

**Mary Baldwin College**  
**PSYC 248 – Forensic Psychology**  
Online Tutorial  
Spring 2021

**Instructor:** Patricia L. Murphy  
E-mail – [pmurphy@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:pmurphy@marybaldwin.edu)

**Required Texts:** *Forensic Psychology (2009)*, although 2005 is also ok, Solomon M Fulero and Lawrence S. Wrightsman. Thomson & Wadsworth.  
**ISBN: 078-0-495-50649-4**

**Course Description:** Forensic Psychology is broadly defined as the application of psychological principles and research to legal issues. Forensic psychologists work as researchers, consultants to law enforcement, expert witnesses, trial consultants, mediators, and more. The first half of this course will cover the role of forensic psychology in law enforcement. This deals with the training of police officers in everything from interrogation techniques and the generating of profiles to how best to deal with special victims (children and/or abuse victims). The second half of the course focuses on the legal system and how forensic psychologists can assist lawyers in the courtroom. They deal with everything from the impact of pre-trial publicity and jury composition to assisting lawyers in their self-presentation and cross-examination techniques. In this course we will pay special attention to the impact that race, ethnicity, religious and cultural differences have on our legal system, and the individuals who are impacted by it. More specifically we will examine: (1) discrimination in the legal system, (2) training techniques for law enforcement (the bad and the culturally sensitive), (3) the impact of profiling, (4) hate crimes (5) group dynamics in the multicultural jury, (6) the role of race and ethnicity in courtroom dynamics (ex. eye-witness testimony, attitude formation), and (7) how all of this influences public policy.

**Course Requirements:**

- 1.) Every week students will be required to respond to **Homework Questions (HWQ's)** relating to that week's material. Responses to the homework questions should be typewritten and no longer than two pages in length. Submissions should occur weekly. As long as you submit responses to all the questions and turn in your HWQ's on time you will receive full credit for these assignments. Worth 20% of final grade.
- 2.) **Discussion Board** - The discussion board is an integral part of this class as there are many topics in this course that relate to current events, in particular the Black Lives Matter movement. To get full credit for this assignment you must make a post of your own and then start a discussion with at least two of your classmates. **You will not be graded on your opinions**, just your willingness to discuss these sensitive issues that our country is now facing. Worth 15% of your grade.

- 3.) **Short Paper** - For this assignment students should find a popular press article about a topic that relates to an issue or issues in forensic psychology. In a 2-3 page paper you will need to briefly review the article and then discuss how it relates to material from class. It is important to apply theories and terminology from the field (of forensics) to your analysis of the article and the case, crime, trial or police action about which it focuses. (Worth 10% of your grade)
- 4.) **Research Paper** – Students will be required to write a research paper on a pre-approved topic (that means run it by me first) within forensic psychology. The term paper is worth 20 % of your grade and should consist of:
  - (1) A general introduction describing the topic and why it is an important area of study
  - (2) A review of the relevant literature, with your evaluation and comments.
  - (3) A lengthy conclusion in which you integrate the literature, provide suggestions for future research, and state your opinions as to why it is an important topic for continued scrutiny.
  - (4) At least 5 references (scholarly articles or books) other than the class readings.
  - (5) Papers should be in APA format if you are a psychology major (if not MLA or Chicago format is fine) and roughly 2,000 words in length.
- 5.) **Exams** – There will be a midterm and a final exam. The midterm is worth 15% of your grade and the final exam is worth 20%

**Course Schedule:** (all readings refer to your text unless otherwise stated)

<b><u>Dates</u></b>	<b><u>Reading Assignment</u></b>	<b><u>Written Assignments Due</u></b>
Week 1	<b><u>Module One</u></b> - What is Forensic Psychology? What purpose does it serve? What do Forensic Psychologist do? <b>Chaps. 1 and 2</b>	HWQ's 1
Week 2	<b><u>Module Two</u></b> - Psychology and Law Enforcement Selection, Training and Evaluation will be Discussed. <b>Chap.3</b>	HWQ's 2
Week 3	<b><u>Module Three</u></b> - Techniques of Criminal Investigators Profiling and Psych Autopsies <b>Chap. 4</b>	HWQ's 3
Week 4	<b><u>Module Four</u></b> - Insanity and Competency <b>Chap. 5</b>	HWQ's 4
Week 5	<b><u>Module Five</u></b> - Risk Assessment <b>Chap. 6</b>	HWQ's 5 Short Paper

Week 6	<b><u>Module Six</u></b> – “Syndrome” Evidence Chap. 7	HWQ’s 6
Week 7	<b><u>Module Eight</u></b> – Improving Eyewitness Identification Procedures. Cross race identification an issue Chap. 10	HWQ’s 7 Midterm Exam
Week 8	<b><u>Module Nine</u></b> - Interrogation and Confessions Specific issues: cultural disparity in understanding one’s rights. Racially and culturally sensitive interrogation techniques. Chap. 11	HWQ’s 8
Week 9	<b><u>Module Ten</u></b> - Trial Consultation: Jury Selection, Case Preparation, and Pretrial Publicity Chap. 12	HWQ’s 9
Week 10	<b><u>Module Eleven</u></b> - Discrimination in the Legal System Chap. 13	HWQ’s 10
Week 11	<b><u>Module Twelve</u></b> - Death Penalty Trials and Appeals Racial disparity in death sentences Death qualified juries Chap. 15	HWQ’s 11
Week 12	<b><u>Module Thirteen</u></b> - Child Sexual Abuse, Child Custody and Related Decisions Biracial family issues Cross-race adoption Chaps. 8 and 9	HWQ’s 12 Term Paper
Week 13	<b><u>Module Fourteen</u></b> - Informing Public Policy Obviously important that the needs of all groups be considered here Chap. 16	HWQ’s 13
Week 14	<b><u>Module Fifteen</u></b> - Sexual Harassment What happens in the courts? Chap. 14	HWQ’s 14

**\*\* There are no homework questions due for chapter 14 but you are responsible for knowing the material for the final exam.**

**Final exam and any remaining work due by April 19th**

**Honor Code:**

Students are expected to abide by the Mary Baldwin College honor code and conduct themselves accordingly. Any form of plagiarism, cheating, or dishonesty will be reported to the Dean.

**Late Policy:**

Without prior notification and a valid excuse, late assignments will be marked down half a letter grade for every week they are late. Keeping your instructor informed is critically important!

**Extension Policy:**

At the student's request, extensions may be granted to those who have not completed all the course work by the MBC declared deadline for the given semester. However, students must have completed at least half of the required work in a good faith effort and/or have extenuating circumstances in order to be approved for an ET.

**E-mail Activation:**

All MBC students are required to activate their MBC issued e-mail accounts. These accounts will be the primary source for communication from the instructor and are thus crucial for your success in this course.

**Source Documentation and Group Work:**

When students reference an outside source in their written work they will be required to state the author's name(s) and the year of publication. Reference pages are only required with the Research Paper.

With the exception of exams students are permitted to help one another on their written assignments. Each student must complete her or his assignment individually (e.g. you can't collaborate on a paper) but peer support and review is often helpful and strongly encouraged.