

*PSYCHOLOGY AND THE LAW*  
*Psychology 394*  
*Fall, 2008*



**Professor Edie Greene**  
**Columbine Hall 4021, 262-4147**

I will be available after class on Tuesdays if you have quick questions. For something longer, please come to my office hours from 1:30-3 on Tuesdays. If this time is not convenient, you can make an appointment to see me at another time. The best way to contact me is via email: [egreene@uccs.edu](mailto:egreene@uccs.edu)

*Information:*

Textbook: Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, and Nietzel, *Psychology and the Legal System* (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2007).

*(I will donate the proceeds I receive from your purchase of the book to the Youth Transformation Center, a local non-profit organization dedicated to empowering youth to generate new possibilities in their lives through personal accountability, empathy, and leadership skills. Studies show that incarceration does little to prepare youth to lead responsible and productive lives. Restorative justice programs sponsored by the Youth Transformation Center are an effective alternative for reducing juvenile crime and building stronger, safer communities.)*

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This survey course will examine the role of psychology in the legal system. Class time will be devoted to lectures, discussions, films, and demonstrations that exemplify the application of psychological principles, findings, and theories to the legal system. The law makes a number of assumptions about human behavior; our objective will be to find those assumptions and to evaluate their appropriateness in light of findings from psychological research studies.

In one sense, this course is about us all because we are all active participants in the legal system: we all face daily choices that are colored by law. The introduction to the course will present a number of interesting conflicts that arise in our daily lives when we use psychological ideas to examine the law. In particular, though, we will concentrate on the behavior of active participants in the legal system: witnesses, victims, plaintiffs, lawyers, judges, juries, defendants, and convicts. We do this by proceeding sequentially through the stages of a legal case, pausing to examine the relevant psychological research findings. Beginning with the commission of a crime or the occurrence of an accident, we look at studies that examine the reliability of eyewitnesses' memories, the techniques that police use to identify and evaluate criminal suspects, pretrial issues

such as plea-bargaining, pretrial publicity, and assessments of defendants' mental capacities prior to trial. During the middle part of the course we will focus on trials, including jury selection, jury decision making, and recent innovative trial reforms. We will visit the El Paso County courthouse to watch a portion of a trial or trial-related proceedings. During the latter part of the course, we focus on the psychology of crime victims, particular concerns that arise when children are involved in the legal system, and psychological aspects of the ultimate form of punishment for convicted offenders, the death penalty. I hope that you will come to see the law as a fascinating and constantly evolving human institution that is amenable to analysis using psychological ideas and research findings.

### *Course Objectives*

By the end of the semester, you will:

- Know and understand how a criminal incident is investigated and resolved by the legal system and how cases proceed through the courts
- Comprehend the roles, perspectives, and ethical dilemmas experienced by judges, jurors, attorneys, defendants, and victims
- Understand the value of psychological research findings for examining the behavioral assumptions in the law
- Be able to critically evaluate claims made in public debates about the workings of the legal system and about the quest for justice for all citizens



A PSYCHOLOGIST, A LAWYER, AND A SHOE  
SALESMAN ATTEMPTING TO MINGLE AT A  
COCKTAIL PARTY

### *What happens in this class:*

**Lectures.** I will generally lecture on one aspect of a particular reading assignment, but the lectures will not be a repetition of the readings and we will not have the time to cover many of the topics mentioned in the textbook. Rudimentary powerpoint slides from the lectures will be available in my out-box for study and review. Be sure to read the assignment prior to class. I will raise questions for discussion from time to time and you will be better able to contribute to the discussion if you are familiar with the material.

**Active participation in class discussions.** You will get the most out of this class if you attend every class period and actively participate in the class discussions and other activities. I ask you to take an active role in class discussions and debates and try to structure the class so that everyone feels comfortable taking part. To encourage active engagement and interesting discussions, I will give extra credit for active involvement in class (details to follow). Some guidelines:

- Useful comments go beyond mere expression of personal views or anecdotes. Rather, they reflect a consideration of issues addressed in assigned readings and previous class discussions
- Controversial issues have no universally agreed-upon “right” and “wrong” answers. The views you express in class do *not* affect your grade. Feel free to say what you really think and to disagree with the book, with me, and with other students, so long as you can do so in a respectful manner and can support your views thoughtfully.
- If you find it difficult to get a word in or if you are not used to participating, tell me and I can discreetly help you. If you tend to talk a lot, remember to give others a chance. Do not simply dismiss viewpoints that conflict with your own. Listen to what others have to say.

**Quizzes.** There will be seven quizzes given over the course of the semester. Each quiz will cover 2 chapters in the textbook and will be worth 25 points. Because of the number of students in the class (and the lack of a teaching assistant), the tests will involve only multiple choice questions. They will cover material presented in lectures and demonstrations, films shown in class, and material presented only in the textbook. Study guides for each chapter can be found in my out-box. It is a good idea to use these to guide your studying. The test questions will ask you to think, to explain, and generally to tell me something that I haven't already told you. If you are sick on the day of a quiz, you will have the opportunity to make it up on December 11 (the last day of class) but you may make up only one quiz.

