

CJ 5309: Forensic Psychology

[August 24, 2026 – Version 1.0 – Subject to Revision]

I. Essential Course Information

A. The Course Description

This is a graduate course in forensic psychology, which is the application of psychology to legal and criminal justice issues.

B. Our Meeting Time and Location

This course is a web course (also known as an “online asynchronous” course).

C. Your Instructor

Professor Wesley D. Wynne

Email: wwynne@sulross.edu

How to contact: From your own Sul Ross email account, email me to convey your concerns or to make an appointment. Out of courtesy, provide your name in every email, and state which course you are taking.

Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 pm to 5 pm are my standard hours for advising and student appointments. For students in evening virtual courses, 8:45 pm to 10:00 pm after class is also set aside for online conferences each week.

D. Your Course Materials

Required Texts

- *Forensic Psychology (7th Edition)*, by Bartol. ISBN: 978-1071919781.
- *The Anatomy of Motive*, by Douglas. ISBN: 978-1668049402.
- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (7th Edition)*, by APA. ISBN: 978-1433832161.

E. The Student Learning Objectives for this Course

The student will:

- analyze how psychological evidence and expertise are applied within civil and criminal proceedings;
- evaluate major theories and empirical research related to criminal and antisocial behavior;
- analyze common forensic assessment methods and instruments;
- apply ethical and professional standards to professional practice;
- examine contemporary controversies in forensic psychology.

II. Your Assignments

A. Chapter Exams (40%)

Weekly exams will cover material from the main textbook chapters. Exams will be posted and available on Wednesdays and will be due at 11:59 pm on Saturdays.

Every student enrolled in this course is expected to attempt each exam that is given. However, absences from *any three* weekly exams will be allowed without penalty, no excuses necessary. Illnesses, funerals, work conflicts, power outages, internet disruptions, or other contingencies might occur in your life, but these problems will not be accepted as excuses for missing an exam.

☛ Missing more than three exams may result in being dropped from the course with an automatic F for non-participation.

B. Discussion Participation (10%)

Contribute to all online discussions. Regular participation in the online discussions is highly recommended and counts for a significant percentage of the course grade. Discussions will be posted and available from Wednesday to 11:59 pm on Saturday each week of the semester, except holidays.

All postings should be thoughtful and literate. Thoughtful contributions will receive credit; insubstantial contributions will not. Below is an example of a credited versus an un-credited contribution on the topic of “Love and Friendship” in a course on human sexuality:

Example of a Thoughtful Contribution - Credited:

I really enjoyed this chapter because it made a lot of my own "theories" make sense. One topic that really interested me was people marrying for money instead of love. My sister is the type of person that would marry for money instead of love and that is something that I never understood. She recently moved to California and has totally adopted a typical California attitude. Along with this, she has surprised the entire family. She is a very pretty girl, 20 years old and dating a man who is 32, very rich, but very unattractive. He is controlling and manipulative and is constantly making her change her ways of life. But he takes her to very expensive restaurants and buys her very expensive things and she thinks that makes it all better. She thinks he is so "cool" because he drives a \$70,000 car. She even admits that she is only with him for his money. I have never understood how someone could live so unhappily just because they want to be rich. What upsets me the most is that we weren't brought up that way, and I don't understand where she got it.

Example of a Poor Contribution – No Credit Awarded:

I don't know. I don't think I believe in love because people just want to take advantage of you and stuff. I get tired of it.

C. Book Reflection Paper (20%)

A ten-page reflection paper covering *The Anatomy of Motive* will be assigned. Students will link aspects of this book with topics in the main textbook and with their own observations and experiences. For this assignment, carefully read and follow all guidelines provided in the course documents concerning written assignments.

The paper will be written in parts. Each week beginning the week of August 31, a one-and-a-half to two-page paper consisting of your reflections will need to be written and submitted on Blackboard. See the reading schedule on the final page of this syllabus.

For the overall assignment, 30% of the grade will come from merely submitting the weekly reflections on time and in good general order. The remaining 70% will come from your completed paper covering the entire book.

D. Film Reflection Paper (10%)

Students will screen the 1996 film *Sling Blade*. A five-page reflection paper will be assigned in which students will link aspects of that film with topics in the main textbook. For this assignment, carefully read and follow all guidelines provided in the course documents concerning written assignments. This paper will be due on Blackboard on Saturday, November 21.

E. The Final Exam (20%)

The final exam will cover all the material in the course and will be administered on Friday, December 4.

