PSCH 4313: Forensic Psychology

[9-Jan-15]

I. Basic Course Information

I-A. Course Description

Forensic psychology is the application of psychological research to the justice system. This course surveys the various areas where psychology and legal issues interact.

I-B. Learning Objectives

The objectives of this course are to:

- identify how forensic psychologists are trained and what they do on the job.
- recognize the differences between the fields of psychology and law with regard to decision-making.
- demonstrate knowledge of forensic psychology in various areas of application.

I-C. Psychology Program Student Learning Outcomes

This course is an element of the RGC psychology program. It is expected that the graduating student in this program will demonstrate the capacity to:

- Recognize the central concepts in the department's main areas of focus: abnormal psychology; social & personality psychology, and developmental psychology.
- Recognize and apply basic psychological research methods.
- Communicate effectively in written assignments and oral presentations concerning psychological subject matter.

I-D. Meeting Time and Location

The course will meet on Monday and Wednesday.

I-E. Instructor

The instructor for this course is Dr. Tiffany Culver.
Email (preferred and best method of contact): tculver@sulross.edu
Phone (excellent during office hours, less so for messages): 830-279-3022
Office: A107 in Uvalde
Student Availability Hours: MW 1:45-3:15 p.m. and TTH 12-3 p.m.
Appointments may also be made for other days and times.

I-F. Course Materials

Required Texts

- *Forensic Psychology,* by Jack Kitaeff. ISBN: 9780132352918.
- *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists, and Other Sex Offenders,* by Anna C. Salter. ISBN: 9780465071739
- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. ISBN-13: 978-1433805622.

Recommended Text

- *Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style*, by Jean Eggenschwiler & Emily Dotson Biggs. ISBN-13: 978-0764563935. This is an effective, brief guide to writing in English. All psychology students should own a copy—almost guaranteed to improve grades on written assignments.

✓ Bargains on textbooks are often found on the websites of Internet booksellers. Amazon.com and other major online vendors accept major credit cards, checks, and money orders.

💣 Illegal copies of books are prohibited at all times in classrooms and labs.

II. Assignments

II-A.

Chapter Exams

Chapter quizzes will cover material from the textbook chapters and will consist of approximately 30 multiple-choice items. They will be posted and available on test days from 8 AM until 11:55 PM. Every student enrolled in this course is expected to attempt each quiz that is given. However, the lowest grade *will be dropped*.

The quizzes may be taken at any location, but *students are advised to take them at a university computer lab* where a technical staffer is available. Power outages, Internet disruptions, or other problems that might occur at your home; these problems will not be accepted as excuses for missing a quiz or for going overtime.

💣 A limited amount of time will be given for the completion of each chapter quiz. Going overtime on a quiz by any amount of time will result in a zero, meaning you will have to count that quiz as your drop grade.

💣 Students who miss more than two exams may be dropped from the course with an automatic F for non-participation.

💣 Any student whose pattern of quiz grades arouses concerns regarding academic integrity will be required to take or re-take certain quizzes in the presence of the professor or a designated proctor, on the RGC campus most convenient to the student.

If you have problems with bboard, you will have that one exam grade dropped. If you do not experience bboard issues the entire semester, you lowest exam will be dropped.

II-B. The Supplemental Text Exam

The supplemental text exam will cover the supplemental text used in this class, *Predators*. The exam is given during the same session as the final exam. The exam may consist of a variety of different question types, including multiple choice, true-false, matching, short answer, essay, or any combination of these types of questions. The exam, along with the final exam, will take no more than three hours to complete.

II – C. Profiling Project
Students will be given specific instructions on this assignment.

II-F. The Final Exam
The final exam will cover only the material in the main text used in this course. The exam is given during the same session as the supplemental text exam. The exam may consist of a variety of different question types, including multiple choice, true-false, matching, short answer, essay, or any combination of these types of questions. The exam, along with the supplemental text exam, will take no more than three hours to complete.

