a detailed explanation of what the paper assignments entail.

EMAIL POLICY

Make sure that the email address listed for you on duckweb/blackboard is correct. You will need to check this account frequently because I may communicate with you outside of class. If the email address that is listed on duckweb/blackboard is not the account that you regularly use, you can change your primary email address by going to <duckweb.uoregon.edu>, selecting <personal information>, selecting <change email address> and then following the instructions. **YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL INFORMATION THAT IS SENT TO YOU VIA EMAIL.**

POLICY ON CLARIFICATION OF INFORMATION

It is your responsibility as a student in this course to ask questions and clarify any points in this syllabus that you find confusing. “I didn’t know that...” or “I wasn’t sure about...” will not excuse you from completing any of the requirements for this course.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Dishonesty

Students are responsible for reading and understanding the University’s policies on academic dishonesty. This information is available at the following web site:
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~conduct/sai.htm>.

Guidelines for Teaching & Learning at the UO, Psychology Department

The Undergraduate Education Committee (UEC) has drafted a set of guidelines that outlines the responsibilities of (1) the psychology department, (2) undergraduate psychology students and (3) course instructors. This information includes sections on (a) the mission of the undergraduate program in psychology, (b) best practices for students, (c) best practices for instructors, (d) special student concerns, and (e) where to get help and additional information. All of this information is available at
<http://psychweb.uoregon.edu/guidelines/>.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and need accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me during the first week of the course.

READING, ASSIGNMENT & EXAM SCHEDULE

NOTE: While the exam dates and case paper due dates will *not* change, it is possible that the list of topics may need to be adjusted as we proceed throughout the course. Any changes to the syllabus regarding topic coverage and/or reading assignment modifications will be announced in class and posted on blackboard.

WEEK 1

- 6/26 Course Overview
Introduction to the Legal System
- 6/27 Introduction to the Legal System (continued)
Reading: Wrightsman – Chapters 1 & 4
Blackboard – US Bill of Rights Summary
- 6/28 Legality vs. Justice
Psychologists and the Legal System
Reading: Wrightsman – Chapters 2 & 3
Blackboard – Federal Rules of Evidence Summary
- 6/29 Interrogation, Lie Detection & Relevant Legal Issues
Reading: Wrightsman – Chapter 8 (pg 212-235) & 9
Blackboard – The Psychology of Confessions
- 6/30 No Class (Friday)

WEEK 2

- 7/3 Memory & Eyewitness Identification
Reading: Wrightsman – Chapter 7
Blackboard – Eyewitness Testimony
- 7/4 NO CLASS (Fourth of July Holiday)
- 7/5 Eyewitness Identification & Lineups
Reading: Blackboard – Juror Knowledge of Eyewitness Behavior
Police Preparation & Conduct of Lineups
Eyewitness Identification Guidelines
- 7/6 GUEST SPEAKER: Kathleen Mercer, Family Law Attorney
Reading: Wrightsman – Chapter 12 (pg 346-350)
- 7/7 No Class (Friday)
PAPER 1 DUE by 3:00pm

WEEK 3

7/10 **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

7/11 GUEST SPEAKER: Ray Broderick, Child Advocacy Center – Forensic Interviewing

“The Child Advocacy Center of Lane County helps lessen the trauma experienced by abused children going through the judicial process by providing a warm, child-friendly setting where children can be interviewed, receive medical exams to help criminal investigations and testify before Lane County’s specially-convened grand jury for child abuse cases.” (Excerpt taken from the Child Advocacy Center’s website: <http://www.co.lane.or.us/ChildAdvocacyCenter/>).

WARNING – Ray will be showing a video of a forensic interview with a child that was sexually abused by her father. Please contact me before class if you are not comfortable viewing this video.

7/12 Profiling & Relevant Legal Issues

Reading: Wrightsman – Chapters 8 (p 207-212) & 12 (p 345-346)
Blackboard – Psychological Aspects of Profiling
Empirical Research on Profiling Accuracy

7/13 Competence & Insanity

GUEST SPEAKER: Mike Morrow, FBI Agent – Profiling

Reading: Wrightsman – Chapter 11

7/14 No Class (Friday)

PAPER 2 DUE by 3:00pm

WEEK 4

7/17 Competence & Insanity (continued)

GUEST SPEAKER: Debra Vogt, Assistant District Attorney – Jury Selection

Reading: Wrightsman – Chapter 13 & 14

7/18 Jury Decision Making (continued)

Reading: Wrightsman – Chapter 15
Blackboard – The Social Psychology of Jury Nullification

7/19 Legal Sanctions

Reading: Wrightsman – Chapter 17

7/20 **FINAL EXAMINATION**

7/21 No Class (Friday)

PAPER 3 DUE by 3:00pm

CASE PAPER REQUIREMENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Papers are due on Fridays by 3:00pm. UNEXCUSED LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. If you are unable to turn a paper in on time, you should plan on submitting it early or you should speak with me directly concerning the issue *before* the deadline has expired.

