

## Individual Assessment Course Syllabus

### Forensic Psychology (FP 6020 BLA, Fall I, 2008)

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**Phone:** 707 428-3340

**Office hours:** By appointment,  
email and/or telephone

**Dates of Class:** Course begins online **September 2, 2008**, meets on the weekends of **September 6 & 7** and

**October 3 & 4**, and officially concludes on **October 22, 2008**. There will be weekly instruction online throughout the term.

#### **Final Date to Drop the Class:**

To receive a “W” grade a student must officially drop this class by the date listed below that corresponds to this course’s term and length (indicated by bold type). Students may not withdraw from this course after the date this date. If a student chooses to discontinue course work after the final drop date, the student may receive an “F” grade for the course.

Fall Session I (7.5 week courses): October 6, 2008

Fall Session II (7.5 week courses): November 27, 2008

Fall Full Term (15 week courses): November 10, 2008

#### **Required Texts:**

Ackerman, Marc J. (1999). *Essentials of Forensic Psychological Assessment*. New York: John Wiley and Sons ISBN: 0471331864 .

Meloy, Reid (2000). *Violence Risk and Threat Assessment: A Practical Guide for Mental Health and Criminal Justice Professionals*. Specialized Training Services: San Diego, CA. ISBN: 0-9703189-0-1

Morrison, J. (1995) *The First Interview: Revised for DSM-IV*. Guilford: New York.

Robinson, David J. (2000) *Three Spheres: A Psychiatric Interviewing Primer*. Port Huron, Michigan  
ISBN: 0-9680324-9-4

#### **DVD’s or Videos required:**

Students will need to locate the following videos to use for assessment write up:

*A Beautiful Mind* for assignment due on September

*Aileen Wurnos: Life and Death of Serial Killer* (these are her 2002 interviews) for full assessment due on **October 22** at noon. I recommend that you locate these in advance so that you have enough time to complete the assignments.

**Recommended Texts (but not required):**

- Chesney-Lind, M. & Pasko, L. (2004) *The Female Offender: Girls, Women, and Crime*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Grisso, T. (2003) *Evaluating Competencies: Forensic Assessments and Instruments*. New York: Kluwer/Plenum.
- Hare, R. D. (1999). *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*. New York: Guilford Press. ISBN: 1572304510
- Meloy, J. R. (2002) *The Psychopathic Mind: Origins, Dynamics, And Treatment*. Oxford: Jason Aronson.
- Peck, M.S. (1983) *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Samenow, S. (2004) *Inside The Criminal Mind*. New York: Crown.
- Shea, S. C. (2002) *The Practical Art of Suicide Assessment: A Guide for Mental Health Professionals and Substance Abuse Counselors*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 0471237612
- Zuckerman, E. L. (2005) *Clinician's Thesaurus: The Guide to Conducting Interviews and Writing Psychological Reports, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed*. New York: Guilford Press. ISBN: 1572304375 (Highly recommended)

**Course Description:**

Introductory graduate course focusing on individual assessment in forensic settings and contexts. What should be included in a good clinical assessment will be covered including risk assessment and considerations for civil commitment procedures. The differences between clinical and forensic assessment will then be delineated including assessing for trial competency, standards for NGI (Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity), and court requests for psychiatric evaluation (4011.6). Accepted standards of assessment practice will also be reviewed for specialized forensic populations.

**Course Objectives:**

- Students will gain an understanding of the theoretical foundation and clinical method of assessing individuals.
- Students will learn what types of specific assessments might occur in forensic settings and how forensic assessments vary from clinical assessments.

- Students will gain additional competence in structuring a clinical interview, mental status examination, performing a thorough risk assessment, and differential screening process when evaluating individuals in forensic settings.
- Students will be exposed to instruments that are generally utilized only in forensic settings to determine an individual's risk of recidivism, or to determine sociopathic characteristics.
- Students will gain specific exposure in recognizing malingering and deception.

**Program Outcomes: Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology**

**Program Outcome One:**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical concepts and methodological approaches to the psychological bases of behavior as it relates to the practice and application of forensic psychology.

**Program Outcome Two:**

**A.** Students will be able to distinguish and utilize the underlying theories guiding the interface between the legal system and psychology.

**B.** Students will be able to establish and analyze the interaction between psychology and the law in all major aspects of criminal and civil justice system.

**Program Outcome Three:**

Students will demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate the existing literature and body of knowledge in assessment, evaluation and research methods in forensic psychology.

**Program Outcome Four:**

Students will use leadership, consultative, and ethical knowledge, skills and attitudes that will allow them to succeed as a part of a professional team, capable of expanding the role of psychologists within society.