II-E. Assignment Schedule

Date	Assignment
9/1	**Ch 2 Exam**
9/16	**Ch 3 Exam**
10/3	**Ch 5 Exam**
10/14	**Ch 6 Exam**
10/21	**Ch 8 Exam**
11/4	**Ch 9 Exam**
11/11	**Ch 10 Exam**
11/18	**Ch 13 Exam**
11/30	**Profiling Project due**
12/ 7	**Final Exam** (all chapters)
	Supplemental Text Exam

III. Grading

III-A. The Calculation of Grades
Grades for each assignment, and for the course itself, are calculated as follows: A: 90% or above; B: 80%-89%; C: 70%-79%; D: 60%-69%; F: 0%-59%.
The times and dates when assignments are due and when evaluations are given will not be altered to fit your schedule. You will be expected to alter your schedule to fit class responsibilities.
In the interest of more thorough coverage of certain topics, the professor may decide to omit some of the assigned material from coverage on any particular exam. You are responsible to learn of any announced omissions.

Exams	100 x 8 = 800 -100 (drop grade) = 700
Final Exam	100
Supplemental Exam	100
Profiling Project	100
	1000 points total

III-B. The Interpretation of Final Grades
The rigor of grading varies somewhat from course to course, from instructor to instructor, from discipline to discipline, and from school to school. It is important to understand that the level of effort needed to achieve a particular grade in another course, under another instructor, in another discipline, or at another institution,

might not be an accurate gauge of the amount of effort needed to achieve the same grade in this course.

The following is a general description of grades:

The grade of A is awarded for performance that is excellent to some degree – anywhere from very good to brilliant. It indicates a masterful level of performance which is far above the average. It is the grade representing a level of performance usually attained by only the top ten or fifteen percent of a typical class.

The grade of B indicates superior performance. B work is by definition better than most. It is good performance, but not outstanding. Consistent B-level performance is something to take a measure of pride in, especially if it the best one can do.

The grade of C represents adequate performance, enough to get by with, but little more. The grade of C is the grade achieved by most people; hence, it is the embodiment of mediocrity. Unless it is the consequence of one's genuine best effort, it should seldom be regarded as a satisfactory grade for persons with ambition or conscientiousness about their work in the endeavor being graded. It is the grade that pleases individuals who are content with being third-rate in their academic efforts.

The grade of D means that there are serious deficiencies in performance that makes the work product less than adequate, a marginal failure. Repeatedly earning Ds, unless they are balanced by As and Bs, is an indication of failure. Being able generally to attain only Ds is an indication that further education in the field of performance being graded may hold no value for you.

An F means that the deficiencies in performance are so serious that the resulting work product is completely unacceptable. A 59 and below means that failure has occurred, yet there are degrees of failure. A grade in the 50s indicates some likelihood that adequate performance could have been achieved under different circumstances, but typically a grade of below 50 means that the student was so lacking in effort, understanding or competence that failure was almost a foregone conclusion without major behavioral changes or remediation of some kind.

III-C. The Basis of Final Grades

Grades in this course are based on performance alone. They will not be rounded upwards. It is important for every student to understand that evaluation is not based ultimately on how hard someone has worked to earn a particular grade, or whether someone needs this course to graduate. Nor are grades based on personal & family needs, or on personal conceptions about what seems to be fair. All grades, including your final course grade, will be based *solely* on your academic work in this course, according to the criteria described in this syllabus.

III-D. The Reporting of Final Grades

For non-graduating students, final course grades will be posted on Banner at noon on the Monday after commencement (and for graduating seniors, at noon on the Friday before commencement). Final exams is a hectic time for students and the faculty alike, so please respect the privacy of all your professors during and after this period. Please do not initiate contact with me concerning grades between the start of the final exams period and when grades are reported. If I need information from you during this time, I will be the one to initiate contact.