Papers can either be turned into the psychology department main office (Straub 131) or emailed directly to me. If you are turning the paper in at the main office, make sure that my name is in a visible place somewhere on the front page. If you plan to email your paper, it should be emailed from your UO email account, and you must email it as a Microsoft Word attachment (.doc). Also, the name of your attached file should include your last name as well as the case paper number (e.g., Sheppler – Case Paper 2).

FORMATTING GUIDELINES

In the past, papers have ranged from 6-10 pages in length. All papers should be double-spaced, typed in Times New Roman size 12 font, and the margins should be 1" all the way around.

CONTENT

Papers should be divided into the following 8 sections (be sure to label each section in your paper):

- I. **FACTS** – This section should provide a brief overview of the relevant facts leading up to the case. This includes not only the information concerning the events in question (e.g., who, what, where, when, etc.), but also the case history (e.g., appeals, previous rulings, etc.).
- II. **LEGAL ISSUE(S)** – This section should outline the main *legal* issue(s) raised by the case. What is/are the main legal question(s) that the court is addressing?
- III. **SOCIAL SCIENCE ISSUE(S)** – This section should contain a discussion of the main *social science* issues that pertain to the case. These issues may or may not be explicitly addressed by the court, but will be relevant from a psychological standpoint. In this section you should discuss the relevant issue(s) in detail by drawing on information presented in the case and/or covered in the lectures and readings.
- IV. **HOLDING(S)** – The holding is the court's determination of a matter of law based on the issue(s) presented in a particular case. This section should contain a discussion of how the law has changed or been amplified by the court's decision.
- V. **OUTCOME** – In many cases, the holding and the outcome are aligned. However, there are times when the outcome of a case runs counter to the holding(s) due to the particular circumstances of the case. In this section, you should briefly discuss what the outcome was for the particular parties involved.
- VI. **MAJORITY ARGUMENT** – This section should include a discussion of the reasoning used by the *majority* to reach its decision. You should outline the key points of the majority argument and discuss how the majority supports its conclusions (e.g., precedence, social science, etc.).

- VII. **DISSENT ARGUMENT** (If Applicable) – This section should include a discussion of the reasoning used by the *minority* to reject the majority argument. You should outline the key points of the dissenting argument and discuss how the minority supports its conclusions (e.g., precedence, social science, etc.).
- VIII. **DISCUSSION** – In this section you should analyze the decisions of the court (both holding(s) and outcome). Discuss what would have happened if the court had decided differently; in other words, what would some of the potential ramifications be had the court interpreted the law differently or decided in favor of the opposing party? Considering all you know about the issue(s) at hand, discuss whether you think the court’s decision was or was not appropriate.

GRADING CRITERIA

Papers will be graded by combining your score from three different categories:

- WRITING** Writing should be clear, concise and grammatical. Make sure that you only use words that you are comfortable with and do not rely on the spell-check/grammar function of your computer to catch errors. Taking the time to proofread your paper is essential, as this section accounts for one-third of the paper score.
- CONTENT** Each section of the paper should be covered thoroughly. It is expected that you will use resources other than the case opinion itself in your presentation and analysis of the issues, so be sure to properly cite all of the references that you use.
- ANALYSIS** Analyses should be based on clearly stated assumptions and/or cited facts. Each step in each argument should be based on previous stated assumptions/cited facts or be a logical deduction from the assumptions or facts that have already been discussed in your paper.

Each category will be scored on the 5-point scale below, and the values will be summed to produce a total score for the paper (15 points are possible).

- 5 – EXCELLENT (no major faults that need to be corrected)
 4 – VERY GOOD (there are minor faults but no major faults that should be corrected)
 3 – GOOD (some major faults, but good overall)
 2 – NEEDS IMPROVEMENT (many major problems that must be corrected)
 1 – POOR (large number of problems, a major rewrite would be necessary)

Case paper scores will translate into the following grades:

15 – A	10 – B-	5 – D
14 – A	9 – C+	4 – D
13 – A-	8 – C	3 – F
12 – B+	7 – C-	2 – F
11 – B	6 – D	1 – F