**Methods of Instruction:**

This course will be delivered in a **blended format**, including in class lecture and discussion, video, and role-plays combined with online instruction. In addition to the two required weekends on campus, students are required to participate online at <http://argosyu.edu> on a weekly basis during the entire term of the course.

**Course Assignments and Student Expectations:**

- Students will be expected to attend class regularly and be ready to discuss required readings. **SEE OUTLINE BELOW FOR READING ASSIGNMENTS TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO CLASS.**

- Participation in class discussion and group work (e.g. in-class vignettes and/or role play exercises) is required.
- There will be a final take home exam which will be due on **October 15th** at noon. This needs to be submitted to instructor electronically.
- Online participation is required. There will be four short assignments online (see weeks 2, 3, 4, & 5 each worth 25 points. All of these assignments will be explained in the first weekend of class and the first assignment is not due until **September 15<sup>th</sup>**. However you will be asked to log on and introduce yourself the first week of online class prior to us meeting AND I would recommend beginning to read Morrison and Robinson prior to our first meeting.
- One clinical assessment will also be assigned. You will be writing an assessment on Aileen Wuornos (a woman found guilty of serial murder). It will be due by noon on **October 22nd**. It should be submitted electronically to instructor. Details on how this assessment should be done will be discussed at the first class meeting and through online instruction.
- Points will be deducted if assignments are turned in late. One can potentially earn up to 400 points (100 points for exam, 100 points for the clinical assessment, 100 points for the online assignments (25 points each) and 100 points for participation.)

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week One Online: Begins Sept 2.** Instructor and student introductions/expectations. Begin readings (Robinson's Three Spheres gives you a quick review of what is involved in a psychiatric interview. Morrison focuses more on how you would ask questions and why.) Start preparing yourself for roleplay interviews you will be doing with each other over the first weekend.

**First Class Weekend (September 6 & 7): This weekend will draw on what is covered in Morrison & Robinson.**

*Saturday (Sept 6)*

- Introductions. Course overview and expectations.
- Key elements of a clinical assessment.
- Conducting a mental status exam.

*Sunday (Sept 7)*

- Risk assessments: Suicide, danger to others, substance abuse.
- Civil commitment procedure
- Differentiating forensic assessment from general clinical assessment.
- Overview of assessing for NGI (not guilty by reason of insanity) and 4011.6 (court ordered psychiatric evaluations.)

**Week Two Online:** Read online minilecture and continue readings in texts.

**Assignment:** Using segment 16 of *The Beautiful Mind*, develop a one to two page mini assessment which includes chief complaint, history of presenting problem, and a mental status exam. This is due on **September 15 at noon**. It should be emailed to professor at [bfriendly@earthlink.net](mailto:bfriendly@earthlink.net).

**Week Three Online:** Read mini lecture and continue readings. This week you will interview an acquaintance and do a brief write up of their history using the outline provided in class on Sept 7<sup>th</sup>. This should be a write up of a minimum of 2 pages. This assignment is due on **September 22 at noon**.

**Week Four Online:** This week there will be an online lecture on civil commitment. There will also be a document attached discussing civil commitment. There will be a written assignment asking you to answer questions about civil commitment by short essay. **This assignment is due on September 29<sup>th</sup> at noon**. You will also want to begin reading Ackerman's *Forensic Assessment*. In particular his chapters on civil commitment, incompetency, and not guilty by reason of insanity are helpful. I would recommend reading Chapter 1, 5, 6, 7, & 8.

**Second In Class Weekend (October 3 & 4):** Read handout on suicide assessment and Ackerman's *Forensic Assessment* prior to class.

***Saturday (Oct 3)***

- Incompetency
- Not guilty by reason of insanity

***Sunday (Oct 4)***

- Malingering
- Psychopathy
- Violent risk assessment.

**Week Five Online:** Vignette with questions assignment **due by October 12**. Read Meloy's *Violent Risk and Threat Assessment*.

**Week Six:** Completion of take home final exam and feedback on assessments.

**FINAL DUE ON October 15 , NOON.**

**Wuornos assessment due October 22 by noon.**

**It is your choice whether you want to submit the final first or the Wurnos assignment first. BUT one will be due on October 15 and the other due on October 22<sup>nd</sup>.**

## **GRADING:**

Assessment One	100 points	<b>A</b>	381-400
Online assignments	100 points (25 pts each, Wk 2,3, 4 & 5	<b>A-</b>	360-380
Final Exam	100 points	<b>B+</b>	347-359
Participation	100 points	<b>B</b>	333-346
		<b>B-</b>	320-332
		<b>C</b>	281-319
		<b>F</b>	<280
<b>Total Class Points: 400</b>			

### **Grading Criteria for Assessments:**

A=90+ Assessment is in appropriate format as suggested by instructor, well organized, thought out, provides excellent picture of client's presentation.

