

# Psychology & Law



Bobby Poole (left); Ronald Cotton (Right)

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## Course Description:

This course will focus on applications of psychological research and practice to the legal system. Drawing from the areas of social, cognitive, developmental, and clinical psychology, students will critically examine the legal process and compare the law's informal theories of human behavior to what psychologists know on the basis of empirical research. This course can serve as an elective requirement for Psychology C.S.P. or Criminal Justice M.A. students. It can also fulfill an upper-level Psychology Elective for Psychology undergraduate students.

## Learning Objectives - Students Will Be Able To:

- Describe the major historic developments in psychology and law research
- Critique applied research methods—more specifically, study assumptions, posited applications, implications, etc.
- Identify the general areas of psycho-legal research and provide summary descriptions of each
- List current issues within the legal system, as well as offer potential remedies
- Critically evaluate the strength of evidence in legal cases portrayed in the news or other popular media
- Summarize major U.S. judicial decisions affecting psycho-legal research (and researchers)

## The Basics

Psychology and Law: PSYC.5430-201

Location: Coburn Hall, G50

Thursdays, 3:30-6:20PM

01/21/2020 to 05/09/2020

Graduate-level course (advanced undergraduate students by permission only)

Professor: Miko M. Wilford, Ph.D.

Email: Miko\_Wilford@uml.edu

Office: Health & Social Sciences Bldg., 393

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:00 to 1:30PM (or by appointment)

Office Phone: (978) 934-3975

## Course Materials & Reading Assignments:

Lecture slides, supplemental readings, assignment information, and grades will be available on Blackboard. Check Blackboard every 1-2 business days for course materials and announcements.

The **required** book for this course is:

- Brewer, N., & Bradfield-Douglass, A. (Eds.). (2019).

*Psychological science and the law*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Hardcover ISBN: 9781462538300; also available as an E-Book (<https://www.guilford.com/books/Psychological-Science-and-the-Law/Brewer-Douglass/9781462538300>)

All readings will be organized into topical lists. Each list will have a corresponding folder on Blackboard—folders will include the reading list, PDFs of all the required readings (except those included in the course book), as well as discussion questions for the readings. Students will be expected to complete all assigned reading prior to the relevant class.

### Grading Percentages

A	463+ points	93-100%	C	363-382 points	73-76%
A-	448-462 points	90-92%	C-	348-362 points	70-72%
B+	433-447 points	87-89%	D	333-347 points	67-69%
B	413-432 points	83-86%	D	298-332 points	60-66%
B-	398-412 points	80-82%	F	297 or fewer points*	0-59%
C	383-397 points	77-79%			

\*University policy allows students to receive an incomplete grade (INC) **ONLY** if the student is in good standing but is unable to complete a "final course requirement" for a legitimate reason.

### Course Assignments\*

3 APA-Style Papers	200 points (45, 75, 80 pts.)	40%
2 Summary Presentations	150 points (75 points each)	30%
6 Pop Quizzes	100 points (20 points each)^	20%
Participation	50 points	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>500 points†</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Grade disputes must be addressed within 2 business days (i.e., M-F) of the grade being posted on Blackboard.

^The lowest pop quiz score will be dropped.

## Attendance

is expected...

1. There will be six pop quizzes over the reading assignments (20 points each).

The quizzes **cannot** be made up, but the lowest score will be dropped.

2. Course readings will often be summarized in class via student presentations

All students will be required to present a summary of at least two of the assigned articles.

3. Participation grades will be determined primarily by engagement in class discussions.

Discussion is an integral part of learning in this class.

4. Absences and tardiness will be documented.

Students who miss more than two classes will lose 10 participation points for each additional absence.

Consequently, students who miss more than five classes will receive a zero for participation. Students who must miss multiple classes for a good reason (e.g., extended illness), should notify Professor Wilford in a timely manner; in these cases, an alternative assignment can be provided. Two tardies will be equivalent to one absence and will accumulate as such.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic &amp; Reading List</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Jan. 23	Course (Syllabus) Overview & Introduction to the U.S. Legal System	
Jan. 30	<b>List #1:</b> The Philosophy of Law	
Feb. 6	<b>List #2:</b> Legal Procedure & Investigations	
Feb. 13	<b>List #3:</b> Interrogations & Confessions	† <b>PAPER 1 [Innocence Project] DUE</b>
Feb. 20	<b>List #4:</b> Expert Testimony	
Feb. 27	<b>List #5:</b> Eyewitness Memory: Interviews	
<b>March 3 (Tuesday)</b>	<b>List #6:</b> Eyewitness Memory: Identifications	
March 19	<b>List #7:</b> Deception Detection	
March 26	<b>List #8:</b> Competency	<b>PAPER 2 [Consulting Report] DUE</b>
April 2	<b>List #9:</b> Child Witnesses	
April 9	<b>List #10:</b> Plea Bargaining	Deadline to withdraw (W) on <b>April 7</b>
April 16	<b>List #11:</b> Jury & Judicial Decision Making	
April 23	<b>List #12:</b> Civil Courts	<b>PAPER 3 [Real World Critique] DUE</b>
April 30	<b>List #13:</b> Translating Psychological Science into Public Policy	

Readings should be completed prior to the class in which they are discussed.

\*Please note that each reading is aligned to correspond to the day (not the week) that it will be reviewed in class.