The quizzes will be given at the beginning of the class period so please be in class on time. If you are less than 10 minutes late to class, you will have the option of taking the quiz in the remaining time or of making up that quiz on December 11. If you are more than 10 minutes late, your only option will be to make up the quiz. Do not plan to leave class after you take the quiz.

You will not receive a letter grade on each quiz. Rather, you will accumulate points as the course progresses. At the end of the semester, I will determine the highest overall score. People who score within 90% of that number will receive an A, people who score within 80% will receive a B, people who score within 70% will receive a C, people who score within 60% will receive a D and people who score below 60% will receive an F. I will announce the high score periodically throughout the semester so you know where you stand. I do give plus and minus grades.

**Required field trip.** In past years, students have told me that the trip to the El Paso County Courthouse was the most educational aspects of this course. Therefore, I will attempt to arrange these trips in the following manner: On Tuesday, Nov. 18, half of the class (last names A-M) will visit the courthouse and on Thursday, Nov. 20, people with last names N-Z will visit. The address of the courthouse is 20 E. Vermijo although the entrance is off of Tejon St., just north of Vermijo (across the street from the Pioneers Museum). You will have to pass through a metal detector prior to entering the courthouse. Please plan to arrive there by 9:15 to go through the detector and meet me in the lobby between 9:30 and 9:45. Please plan to stay until approximately 10:30 if you have to return to campus for another class or stay longer if you are able. We will discuss these excursions during subsequent class periods.



**Guest speakers.** Two professionals in psychology and law will be guests in our class. To allow for more interaction with them, students will read the relevant part of the textbook and prepare questions ahead of time. Please email a question for the police psychologist (Chapter 4) to me by September 16 and for the forensic evaluator (Chapter 8) by October 16. The best questions are those that ask for specific details or applications of a particular topic (and the worst are ones that ask why someone chose his or her profession...yawn.) If I select your question to pose to the guest (you will actually ask it of the speaker), you will receive an additional 3 points; if I don't receive a question from you by the date due, you will lose 3 points.

### *Extra credit opportunities*

**Research participation.** You can also earn up to ten extra credit points by participating in psychology department research experiments. (Directions for doing so are provided in my outbox.) The number of credits you accumulate (up to 10) will be added to your total score before your grade is determined.

**Active participation in class activities.** You can earn up to six extra credit points by actively participating in class. Together with the research participation credits, this represents an opportunity to significantly improve your grade.

## *Do's and Don'ts*

**Classroom decorum.** You may not use cell phones in class. If you are expecting an absolutely urgent call, please set your phone to vibrate or pulse and let me know that you may need to leave class to accept the call. If you are unavoidably late for class, or if you need to leave class early, please do so quietly. Treat your classmates with absolute consideration at all times. Please show respect for other people's ideas and comments.

**Academic honesty.** I expect all students to adhere rigorously to the highest standards of academic honesty. Please refer to page 33 of the UCCS Catalog for the complete text of the UCCS Honor Code and explanation of honor code procedures. It is found online at: <http://www.uccs.edu/~pubs/bulletin/generalInformation.pdf>.

**Students with disabilities.** You will want to contact the Disability Services Office located in Main Hall (Room 105; Telephone 262-3354). If you have any special needs, the good people there will assist you. Please give me your letter of certification and requests for accommodation within the first two weeks of class, if this is necessary. I am happy to accommodate your needs.

## *Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Quizzes*

Aug. 26, 28, Sept. 4 (No class on Sept. 2)

Topic: Introduction to the field

Readings: Chapter 1 Psychology and the law: Impossible choices  
Chapter 2 The legal system and its players

**Sept. 9 Quiz 1: Chapters 1 & 2**

Sept. 9, 11, 16

Topic: Eyewitness identification

Reading: Chapter 5 Crime investigation: Witnesses

Sept. 16 Email a question for police psychologist

Sept. 18 Topic: Psychology of the police

Reading: Chapter 4 Psychology of police

Guest speaker: Dr. Aldo Tartaglino, Staff Psychologist, Colorado Springs Police Department

**Sept. 23 Quiz 2: Chapters 4 & 5**

Sept. 23, 25, Oct. 2 (No class on Sept. 30)

Topic: The psychology of confessions

Reading: Chapter 6 Identification and evaluation of criminal suspects

Oct. 7 Topic: A real case involving eyewitness identification, confession evidence, and racial issues in the film "Murder on a Sunday morning"