Unsolicited voicemails and emails from any student during this period are liable to be ignored. This policy is based on years of experience: most communications from students during final exams and the grading period are based on needless anxiety rather than reasonable concerns. Please understand that any issues of grading that truly must be resolved may still be resolved *after* final grades are

reported. Access to assignment grades and other course content will also be available to you on Blackboard until the week after commencement.

IV. Student Confidentiality

Because of privacy laws, all school-related issues -- academic, disciplinary, and personal -- must be handled between the university and the student directly. A student's parent, spouse, boyfriend, best friend, case worker, parole officer, et cetera has absolutely no standing to intervene for a student or inquire concerning grades, disciplinary matters, or any other issues. Do not ask such persons to contact university faculty and staff to serve as a liaison, make inquiries, or settle disputes on your behalf.

V. Academic Integrity

V-A. The Honor Code

As members of the academic community, no student should tolerate cheating. According to the honor code, it is the responsibility of each and every student to report obvious cheating or any suspicious behavior that may compromise the integrity of the grading process. The confidentiality and anonymity of students who report such incidents will be respected.

- *To report cheating, call 830-279-3044. If there is no answer, leave a detailed description of what you witnessed.*

V-B. Policy on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty and the penalties pertaining to it are described in the SRSU student handbook. In this course, all communication among students while taking exams is prohibited.

- Communicating material included on an exam with or in the presence of someone who has not yet taken that exam is also prohibited.
- No student may print, photograph, copy, or in any other way reproduce material from any exam. The consequence of violating this directive will be immediate dismissal from the course with a grade of F.
- Except in online courses, unless specifically authorized, no student shall take an exam at any computer outside of the designated testing facility.
- Students may not share books, notes, or any other form of communication during exams. Do NOT sit next to another student who is taking the same test in the lab unless no other seats are available. No student taking an exam should have open any website other than the Blackboard site. Close all other windows. Failure to follow these instructions may, at a minimum, result in a zero for the exam and might result in an F for the course.
- The possession of any course-related material in an exam room during an exam period in which the material in question is forbidden is *ipso facto* evidence of scholastic dishonesty. In plain language, if you bring material, such as a textbook, into a testing situation where you are not supposed to have that material with you, you are thereby committing a violation, even if you were not referring to the material or intending to use the material to cheat.
- Plagiarism, as every student should know, involves taking the work of others and claiming it as your own. It will not be tolerated. If you are unsure what

constitutes plagiarism, excellent guidelines can be found online at *www.plagiarism.org*.

Using an illegal copy of textbook materials constitutes academic dishonesty. If a student is found to be using illegally copied textbook material during an open-book exam, the penalty will be failure of the exam. In addition, the student will have the choice of immediately surrendering the illegal copy to SRSU faculty/staff or receiving a failing grade for the course.

The penalty for serious academic dishonesty is severe: a student who turns in a plagiarized paper or cheats on an exam may receive an F for the entire course. A plagiarized paper will be given a zero on academic grounds alone, yet the student may face the additional disciplinary penalties for academic dishonesty. You and you alone are responsible for understanding and avoiding academic dishonesty in all your work.

VI. Student Etiquette

VI-B. Student Etiquette In Traditional and Teleconference Courses

Please, do not just attend. Participate actively when you have something to add to the class discussion. However, before addressing the class or the professor during a class discussion, ask yourself: Will my comments have value to other students in this course? Are my comments relevant to the material being discussed? Remarks such as "I can't find the assignment I turned in on Blackboard" or "I got a bad grade on the test. Can you tell me what I need to do to improve it?" are two examples of things *not* always appropriate to bring up during class in some circumstances. They should be discussed privately with the professor.

Please remember to follow all the conventional classroom rules, such as: Show up to class on time. Do not leave class early. (If you must leave early or show up late in special circumstances, notify the professor *in person* ahead of time.) And absolutely do not get up and leave the classroom during lecture to go get food, take calls or for other trivial reasons.