†Assignments are also aligned to correspond to the day that they are due (e.g., Paper 1 is due Feb. 13th)

Barry Scheck and Vanessa Potkin flank Larry Fuller, an exoneratee of the Innocence Project freed after 25 years in prison.



## Papers & Oral Presentations

**Papers.** Each paper should be written in APA style. Every paper will cover a different topic (see below), and should incorporate a minimum of 3 academic (peer-reviewed) sources. Specific instructions for each paper will be made available on Blackboard as the relevant deadlines approach. Papers will be evaluated with the following criteria: formatting, external source quality and integration, content accuracy/clarity, creativity, and critical thinking. Only papers submitted on time and in Word format (.doc or .docx) will be eligible for full credit. Late papers will be penalized 20% for each day late. Papers later than **3** days will **not** be accepted and will receive a zero.

**Paper 1.** Summarize and analyze an Innocence Project case (<https://www.innocenceproject.org/all-cases/>)

**Paper 2.** Provide an expert legal consultant's report (e.g., concerning the reliability of juvenile or adult eyewitness, defendant competency, etc.)

**Paper 3.** Identify the most significant criminal or civil justice issue in America and how it could be remedied (via legislative or judicial avenues)

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**Summary (Oral) Presentations.** All students will be required to summarize two of the assigned readings in class. Presentations will be assigned on the first day of class. Students will be expected to prepare a 15- to 30-minute presentation of the paper. The presentation should include: an outline of the article, the paper's implications (e.g., How does it contribute to the literature? How could it influence policy? Etc.), and the article's most important take-home message(s). This summary should be prepared as a Power-point presentation, which must be emailed to Professor Wilford a minimum of 24-hours prior to the presentation. After the presentation, students will be expected to lead a discussion over the reading for which they should prepare discussion prompts/questions that should also be sent to Professor Wilford 24-hours prior to the presentation. If materials are submitted late, presentation scores will be penalized 10%. Unless excused, students absent on their presentation days will receive a 0 for that presentation.

## Pop Quizzes

Pop **Quizzes** will consist of fill-in-the-blank and short answer/essay questions. Students will be required to complete quizzes during the allotted class time, **even** if they arrive late. Quizzes cannot be made up, but the lowest pop quiz score will be dropped from the final point total prior to the submission of final grades. Students might be permitted to access notes during quizzes, but will **never** be allowed to access the course readings.

## In-Class

### Expectations:

During course lectures...

1. Cell phones should be silenced and **put away**, and laptops/tablets are allowed for class tasks only.

This expectation is to the benefit of the instructor and all students. Cell phones and web-surfing produce unwanted class distractions.

2. Discussion should be relevant to the class material.

Students should always feel free to join in class discussions and to admit when concepts are unclear.

3. Act in a manner that creates an atmosphere of academic discourse and respect.

The *academic* golden rule is to treat others the way that you would like to be treated, and act in a way that maximizes everyone's opportunity to learn in a respectful environment.

## Correspondence & Academic Resources

- The easiest way to contact Professor Wilford is by email (Miko\_Wilford@uml.edu). I will typically respond to course emails within 2 **business** days (i.e., M-F 9AM-5PM and excluding holidays). Students can also stop by Professor Wilford's office hours or make an appointment.
- Course-related materials and grades will be available on **Blackboard** (<https://lowell.umassonline.net/>)—including the syllabus, lecture materials, readings, assignment materials, etc.
- Students who feel academically overwhelmed should take advantage of campus resources—for instance, the Writing Center (<http://www.uml.edu/Writing-Center/default.aspx>) offers free graduate-level tutoring sessions to students as long as they schedule an appointment in-advance.

## Accommodations and Support:

- Students with disabilities can contact the Office for Disability Services ([uml.edu/student-services/disability](http://uml.edu/student-services/disability))
- Support services are available via the Student Counseling Center ([uml.edu/student-services/counseling](http://uml.edu/student-services/counseling))
- UMass Lowell is committed to the fair treatment of all its students by faculty, staff, and other students. If students feel they have been unfairly treated, they can read their rights here: [http://www.uml.edu/catalog/undergraduate/policies/student\\_complaints.htm](http://www.uml.edu/catalog/undergraduate/policies/student_complaints.htm).
- UMass Lowell strives to provide a safe and secure environment for all its students and employees. In an emergency, UMass Lowell police can be reached by dialing x4-2911 or at [police@uml.edu](mailto:police@uml.edu).

## Academic Integrity:

Any exam or paper that shows evidence of plagiarism will receive a 0 and the responsible student will be referred for disciplinary action, as stated here: <https://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Policies/Academic-Integrity.aspx>. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to indications that: multiple phrases or references have been copied from a website, textbook, article, peer's work, or other source without enclosing the words in quotation marks, students collaborated on an individual project, a student allowed someone else to copy his/her work, or a paper submitted in another course is used. Students may, of course use material from class and from published or electronic sources. provided that the source is cited in proper APA style. All

papers will be submitted to *SafeAssign*—a tool that checks for plagiarism via linguistic pattern-recognition algorithms. Exam responses will also be submitted to *SafeAssign* when appropriate.

*Not understanding this policy, or not realizing that plagiarism was committed, will **not** exempt any student from the penalties described above.*