III. Assignment Calendar, Attendance Policy, and General Assignment Information**A. The Calendar**

<u>Week of...</u>	<u>Assignments and Topics</u>
August 24	Introductions
August 31	Ch. 01 Exam & Discussions
September 7	Ch. 02 Exam & Discussions
September 14	Ch. 03 Exam & Discussions
September 21	Ch. 04 Exam & Discussions
September 28	Ch. 05 Exam & Discussions
October 5	Ch. 06 Exam & Discussions
October 12	Ch. 07 Exam & Discussions
October 19	Ch. 08 Exam & Discussions
October 26	Ch. 09 Exam & Discussions
November 2	Ch. 10 Exam & Discussions
November 6	<i>Last day to withdraw from a class with a grade of "W"</i>
November 9	Ch. 11 Exam & Discussions
November 16	Ch. 12 Exam & Discussions
November 23	Ch. 13 Exam & Discussions
November 30	Review
December 4	<u>Final Exam</u>

December 11/12	<i>Commencement in Alpine/Eagle Pass</i>
December 14	<i>All grades will be posted at noon.</i>

Notice: The schedule of topics above is subject to change for pedagogical reasons at the discretion of the instructor.

B. The Attendance Policy

Sul Ross State University policy states that students may be automatically dropped with an F from courses if they acquire excessive absences. The professor may enforce this policy strictly whenever a pattern of negligent behavior is observed.

In web courses, three hours of absence will be defined as one calendar week of non-participation in a spring or fall course, or four continuous days of non-participation in a summer course, as measured by completion of exams, participation in discussions, and submission of other assignments on Blackboard.

Students who without authorization arrive late or leave class early for any reason without approval may be counted absent for the entire session. Attendance may be taken at any time during a class meeting and more than once during a class meeting. Students who are not present for roll call will be counted absent.

C. General Assignment Information

All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard unless otherwise instructed. If you have a problem that prevents you from submitting a major exam or major written assignment on time through Blackboard, contact the professor immediately once you determine that you cannot resolve the problem on your own. For major exams and major written assignments, waiting until after the deadline to do this might result in forfeiture of the assignment grade. (All weekly exams, homeworks, discussions, etc. are categorized as minor assignments, not major assignments. Occasionally missing a minor assignment typically has little impact on student grade averages.)

Exam dates will not be changed except in exceptional circumstances. Deadlines for other assignments, such as papers and presentations, may in certain circumstances be postponed to a later date, but not advanced to an earlier date. (In other words, students may in some instances be granted additional time to submit assignments.)

If it is not possible to administer a final exam (for example, due to an internet outage, power outage, emergency school closure, or other extraordinary circumstances), final grades for this course will be calculated solely from the assignments submitted prior to the final exam.

☛ Other than any exceptions described herein, all major assignments in this course *must be completed and submitted to pass this course*, regardless of a student's grades on other assignments. Students who do not submit *all major written assignments* by their deadlines are liable to receive an F as a final grade for this course.

☼ Do not wait to complete and submit major assignments on their due dates. Due dates are deadlines. They are the final opportunities to submit your work; they are not the ideal opportunities to submit your work. So don't wait until the last possible day to submit something important. The reason is simple: things can go wrong. Emergencies arise. Electrical service can be interrupted. Computer equipment can malfunction. You or someone in your family can suddenly get sick. So fight the temptation to procrastinate. Try to submit a good version of each major assignment a day or two before the deadline. You can go back and upload revisions until the last minute if nothing goes wrong. But don't run the risk of a last-minute disaster. If and when late work is accepted in this class, it will be penalized 25 points per calendar day.

D. Extra Credit Information

Extra credit assignments may be offered in this class. Certain extra credit opportunities might involve an invitation to participate in an event at a physical location or being online at a particular time. If your other responsibilities or your own location make it inconvenient for you to participate in a particular extra credit assignment, don't fret. No extra credit opportunity will disadvantage students who, for whatever reason, do not participate. Extra credit does not affect the curve at all; it is just added on top of grades already earned. It's just something extra.

IV. Grading

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%.

On assignments with curved grades, the top score(s) will be converted to a 100. All other grades on the assignment will be expressed as a percentage of the top scores. For example, if the top score on an exam is a 20 out of 25 items, the 20 will be converted to a 100. If you answer 15 of the 25 questions correctly, your grade will be a 15/20, which is equal to a 75 (in other words, a C).

The times and dates when assignments are due and when evaluations are given will not be altered to fit a student's schedule. All students will be expected to alter their schedules 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 an exam. Each student is responsible for learning about any announced omissions.

B. The Basis of Final Grades

Grades in this course are based on performance alone. Grading is not based on how hard someone has worked to earn a particular grade, or whether someone needs this course to graduate, or on personal & family needs, or on personal conceptions of fairness or justice. All grades, including the final course grade, will be based on a student's

academic performance in this course, according to the criteria described in this syllabus.

C. The Reporting of Final Grades

For non-graduating students, final course grades will be posted at noon on the Monday after commencement (and for graduating seniors, at noon on the Friday before commencement). Final exam week 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 inquire concerning grades between the start of the final exams period and when grades are reported. If the professor needs information from you during this time, he will be the one to initiate contact.

