

## Individual Assessment Course Syllabus

### Forensic Psychology (FP 6020 BLB, Fall I, 2007)

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

**Dates of Class:** Course begins online **September 7, 2007**, meets on the weekends of **September 8 & 9** and **October 6 & 7**, and concludes on **October 24, 2007**. 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 Full Term (15 week courses): November 12, 2007

**Fall First Session (7 ½ week courses): October 8, 2007**

Fall Second Session (7 ½ week courses): November 29, 2007

#### **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.

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)

#### **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 October.

*Monster* (with Charlize Theron) and *Aileen Wurnos: Life and Death of Serial Killer* (these are her 2002 interviews) for full assessment due on October 14<sup>th</sup> at midnight. 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

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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 via Embanet-Interlearn at <http://online.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 22<sup>nd</sup> at noon. This needs to be submitted to instructor electronically.

- Online participation is required. There will be four short assignments online (see weeks 1, 2, 3, & 4 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 16<sup>th</sup>.
- 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 midnight on October 14<sup>th</sup>. 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 7** Instructor and student introductions/expectations. Begin readings (Morrison).

**First Class Weekend (Sept 8 & 9):** Read Morrison's, *The First Interview* and familiarize yourself with Zuckerman's *Clinical Thesaurus* prior to the first class meeting. **Please bring the Zuckerman book to class as you will be using it in to aid you in doing assessments that weekend.** The Zuckerman book is a great reference book and not really the kind of book you read cover to cover--but do familiarize yourself with its layout as well as the key elements that are expected in a good clinical assessment.

### *Saturday (Sept 8)*

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

### *Sunday (Sept 9)*

- 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 ONE Online: Assignment due on Sept 16th**

The first portion of this lecture is a review of some of the issues we discussed at our first class meeting on Sept 8 & 9. The second half discusses in greater detail some of the

different types of forensic assessments. This includes building an assessment. Facts versus opinion.

Online assignment: Due Sept 16<sup>th</sup> by midnight. **Answer questions about vignette** on Discussion group. Group I students were the students that played the interviewer in the roleplay assignment. Group II students are those of you that were the amphetamine psychosis client (who lost her/his car.)

**Week Two Online: September 23 at midnight due.** Read postings for this week on embanet. Your homework assignment is to turn in a history assessment on an acquaintance you have interviewed. This interview should include informed consent. Your write up will include demographics/ as well as legal, substance abuse, psychosocial, family, relationship, etc history. It will not include chief complaint or history of presenting problem since that isn't the purpose of this interview. It will also not include mental status exam or diagnostics. Please send write up to instructor's email by **September 23.**

**Week Three Online:** Determining incompetence to stand trial and not guilty by reasons of insanity. **A Beautiful Mind assessment is due on September 30<sup>th</sup>.** This includes demographics, chief complaint, mental status exam, and provisional diagnosis on 5 Axis of DSMIV.

**Second In Class Weekend (October 6 & 7):** Read Meloy's *Violent Risk and Threat Assessment* and Ackerman's *Forensic Assessment* prior to class. **Also bring Zuckerman book to class again.**

***Saturday (Oct 6)***

- Practice with forensic assessment.
- More on incompetence assessment.
- Psychopathy.
- Malingering and/or factitious disorder.

***Sunday (Oct 7)***

- Risk assessment
- Special population considerations.

**Week Four Online: Oct 9.** Mental statute assignment. **Due by October 9<sup>th</sup>.**

**Wuornos assessment due October 14, by midnight.**

**Week Five Online:** Please read lecture, it will help you with your assignments. **Oct 14th—Wuornos assessment is due.**

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

**FINAL DUE ON October 22nd, NOON.** Class closure and final issues. **Class ends .**

## **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:**

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.