

PSY 310 Forensic Psychology (3 credits)

Spring 2009

M 6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Professor Jane Tyler Ward, PhD

Curtis Hall 121

Office Hours: M - F 9:00 – 10:00, T/R 11:00 – 12:00, other times by appointment

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Prerequisites: PSY 100; PSY 309 (Abnormal Psychology) recommended

Text: Cronin, C. (2006) *Forensic Psychology*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co: Dubuque, IA.

Other handouts as indicated

Course Description: Forensic psychology is the application of the science and practice of psychology to questions and issues relating to the law and the legal system. The word “forensic” comes from the Latin word “forensis,” meaning “of the forum,” where the law courts of ancient Rome were held. Forensic Psychology is defined by the American Psychological Association as “the application of clinical specialties to the legal arena.” Although the most frequent use of forensic psychologists has been in assessing individuals, new, less intrusive, approaches are being used by the court which will ultimately broaden the scope of forensic practice.

This course is an introduction to the practice of forensic psychology in the spirit of the *scientist-practitioner model*. Topics will include psychological evaluations for the court (child custody; competency; insanity), psychological factors in eyewitness testimony, trial consultation, criminal investigation techniques, and alternative dispute resolution – to name a few.

Course format: class discussion and questions/lecture

Course Objectives:

At the completion of the course, the student should demonstrate a knowledge of the role of psychology in the legal system, including:

1. The student should have an elementary working knowledge of the role of procedure in the legal system.
2. The student should demonstrate understanding of the influence of psychology in the role of victims, defendants, judges, police officers, and lawyers as they interact with the legal system.
3. The student should understand the influence of psychological principles as applied to various aspects of pretrial and trial activities, including alternative dispute resolution.
4. The student should understand the influence of psychological principles as they relate to eyewitness testimony, expert testimony, psychological profiling, assessment of criminal responsibility and child custody issues, assessment of competency, and jury selection.
5. The student should be able to use analytical thinking in order to critically examine how psychological factors and legal issues interact.

Course Outcomes:

Short answer and essay exams will be used to determine whether the student has achieved objectives 1 – 5 above. The student will also demonstrate analytical thinking in building a criminal profile from crime scene evidence, victimology, and other profiling methodology.

Course Requirements:

1. Exams: There are two exams and one final examination (partially comprehensive). The final exam essay questions are based on readings, notes, and the film “Primal Fear.” The first two exams are completed in class (closed book), and the final exam is take-home, open book, and typed. There are 2 required projects.
2. This is meant to be an interactive, participatory class. I will expect you to read the text and handout assignments before class, and be prepared to ask and answer questions. Sometimes you will have short, graded activities to discuss and hand in for participation points.

Grading:

1. The first two exams are each worth 25% of your grade.
2. The final exam is worth 25% of your grade.
3. The projects and participation are worth 25% of your grade.

Grading system:

A	93.0 – 100%	A-	90.0 – 92.9%	B+	87.0 – 89.9%
B	83.0 – 86.9%	B-	80.0 – 82.9%	C+	77.0 – 79.9%
C	73.0 – 76.9%	C-	70.0 – 72.9%	D +	67.0 – 69.9%
D	63.0 – 66.9%	D-	60.0 – 62.9%	F	59.9% and below

Exam-taking protocol:

Exams must be taken on exam day unless you have a written excuse from your doctor, the Dean of Student Affairs, or the absence was pre-approved by me. If you miss an exam and do not have a written medical or pre-approved excuse, you will receive a five point deduction from your test score for each week day (Monday through Friday) until the test is taken.

Honor Code:

The Honor Code of Cedar Crest College is fully supported in this class, and each student will be treated as a responsible and honest adult. Violations of the Honor Code will be dealt with through the Chair of the Psychology Department and the Provost’s Office.

Special Accommodations:

Any student with a documented disability should see me within the first two weeks in order to address academic accommodations. The Academic Advising Center is available to assist students in meeting their particular needs, and I will do my best to ensure the best possible arrangements for a successful learning experience.

College Classroom Protocol:

The Cedar Crest College Classroom Protocol rests on the assumption that each student has the right to a positive learning environment free of extraneous interruptions and distractions or inconsiderate/uncivil behavior. Please think of your fellow students and refrain from talking while someone else is presenting information; please refrain from passing notes, coming to class late, or leaving class early.

Psychology Department Attendance Policy:

The Psychology Department is committed to the principle that regular and punctual class attendance is essential to the students' optimum learning and successful academic achievement. Regular class attendance is a student obligation, and students are responsible for all work, tests and written assignments. Therefore, students are expected to be present for all class sessions. The Psychology Department's attendance policy recognizes that there will be times when attendance at class is not possible. You may think of the policy as being similar to the type used in the corporate world where each employee is given a certain number of "personal/sick days." Based on the number of regularly scheduled class meetings, you will be allowed a certain number of absences (see below) with no consequences, no questions asked. In other words, there is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. You are of course responsible for anything covered during those missed classes, and for submitting assignments on time, regardless of whether or not you attend. Beyond the allowable number of absences, there are consequences that will adversely impact your grade, much as missing too many days of work can adversely impact your employment status. Above all else, you should carefully consider each decision to not attend class, as once your allotted absences have been used, they are gone. *It is important that students arrive for class on time. Late arrivals are very distracting, not only to the instructor, but also to fellow students. Repeated late arrivals are not acceptable and will be addressed on an individual basis.* It is each student's responsibility to understand this policy and to keep track of absences throughout the semester.

Application to this Class:

Formal attendance will be taken during all class sessions. This class meets once per week (14 class meetings). As such, you may miss **2 classes** without penalty. If you miss **3 classes**, your final grade (cumulative percentage of points) will be lowered by 5%. That means that if you have earned 84% of the available points in the class, which is a B grade, you would be lowered to 79%, which is a C+. Likewise, if you have earned 77% of the points available, the penalty would take you down to 72%, which is a C-. As a reminder, a C grade (73%) is required in all Psychology courses. If you miss **4 classes**, you will receive a failing grade for the course. If you miss four classes, you have missed approximately 25% of the class meetings.

Course topics and assignments:

	Topic	Assignment
1/19	Introduction and overview of course Legal terms	Ch. 1 Legal Terms (PPT) Project #1
1/26	Expert Witness Testimony Ethical Issues <i>Quiz on legal terms</i>	Ch. 2
2/02	Psychological Assessment Project #1 due	Ch. 3 Personality Assessment (PPT) Project #2
2/09	Psychological Assessment: MMPI-2	MMPI Interpretation (PPT)
2/16	Insanity Pleas & Competency Evaluations <i>Quiz on MMPI-2</i>	Ch. 4 Insanity & Competence (PPT)
2/23	Diminished capacity; Competency Project #2 due	Ch. 4 Insanity & Competence (PPT)
3/02	<i>Test #1</i> Civil Assessment: Child Custody	Ch. 8 Child Custody Evaluations (PPT)
3/09	SPRING BREAK	
3/16	Child Custody and other court-appointed custody roles	Custody Evaluations
3/23	Trial Consultation, mediation, scientific jury selection	Ch. 9 Alternative Dispute Resolution & Jury selection (PPTs)
3/30	Memory, Eyewitness Testimony Video: What Jennifer Saw	Ch. 11 Eyewitness Testimony (PPT)

4/06	Children's Testimony	Children's Eyewitness Testimony (PPT)
4/13	Break	
4/20	Test #2 Criminal Investigative Techniques	
4/27	Psychopathy & ASPD Criminal Profiling	Ch. 10 Psychopathy & ASPD (PPT)
5/04	"Primal Fear"	