Unsolicited voicemails and emails from any non-graduating student during the final exams period might have to go unanswered. 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.

V. Upholding Academic Integrity

A. The Honor Code

As members of an academic community, no student should tolerate cheating. According to the traditional academic honor code, it is the responsibility of 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.

B. Policies on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty and the penalties pertaining to it are described in the SRSU student handbook. The penalties for serious academic dishonesty are severe: a student who submits a plagiarized paper or cheats on an exam may receive an F for the assignment, and in cases of repeated or flagrant violations, for the entire course.

A plagiarized written assignment may be awarded a zero on academic grounds alone, yet the offending student may face additional disciplinary penalties for academic dishonesty. Plagiarism, as every college student should know, involves taking the work of others and claiming it as your own. It will not be tolerated in this class. If you are unsure about what plagiarism is, find out online at www.plagiarism.org. You and you alone are responsible for understanding and avoiding academic dishonesty in all your assignments.

Students may not print, photograph, copy, or in any other way reproduce material from any exam, and no student may share, receive, or knowingly read such material.

Students may not use books, notes, cell phones or any other informational materials or electronic devices during testing, unless authorized by the professor. While taking an exam, students should not use any electronic device other than the device on which an exam is being taken.

Students may not share books, notes, make phone calls, send texts, or engage in any other form of communication with each other during exams. Nor may students communicate about material included on an exam with a classmate or in the presence of a classmate who has not yet completed that exam.

In a testing classroom or lab, students should not sit next to other students who are taking the same test unless no other seats are available. Students should not talk while exams are being administered. During Blackboard exams, students should not open, view, or interact with any website other than the Blackboard website.

C. Policies on the Use of Generative AI in this Course

This course emphasizes critical thinking, psychological analysis, and—especially in reflection papers—your own personal perspectives, experiences, and voice. Because of this, the use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT or similar systems) is limited and carefully defined.

You may use AI tools for:

- Brainstorming topics or questions
- Clarifying concepts from course readings or lectures
- Generating outlines or organizing ideas
- Grammar, spelling, or style suggestions (without changing meaning or voice)

You may *not* use AI to:

- Generate substantive content for papers or parts of papers.
- Write or rewrite reflection papers or personal responses.
- Substitute for your own thinking, emotional processing, or engagement with course materials
- Fabricate sources, citations, quotations, or data

For reflection papers, all content must be entirely your own. These assignments are designed to assess your personal engagement, insight, and self-reflection, which cannot be meaningfully produced by AI.

Disclosure requirement: If you use AI beyond basic proofreading, you must include a brief note at the end of the assignment stating:

- The tool used
- How it was used (e.g., “to help generate an outline”)

If you are unsure whether a particular use is allowed, ask before submitting.

Unauthorized or undisclosed use of AI may be treated as an academic integrity violation. You remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of all work you submit.

This course policy was developed with the assistance of generative AI and reflects widely accepted academic integrity principles adopted across U.S. universities. The instructor reviewed, edited, and takes full responsibility for the final content and its application in this course.

☛ The consequence of violating any of these directives can be severe. Doing so may result in the forfeiture of an assignment grade and other penalties, up to and including dismissal from the course with a grade of F.

VI. Courtesy and Good Conduct in Class

Out of courtesy to others, always remember to follow the conventional classroom rules, such as: do not distract others from learning; always show up to class on time; do not leave class early. (If you must leave early or show up late in special circumstances, please notify the professor ahead of time.) And absolutely do not get up to get food, take calls, or for other trivial reasons. Breaks are always provided, so wait until a break.

Students in VMR classes (that is, classes which meet online using applications such as Teams, Zoom, Lifesize, et cetera) must be able to log in with a working camera and a working microphone on their device. The camera must be turned on and the student must appear in the frame at almost all times, with few exceptions. Anyone whose camera is turned off or whose face is not in frame may be removed from VMR class meetings and not allowed back in for the remainder of the meeting. Visual and auditory disruptions and distractions must be kept to a minimum for the benefit of everyone. For this reason, no eating or drinking on camera is allowed except during breaks. No one may be logged into VMR class meetings from an automobile, whether stationary or in transit, whether driving or as a passenger. This is a matter of public safety.

Sul Ross has a policy on appropriate 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.” Even when logging into a class from home, students should always present themselves in a socially appropriate and dignified manner. Any student whose attire or behavior detracts from the academic atmosphere to an extent that it becomes seriously or repeatedly distracting or disruptive will be notified by the professor and expected to resolve the problem.

VII. Ensuring Accessibility for Everyone

A. 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 SRSU’s office of Counseling and Accessibility Services. The phone number there is 432-837-8203 and the email address is counseling@sulross.edu.

