PSYCH 378:
SEMINAR – FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY
Fall, 2005

Instructor: Dr. Robert T. Brill
Office: PPHAC - Room 225
Fax: 610-625-7879
E-Mail: mertb01@moravian.edu
Office Phone: 610-861-1561
Office Hours: Monday 9AM -10AM
Tues., Wed., & Thursday 2PM – 3PM
(or by appointment)

Course Overview:

Psychology and the law continue to converge in a growing number of ways, and it is apparent that psychology can lend substantive help to the lofty goal of justice in a variety of contexts, including investigations, court room dynamics and organizational efficiencies. The purposes of this seminar will be: 1) to introduce students to basic concepts in the field of forensic psychology, 2) to provide a forum for discussing current forensic issues, 3) to help you learn how psychologists function in the legal system, and 4) to think critically about how psychological research can continue to confront and advance our knowledge in this area.

Course Objectives:

1. Students should become knowledgeable of a wide range of psychological concepts, ideas and theories relevant to the challenges of optimizing the effectiveness of our legal system in the context of our complex society.

2. Students should demonstrate a comprehension of philosophical and social science underpinnings of substantive and procedure law, and sharpen their own philosophical values related to themes of forensic psychology.

3. Students should increase their understanding of, respect for, and appreciation of the various partnership roles psychologists play in the area of forensics with a variety of other disciplines.

4. Students will be challenged to think critically and in an active learning approach about the issues discussed in the course description above.

5. Students should develop the ability to relate psychological theories to real life forensic situations.

6. Students should develop research and writing skills and become familiar with various sources specific to this field, as well as various psychological problem analyses.

7. Students should improve their communication skills (written, verbal, & listening, both formal and informal) through various opportunities provided during the course.
Required texts:


Also, you need to have access to Blackboard, and register for the course.

Course Requirements:

Research / Analysis Paper/Presentation (25%) – You are to complete a literature review on a particular topic (Suggestions below) and make a brief presentation to the class on synthesizing themes and emerging contemporary trends. These papers must be done in APA format. This project can be done in pairs but does not need to be. If done in pairs the standards for the paper will reflect a recognition of that collaboration. Individual efforts should be 8 to 12 pages long while dyad efforts should be at least 14 pages long. More details on structure and guidelines will be discussed in class. Possible topics include: Expert testimony, Eyewitness testimony, Criminal Profiling, Psychological Autopsies, the Insanity Defense, Jury Deliberation, Juror Selection, Biases and Discrimination within the Legal System, Work Issues Impacting Police Officers, Ethical Dilemmas within Legal Professions, Treatment and Rehabilitation Programs, Community Crime Prevention, The Psychology of Vigilante Mindsets, Psychology and Custody Hearings.

For the first Thursday of class (next class) – please rank order your top five preferred topics, provide a brief rationale indicating why you are interested in the first two or three, and also indicate if you will be working with anyone.

Active Learning & Short Assignments (25%) Active learning involves questioning the text and lecture material, contributing to discussion, sharing ideas and alternative perspectives. Such active learning MUST be accompanied by critical thinking. This scholarly approach to the material is essential to fully achieve many of the course objectives. As a prerequisite to the active learning that will take place in the classroom, please arrive to class prepared by having read the assigned chapter(s), and completing the writing assignments. Class participation is expected and highly encouraged. This is the best strategy for achieving many of the objectives laid out for the course. Given the relatively short amount of time in class and extensive material to discuss, BLACKBOARD will be a key tool to continue and elaborate upon our discussions. This grade will also be impacted by the number and quality of contributions to the Blackboard discussions we generate, as well as your active engagement (asking questions) when we have guest speakers.

There will periodically be short assignments that will supplement the readings. These will need to be completed for class and handed in at the assigned class. One type of assignment you will see listed on
the syllabus is “KC Entries”. These are bullet item lists of connections that you perceive between psychology and the John Wayne Gacy case. In other words, for each entry you must generate at least five instances or examples in which the field of psychology could lend assistance, support, or offer efforts in scientific research areas in this case.

In addition, each week you will be asked to contribute EITHER TWO possible multiple choice questions or ONE short answer question for possible inclusion on the exams. These should be proofread, and short answers should strive to tap into critical thinking about the course material and discussions. These will be submitted onto a designated place in Blackboard but also sent to me via e-mail with the heading: PS378 Test Questions

**Group Project/Presentation (20%)** – These projects will center around the major case study presented in “Killer Clown” about John Wayne Gacy. In addition to giving you a sense of criminal investigations, the book provides a context for simulating several forensic psychology roles. Students will be assigned to “task forces” and be given objectives to accomplish by applying the principles of the course to that objective. More details on structure and guidelines will be discussed in class.

