

Graduate Seminar: Forensic
Psychology, Law, and Public Policy
Course Syllabus
M 2-4:45pm in SB 107

Instructor: Bryan Myers, Ph.D

Hours: T,Th 11am-12pm or by appointment

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Readings and course information can be found at:

<http://people.uncw.edu/myersb/595/index.595.htm>

Course Overview

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to an in-depth discussion of topics that interface law, psychology, and public policy. Examples of topics can be found by reading a journal devoted to these issues.

Psychology, Public Policy, and Law provides a forum to critically evaluate the contributions of psychology and related disciplines to public policy and legal issues. Articles assess policy alternatives in light of the scientific knowledge base in psychology and articulate research needs on policy and legal issues for which there is currently insufficient empirical or theoretical knowledge.

A *policy* is a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve a particular outcome or a set of outcomes. Policies are broader than laws, but can include laws. So, policies may include things such as civil commitment laws, or it may include common practices (or rules) law enforcement personnel follow in how they operate, such as how they conduct lineups and photospreads.

You have a lot of freedom in choosing the topics you wish to explore, so try to look into some topics that really interest you. Students must lead 1 discussion and can choose their topic as long as it is cleared with the instructor.

Examples of Topic ideas you might consider exploring

- Kendra's Law: Preventive outpatient commitment for persons with serious mental illness
- Sexually violent predator laws
- Juvenile transfer to adult court
- Miranda and the psychology of eliciting confessions
- Rape shield laws
- Drug courts
- Conviction proneness, death qualification, and Lockhart v. McCree

Some points to consider in your topic choice, and when leading discussion:

- Is this a legal/policy issue where psychological issues are relevant?
- Can psychological research inform this debate?
- Are there areas in which more research is needed—if so, identify possible issues to explore.

Grading

Your grade will be based on:

1. A final take-home examination assigned April 14 and due April 21. This will be a typed response to a series of questions surrounding the issues we have discussed in class. You have the option of bringing in additional sources to your answers that were not part of the regular course readings. This take-home examination will constitute 50% of your grade.

2. Your performance as discussion leader. This is not a formal presentation to the class. Rather, your responsibilities include picking a topic relevant to the course, identifying important readings (normally no more than 3 and no less than 2) for the class, getting the readings to me by the deadline (i.e., 1 week prior to the class you lead discussion), identifying important questions for the group to discuss, moderating the discussion, and supplying useful and educational background information to fill in gaps where the readings do not address some important issues. This will constitute 25% of your grade.

3. Your performance in class during discussions. Do you come to class demonstrating you have read and thought about the material? Are you an active participant in discussions (both asking and answering questions)? The quality of seminar classes rests largely with the motivation of the class, and so your participation is vital to the success of the course. This will constitute 25% of your grade.

1	1/14	Introduction
2	1/28	Victim impact statements and capital sentencing
3	2/4	Lie detection and the courts
4	2/11	Forensic hypnosis
5	2/18	Meredith – competence for executions
6	2/25	Jill – insanity defense
7	3/10	Steve – child custody determinations
8	3/17	Mary Beth – Interviewing child witnesses
9	3/24	Gina – Kendra’s Law
10	3/31	Emalee – sexual predator laws
11	4/7	David – interrogations and confessions
12	4/14	Lineup policies – Exam assigned
13	4/21	Video and discussion- Exam due
14	4/28	TBA