B=80-89 Assessment is well organized and thought out, but is missing one component of format OR picture of client is only adequate or is somewhat limited.

C=70-79 Assessment is disorganized, client presentation is inadequate, grammar is poor.

F=<70 Evidence of plagiarism or assessment not submitted.

### **Grading Criteria for Participation:**

**Instructor Attendance policy:** In general, the only acceptable reason for an absence would be severe illness (and this would require a letter from a physician). This still would require that you do all the work and assignments in a timely manner, and you would still lose points if you were not present to participate. If you have important events you need to attend during the weekends scheduled, please take the class at a later date.

A=90+ Student actively participated in discussions in >80% of class sessions; nearly all comments were thought provoking and incorporated material from the assigned readings.

B=80-89 Student actively participated in discussions in >70% of class sessions; most of the comments were thought provoking and incorporated material from assigned readings.

C=70-89 Student participated in discussions in >60% of class sessions, comments/questions demonstrate only a surface level understanding of topics

F=<70 Poor understanding of course topics and demonstration that course materials have not been read.

## **Library**

*All resources in Argosy University's online collection are available through the Internet. The campus librarian will provide students with links, user IDs, and passwords.*

Library Resources: Argosy University's core online collection features nearly 21,000 full-text journals and 23,000 electronic books and other content covering all academic subject areas including Business & Economics, Career & General Education, Computers, Engineering & Applied Science, Humanities, Science, Medicine & Allied Health, and Social & Behavior Sciences. Many titles are directly accessible through the Online Public Access Catalog at <http://library.argosy.edu>. Detailed descriptions of online resources are located at <http://library.argosy.edu/misc/onlinedblist.html>.

In addition to online resources, Argosy University's onsite collections contain a wealth of subject-specific research materials searchable in the Online Public Access Catalog. Catalog searching is easily limited to individual campus collections. Alternatively, students can search combined collections of all Argosy University Libraries. Students are encouraged to seek research and reference assistance from campus librarians.

Information Literacy: Argosy University's Information Literacy Tutorial was developed to teach students fundamental and transferable research skills. The tutorial consists of five modules where students learn to select sources appropriate for academic-level research, search periodical indexes and search engines, and evaluate and cite information. In the tutorial, students study concepts and practice them through interactions. At the conclusion of each module, they can test their comprehension and receive immediate feedback. Each module takes less than 20 minutes to complete. Please view the tutorial at <http://library.argosy.edu/infolit/>

## **Academic Policies**

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism: In an effort to foster a spirit of honesty and integrity during the learning process, Argosy University requires that the submission of all course assignments represent the original work produced by that student. All sources must be documented through normal scholarly references/citations and all work must be submitted using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (2001)*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association (APA) format. Please refer to Appendix A in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* for thesis and paper format. Students are encouraged to purchase this manual (required in some courses) and become familiar with its content as well as consult the Argosy University catalog for further information regarding academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

Scholarly writing: The faculty at Argosy University is dedicated to providing a learning environment that supports scholarly and ethical writing, free from academic dishonesty and plagiarism. This includes the proper and appropriate referencing of all sources. You may be asked to submit your course assignments through "Turnitin," ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)), an online resource established to help educators develop

writing/research skills and detect potential cases of academic dishonesty. Turnitin compares submitted papers to billions of pages of content and provides a comparison report to your instructor. This comparison detects papers that share common information and duplicative language.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act Policy**

It is the policy of Argosy University to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If a student with disabilities needs accommodations, the student must notify the Director of Student Services. Procedures for documenting student disability and the development of reasonable accommodations will be provided to the student upon request.

Students will be notified by the Director of Student Services when each request for accommodation is approved or denied in writing via a designated form. To receive accommodation in class, it is the student's responsibility to present the form (at his or her discretion) to the instructor. In an effort to protect student privacy, the Department of Student Services will not discuss the accommodation needs of any student with instructors. Faculty may not make accommodations for individuals who have not been approved in this manner.

### **The Argosy University Statement Regarding Diversity**

Argosy University prepares students to serve populations with diverse social, ethnic, economic, and educational experiences. Both the academic and training curricula are designed to provide an environment in which students can develop the skills and attitudes essential to working with people from a wide range of backgrounds.

**Your instructor is responsible for delivering this curriculum in a format that will ensure the objectives are met and measured. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways depending upon the experience, orientation, technological acumen, emphasis and preferences of the instructor as well as the resources available. Your instructor is also required to ensure that the course Outline include details regarding assignments and method of instruction.**