**Mid Term and Final Exam (15% each)** – Designed to motivate efforts toward the first course objective, the exams will cover the first half and second half material respectively. It is preferable that the short class time we have be devoted to active discussion in the true spirit of a seminar. Therefore, lectures are downplayed but you are encouraged to ask for clarification about material assigned for each class. In the spirit of seminar, class time is not relegated to “covering the text” so please approach the mastery of the information in the manner appropriate for a 300 level seminar. Student generated questions will be well represented on the exams in edited format.

### Course Structure & Policies:

1) **ACTIVE LEARNING:**
Active learning involves questioning the text and lecture material, contributing to discussion, sharing ideas and alternative perspectives. As a prerequisite to the active learning that will take place in the classroom, please arrive to class on time and prepared by having read the assigned chapter(s), and completing the assignments. Class participation is expected and highly encouraged. This is the best strategy for achieving many of the objectives laid out for the course. Those who commit themselves to such active learning are scholars. It is for this reasoning that excessive absences will be penalized as stated in policy #4 below.

Please note, those who commit themselves to such active learning are scholars. To help with my grading of this component there will be a self evaluation instrument introduced and used during the small group discussions.

2) **LATE ASSIGNMENTS:**
Assignments and projects may be handed in up to three days late (5 points deducted from the grade each day late). When handing in an assignment late please indicate the amount of days late on the
front cover along with your signature – without this late assignments will be considered incomplete (I). Assignments may not be handed in after the third day late. Please, do not ask me to deviate from this policy. If you must miss class, drop off the assignment earlier, or send it with a classmate. YOU MAY NOT E-MAIL ME ASSIGNMENTS - as evidence by past experience – too much can go wrong. I encourage you not to procrastinate, and be sure to use your file on the student X: drive and back up your work!

3) MAKE-UP TESTS:
In order to avoid receiving a zero on a missed test you must provide notification and verification. Notify me beforehand, or as soon as possible. Notification more than two days after the exam is not acceptable. Also, if you miss a test you MUST provide appropriate documentation (Drs.' note, court order, family note upon death of a family member, etc.) at the time of the make-up exam or beforehand. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONTACT AND WORK WITH STUDENT SERVICES IF YOUR ABSENCE WILL BE EXTENSIVE. Due to the awkwardness, in some cases I will not ask for such documentation; however, realize that if such documentation is not presented, the highest score that can be achieved on a test is a 70. I reserve the right to schedule make-up tests for 8:00AM on an agreed upon weekday or weekend agreed upon. Pop quizzes cannot be made up. I will drop the lowest grade on a quiz – this includes the zero for anyone who misses a quiz.

4) ATTENDANCE:
Class attendance is expected. Class lectures and demonstrations will supplement text material. Excessive absences will impact directly on your final grade. After three missed classes, each class missed will reduce your final grade by two points. You are responsible for getting missed notes, assignments, and relevant in-class announcements in a timely manner. If you miss a day when we are meeting as research groups without a valid excuse, your final grade will be deducted by five points. PLEASE USE STUDENT SERVICES IF YOU MUST MISS MULTIPLE CLASSES FOR EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES.

5) ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
Academic integrity is a core value of the college and is expected. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. It is my contractual agreement with the college that I am to report all suspected cases of plagiarism and cheating. Plagiarism is the intentional misrepresentation of someone else's work as your own. This includes transcribing sentences or paragraphs belonging to another author directly from another written source and suggesting they are your own words, quoting directly from a published work without giving the author credit (i.e. proper citation), using or "borrowing" another student's work, buying a paper from a professional service, etc. The policy of the department is that the student must keep all note cards and rough drafts until given a grade for that course!!! Again, be sure to back up computer disks. Evidence of plagiarism and cheating will be dealt with in accordance with the college policy on academic honesty in the Student Handbook (pp. 50-56).

6) EXCUSES:
Given the nature of the course and its emphasis on mastery skills that are critical for upper level study
in psychology, I can not pardon work or substitute with extra credit other than that which is relevant to the course and offered to all. In the spirit of fairness to ALL students I must be consistent with the policies laid out in this syllabus and ask you to be familiar with and respectful of them. If you are thinking of asking for an exception to my polices; first ask yourself – “Am I willing to ask my classmates to support my exception to the rules of the course?”

7) SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:
Should you require special accommodations for a disability, please arrange an appointment with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Documentation of a disability will be required for special accommodations to be arranged in conjunction with the Learning Services Office.

Students with Disabilities
Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for support of learning disabilities and/or ADHD, should contact Mrs. Laurie Roth, Director of Learning Services, 1307 Main Street (ext. 1510).