Our school is contracting with an organization called TimelyCare. This organization provides counseling services. All students will have access to nine free counseling sessions this fall. For more information, visit <https://timelycare.com/srsu/>

Sul Ross also offers counseling directly at the Alpine campus in Ferguson Hall Room 112, and through telehealth Zoom sessions for all Sul Ross students.

B. Distance Education

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. [If the course requires students to take proctored exams or to purchase additional software or equipment, those requirements are described herein above.] The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students enrolled in online courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

C. Purchasing Course Materials

By law, this university is required to inform you of the following in accordance with Section 51.9705 of the Texas Education Code: "A student of this institution is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer." In fact, bargains on textbooks are often found on the websites of many Internet booksellers. Major online vendors typically accept major credit cards, checks, and money orders.

It is the student's responsibility to acquire course materials in time for their use in class. Many weeks before the start of each semester, textbooks are made available for browsing and purchase at the website for the Sul Ross Bookstore. It is important that students have their course materials by the start of each semester. This is especially important for the summer semester, when classes proceed more rapidly than in the fall or spring.

XIII. Our Psychology Program's Learning Objectives and Skills

A. Student Learning Objectives for the Psychology Program

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

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

B. Marketable Skills for the Psychology Program

1. Students will demonstrate competency in public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences (speaking effectively).
2. Students will demonstrate empathic or active listening and conversational skills, and/or write clearly about their affective stance, respectfully attuned to the needs of their audiences (describing feelings).
3. Students will demonstrate the aptitude to locate, organize and evaluate the credibility of information from multiple sources (identifying resources).
4. Students will demonstrate the ability to examine the underlying issues of scientific problems, attending to the pertinent details and creating action plans, recognizing ambiguity and complexity as essential components (analyzing).

IX. Cultivating a Vibrant Academic Environment**A. Tolerance, Open Expression, 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 disagree with the professor's, either in what you say or in what you write in assignments. In class, when time permits, students are encouraged to express their opinions and arguments when they are 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) may leave the classroom if the need arises, and they should never feel embarrassed for doing so. This can be an adaptive response to an emotionally difficult situation.

In contrast, some individuals in our society seem to be offended in principle by the mere exposure to concepts, opinions, and arguments with which they disagree. The response of such individuals is sometimes to try and shut down discussion, to claim they feel "unsafe," 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 issues preventing them from engaging in serious intellectual discourse.

B. Dr. Wynne's 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. Sul Ross 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 own 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 Sul Ross 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.

The typical American psychology undergraduate curriculum and textbook are designed to prepare students to become psychological researchers or practitioners. Yet few students here who major in psychology plan to become psychologists. Instead, many intend to become counselors, and many others expect that their major in psychology will help them in a variety of ways. I believe that while exposure to research methods and technical esoterica does have a rightful place in the undergraduate program, most of my students are much better served by a phenomenological educational orientation that places real-life applications of psychological theories and discoveries above a focus on technical training. Therefore, I strongly encourage students to relate and apply what is taught in my psychology classes to their own emotional lives, family lives, workplaces, and communities.

X. Syllabus Updates and Substantive Changes

This syllabus was constructed to be as accurate and clear as possible. However, there is always a chance that errors or ambiguities might require the publication of updates after the semester begins. It is also possible that unforeseen circumstances might necessitate substantive changes to this syllabus. If substantive changes are made, they will be implemented in the interest of fairness for all students and in a way to minimize any inconvenience or difficulty for everyone.

The Anatomy of Motive Assignment Schedule

We will read through this book over the course of the semester, according to the schedule below. Each week, you will write at least one and a half full pages of reflections covering the assigned segment for the week. Carefully read and follow all the guidelines and instructions in the documents for these and all written assignments for this course.

Toward the end of the semester, you will have written at least fifteen pages of reflections. You will then assemble a final paper from the work you produced over the prior weeks and then submit a complete paper of ten full pages.

For the overall assignment, 30% of the grade will come from merely submitting the weekly reflections on time and in good general order. The remaining 70% will come from your complete paper that will cover the entire book.

- **Week 1 (Prologue)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, September 5 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 2 (Ch. 1)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, September 12 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 3 (Ch. 2)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, September 19 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 4 (Ch. 3)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, September 26 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 5 (Ch. 4)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, October 3 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 6 (Ch. 5)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, October 10 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 7 (Ch. 6)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, October 17 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 8 (Ch. 7)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, October 24 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 9 (Ch. 8)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, October 31 by 11:59 pm.
- **Week 10 (Ch. 9)** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, November 7 by 11:59 pm.
- **Complete Paper** Due on Blackboard on Saturday, November 14 by 11:59 pm.

Sling Blade Assignment Schedule

Watch *Sling Blade* (1996) from home at some point in November. Submit your five-page paper on Blackboard by Saturday, November 21 at 11:59 pm.