Please remember that Sul Ross has a policy on appropriate campus attire. The policy refers to "the responsibility to dress in a manner which will not detract from the academic atmosphere of the library, classrooms, and other facilities." Students whose attire detracts from the academic atmosphere of the classroom to an extent that becomes disruptive will be notified of the problem by the professor and thereafter expected to dress more appropriately.

Misuse of cell phones, especially text messaging, has become a problem with some people. Turn your cell phone OFF before entering the classroom or testing lab. Do NOT merely set the phone to vibrate—buzzing is just as disruptive as ringing. Do NOT set it to silent and leave it in view—any incoming calls or texts messages will distract you and possibly others around you. If you feel you absolutely must leave your phone on to take an important call or wait for an important text message (doctor report, et cetera), please sit near the door and let the instructor know ahead of time of the situation.

Also, the use of laptop computers in the classroom will not be allowed. Studies have shown that laptops in class are frequently disruptive to other students and can even be counter-productive to the learning process of the students who use them.

Disruptions caused by tardiness, cell phone use, talking, and other disruptive behaviors may result in a student's expulsion from the classroom and, for repeat

offenders, permanent dismissal from the course. Any student who has disrupted other of my courses will receive less leniency because of prior inappropriate conduct.

Attendance will sometimes be taken, usually but not always at the beginning of class. Students who are not present for roll call will be counted absent. Sul Ross policy allows that students may be automatically dropped with an F from courses if they have excessive absences, defined as nine hours of absence from a course (this translates to 3 absences from an evening course, 6 absences from a daytime course, and 3 absences from a summer course). The professor will enforce this policy when a pattern of negligent behavior is observed. Students who without authorization arrive late or leave class early for any reason without approval may be counted absent for the entire session.

In the computer labs when people are testing and in all courses taught by teleconference, it is absolutely essential that all students behave so as to minimize noise and disruption, including whispering.

VII. Policy Concerning Problems with Blackboard during Exams and While Submitting Assignments

VII-A. Blackboard Exams

Blackboard is seldom to blame for problems during exams. When genuine problems occur with Blackboard technology, the problem affects multiple people at the same time. Yet some students frequently report that Blackboard has "frozen up" or will not let them proceed with a test. So far I have identified the following reasons for this problem:

- Students will not use the Firefox browser when taking a quiz. If you do not use Firefox, you will have problems.
- Students try to go back and change the answers to test items that they have already answered. You cannot do this. Trying to do so by hitting the back button on your browser, or by other methods, will cause you to forfeit a test grade.
- Students misinterpret the following statement that appears at the start of each quiz: "This Test can be saved and resumed later." Yes, if later means in five minutes. But you will have only twenty-five minutes from the time you log on to the time you log out. Taking longer than that will result in a zero for the quiz.
- Students try to cheat by first previewing a quiz, then logging out and claiming that they were frozen out of the quiz. They do this in the hope of getting the chance to then retake the quiz and earning a higher score. That will not happen.
- Students misuse the mouse by repeatedly clicking on a browser button to move to the next test item, or hold down the mouse button for an extended period of time. These behaviors may cause you to forfeit a test grade.

Tests will not be reset for individual students in the great majority of circumstances. Therefore, please avoid the behaviors listed above in order to successfully use Blackboard for taking tests.

VII-B. Using the Blackboard Dropbox

The Blackboard Dropbox feature is a reliable way for students to submit papers electronically. However, it is critical for students to know the difference between uploading (adding) a paper to the Dropbox and actually submitting (sending) a paper

to a professor using the Dropbox. Until you see a confirmation message announcing *"Receipt: Success: The file has been sent to selected users with role of Instructor*" you have not successfully submitted your file.