Students who wish to request accommodations for support of other disabilities, should contact Dr. Ron Kline, Director of the Counseling Center, 1307 Main Street (ext. 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the appropriate disability support provider on campus.

8) SUMMARY OF GRADING SYSTEM:

MIDTERM EXAM 15%
FINAL EXAM 15%
GROUP PROJECT / PRESENTATION 20%
RESEARCH/ ANALYSIS
   PAPER/PRESENTATION 25%
ACTIVE LEARNING / ASSIGNMENTS 25%

9) The following grading scale will be used in the course:

   A:  93-100  C:  73-76
   A-: 90-92  C-:  70-72
   B+: 87-89  D+:  67-69
   B : 83-86  D :  63-66
   B-: 80-82  D-:  60-62
   C+: 77-79  F : Below 60

10) Course Schedule Flexibility:
We will try to follow the schedule, but sometimes events occur that disrupt it, or I may invite a speaker that I had not anticipated. In that case, I will reorganize. In addition, it is constructive to stay flexible based on your needs and for topics that may need additional coverage.
### COURSE SCHEDULE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
<th>Assigned Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T 8/30</td>
<td>Introduction and Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 9/1</td>
<td>Discussion of Projects and Papers</td>
<td>READ SYLLABUS CAREFULLY!</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>FP: Chpt. 1; CM: Intro</td>
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<td>T 9/6</td>
<td>Forensic Psychology: The Big Picture (cont’d)</td>
<td>FP: Chpt. 2</td>
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<td>TR 9/8</td>
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<td>CM: Chpt. 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>T 9/13</td>
<td>Law Enforcement: Selection, Tr, Eval</td>
<td>FP: Chpt. 3</td>
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<td>TR 9/15</td>
<td>Theories of Criminality</td>
<td>CM: Chpt. 3</td>
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<td>T 9/20</td>
<td>Character Disorders</td>
<td>CM: Chpt. 4</td>
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<td>TR 9/22</td>
<td>Brief Presentation: The Philadelphia Center</td>
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<td>Disorders (cont’d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/27</td>
<td>Psychological Assessment</td>
<td>CM: Chpt. 5; FP: Chpt. 4</td>
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<td><em>KC Entries for pp. 1-130</em></td>
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<td>TR 9/29</td>
<td>Applications (Profiling)</td>
<td>CM: Chpt. 11</td>
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<td>T 10/4</td>
<td>cont’d</td>
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<td>TR 10/6</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM</td>
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<td>T 10/11</td>
<td>FALL BREAK</td>
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<td>TR 10/13</td>
<td>Mental States</td>
<td>CM: Chpt. 7</td>
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<td>Insanity &amp; Competency</td>
<td>FP: Chpt. 5</td>
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<td><em>KC Entries for pp. 282 to the end</em></td>
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<td>T 10/18</td>
<td>Punishment and Risk Assessment</td>
<td>CM: Chpt. 8; FP: Chpt. 6</td>
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<td>TR 10/20</td>
<td>Treatment &amp; Rehabilitation</td>
<td>CM: Chpt. 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 10/25</td>
<td>Interrogations &amp; Confessions</td>
<td>FP: Chpt. 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR 10/27</td>
<td>Eyewitness Testimony</td>
<td>FP: Chpt. 10</td>
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T 11/1    Discrimination & Harassment          FP: Chpt. 13 & 14

8PM  Dr. Fowlin Presentation – Prosser Auditorium  
     “You Don’t Know Me Until You Know Me”

TR 11/3  Cont’d with discussion of material and presentation  
     Literature Review Analysis Papers Due

T 11/8    Psychologists as Expert Witnesses          CM: Chpt. 6

TR 11/10  Trial Consultation and Jury Analysis       FP: Chpt. 12

T 11/15   Juveniles and Crime            CM Chpt. 10

TR 11/17  Death Penalty Trials & Appeals        FP: Chpt. 15

T 11/22   Ethical Issues & Public Policy      CM: Chpt. 13; FP: Chpt. 16

TR 11/24  THANKSGIVING BREAK

T 11/29 & TR 12/1  Research / Analysis Presentations  Group Projects Due (12/1)

T 12/6 & TR 12/8  Group Projects & Presentations

FINAL EXAM – Week of 12/12 – to be set by the Registrar.
“TASK FORCE” GROUPS for Gacy Case Study Group Project / Presentations

JURY SELECTION

POLICE INVESTIGATION COUNSELING AND SUPPORT

FORENSIC UPDATES – DEMONSTRATING 25 YEARS OF PROGRESS

LINING UP EXPERT TESTIMONY

REVISITING THE INSANITY DEFENSE

TREATMENT / REHABILITATION PLAN

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS – VICTIMS AND GACY