Oct. 9 Topic: Conclusion of "Murder on a Sunday morning" and discussion

- Oct. 14                    Topic: Plea bargaining  
Reading: Chapter 7 Between arrest and trial
- Oct. 16                    Quiz 3: Chapters 6 & 7** (No lecture). Email question for forensic evaluator
- Oct. 21                    Topic: Competency to stand trial  
Reading: Chapter 8 Forensic assessment in criminal cases  
Guest speaker: Dr. John Crumlin, forensic evaluator
- Oct. 23, 28              Topic: Insanity defense  
Reading: Chapter 8 Forensic assessment in criminal cases
- Oct. 30                    Quiz 4: Chapters 8 & 9**
- Oct. 30`                  Topic: Jury nullification  
Reading: Chapter 10 The trial process
- Nov. 4, 6                Topic: Jury selection  
Reading: Chapter 11 Jury trials I: Representativeness and selection
- Nov. 11                    Quiz 5: Chapters 10 & 11**
- Nov. 11, 13             Topic: Jury decision making  
Reading: Chapter 12 Jury trials II: Concerns and reforms
- Nov. 18, 20             Courthouse visits
- Nov. 25                  Topic: Sexual assault (No class on Nov. 27)  
Reading: Chapter 13 Psychology of victims
- Dec. 2                    Quiz 6: Chapters 12 & 13**
- Dec. 2                    Topic: Children in court  
Reading: Chapter 14 Children, adolescents, and the law
- Dec. 4, 9                Topic: Capital punishment  
Reading: Chapter 15 Punishment, sentencing, and corrections
- Dec. 11                    Quiz 7: Chapters 14 & 15**  
**Make-up quizzes (1 maximum)**

*Communicating with the psychology department*

Information list: The psych-l email list is used primarily to distribute information from the Psychology Department to undergraduate psychology majors and minors, but any students may join. Subscribe by sending an email from your preferred account to psych-l-on@uccs.edu or unsubscribe at any time by sending an email from your subscribed account to psych-l-off@uccs.edu

Webpage: <http://web.uccs.edu/psychology/>

### *Helpful hints on how to get the most out of this class*

**Attend class.** Bright, highly motivated students who have superior study skills can learn most of what the book presents -- enough to do quite well on exam questions that cover the textbook material. However, a considerable amount of material that is not in the textbook will be presented during classes and I will not review most of the textbook material in lectures. A number of exam questions will come from material presented exclusively in lectures. Research has shown that one of the best predictors of grades in courses is class attendance, and even the brightest students gain more insight by attending classes regularly.

**Study chapters early.** Some lectures overlap information from the book, but even for lecture material that is not redundant with the book, you will learn best by reading/studying the assigned chapters by the date on which they are indicated on the syllabus. I will assume in lectures that you have covered the assigned chapters, and hence will not focus unnecessarily on terms/concepts that are well defined in the book. However, lack of emphasis or coverage during lectures does not mean lack of importance of material in the book. You should strive to complete assigned chapters on time and several days before an exam. Studying early leaves much more time for resolving difficulties and reviewing the material -- repetition is a fundamental principle of learning.

**Take notes “actively” while you read.** Research shows that many individuals read and write passively, that is, without thinking about the meaning of what they are covering. In reading and studying textbook-type material, everyone (professors included) must read actively and as a result somewhat slowly. You must try to understand what you are trying to learn within the framework of what you have already learned. Research shows that learning is much more effective if new information is related to old information. Not only must you work on textbook material actively, but you must also stay mentally active during class. Passively writing down what is on the overhead screen or what I say in class without thinking about it -- about how it fits with previous material in earlier classes or earlier in that lecture -- will not help you learn or understand the material. Some students benefit from rewriting their notes as soon after class as possible.

**Before beginning to read a chapter, actively study the outline and study guide.** Also page through the chapter, reading headings and illustrations actively to gain a good general understanding of major themes and ideas. These major ideas serve as part of the framework for you to organize the more detailed information if you are to gain a good overall understanding.

**Outline each chapter.** You should take organized notes on the chapter as you go through it the first time, just as though you were taking notes on a lecture. Research shows that taking good notes requires active thinking and is much superior to underlining or highlighting text material. If you take good notes on chapters and use them in conjunction with the study guide, you should be able to study primarily from these notes without having to reread text material. In the long run, that will save you time, particularly as you become more and more skilled (through practice) at taking quality notes on text material. These notes and your lecture notes should be reviewed as many times as feasible in preparation for each exam.

**Alter your expectations for studying.** Research shows that college students greatly underestimate the effort and time it takes to do a quality job of learning the new and complex material that is a part of most of your courses. Academic experts generally agree that for a typical three semester hour course that spending about 9 hours per week outside of class working on learning is the norm for reasonable achievement. However, if the course is particularly difficult or

if your skills are not as great as the typical students', you will likely need to spend even more than 9 hours per week to do well in the course.

**Use the study guide.** It can be very helpful in structuring your study of textbook material. The study guide can be treated as questions to be answered or a framework on which to organize text information.

**Ask questions.** Questions that extend or broaden what you have learned in the book or heard in lectures are strongly encouraged during class. For more detailed questions, seek me out after class, during office hours, or make an appointment.