VIII. Statement on Intellectual Tolerance and Academic Freedom

Psychology is a field of inquiry that touches upon many controversial issues, including sexuality, evolution, gender, race, ethnicity, individual differences, parenting, divorce, crime and public policy, drug use, religion, and multicultural issues, among others. Professors and students often have strong opinions and make forceful arguments concerning these phenomena. It is often educationally productive to address and debate these matters in the context of classroom instruction and course assignments. Social taboos discouraging open discussion are inappropriate in this context and must be laid aside in the interest of intellectual inquiry.

Your grade will not be influenced in any way by expressing points of view that are in disagreement with the professor's. If time permits, students are encouraged to express their opinions and arguments whenever relevant to the subject material. The professor is free to do likewise.

Students who experience excessive anxiety or discomfort during the discussion of a sensitive topic (e.g., domestic abuse) should not hesitate to leave the classroom for a time if necessary and should never feel embarrassed for doing so. This can be an adaptive response to an emotionally difficult situation.

In contrast, other individuals are offended in principle by the mere exposure to concepts, opinions and arguments with which they disagree. The response of such persons is sometimes to try and close off discussion or to become hostile or vindictive toward others. Such persons are not encouraged to take psychology courses at Rio Grande College until they have resolved the personal issues preventing them from engaging in serious intellectual discourse.

IX. Teaching Philosophy

A college degree signifies accomplishment; it will increase a person's prestige and can help its holder acquire a job. However, once the job is taken, success depends on what has been learned—a college degree by itself is merely a sheet of paper. If a student takes full advantage of the opportunity of education, the sheet of paper signifies skills and knowledge that will improve one's value as a worker and as a member of the community. If not, the student might find himself or herself with a sheet of paper only, without additional skills, useful knowledge, or value to employers. RGC psychology courses are designed to provide students with knowledge and skills that will help them in their careers, in their relationships, and in their capacity to be responsible members of a community.

The early 20th Century American writer Albert Jay Nock had this to say about his college experience:

> We were made to understand that the burden of education was on us and no one else, least of all our instructors; they were not there to help us carry it or to praise our efforts, but to see that we shouldered it in proper style and got on with it.

I believe that through encouragement and deserved praise, college professors can and should ease the burden of education for their students. Yet students who

enroll at SRSU-Rio Grande College must remember they are expected to perform upper-division college-level work. No course in the psychology curriculum is remedial. As Albert Jay Nock understood, a professor's responsibility is to lead students to knowledge; it is, however, each student's responsibility to learn.

X. Contacting the Professor

The most effective way to contact the instructor is by email at *tculver@sulross.edu*. To protect student privacy, send from your Sul Ross or Blackboard-registered email account. Email etiquette requires that you sign your name in *every* email you send and that you specify the particular course or issue to which you are referring. Do not expect to receive a response without extending this courtesy.

XI. Contacting Technical Support

Most technical problems that students experience using Blackboard can be avoided by using Google as your web browser rather than *Internet Explorer.*

If you have a problem with technical issues such as downloading a file or taking an exam, contact an Office of Information Technology (OIT) staffer for assistance or call the OIT Helpdesk. The Helpdesk is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days of the week.

- From on-campus, call 8765.
- From off-campus, call (888) 691-5071.

If you are downloading syllabi and other documents, you should update your computer for compatibility with Microsoft Office 2007. The free update is available at: http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=941B3470-3AE9-4AEE-8F43-C6BB74CD1466&displaylang=en

XII. Special Accommodations

Our institution complies with state and federal laws concerning people with disabilities. If a student needs accessibility services, it is the student's responsibility to initiate a request. This may be done by contacting Ms. Kathy Biddick at 830-279-3003.

In web-based courses, due to the difficulty of coordinating schedules and meeting times, it will not be possible for students to review their performance on weekly assignments unless they are willing to visit the professor's office in Uvalde. Otherwise, to improve their performance and to prepare for the final exam, students should review the course materials. If any student is concerned about the accuracy of a test item or a grade, the student may arrange an office appointment with me at the end of the semester; the student will be provided with an opportunity to review their performance on all assignments at that time.