

**Code**

FOR2001 (Forensic Psychology)

**ECTS-credits**

7.5 ECTS

**Organisational unit**

CES

**Coordinators**

Jenny Schell-Leugers, PhD

Anna Sagana, PhD

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**Description**

Forensic Psychology

The aim of the course is to familiarize students with applications of psychology to the legal system and to raise awareness about the problems that arise when psychology is applied to law in practice. In the course of 3 weeks, students will take part in an intensive educational program that covers the most important topics in the field of Forensic Psychology. During the course four main themes within the field of forensic psychology will be addressed. The first is eyewitness memory, which consists of eyewitness identification and (false) memories. The second is about interviewing and interrogation. Within this topic, the students learn about police interrogation techniques, deception detection and (false) confessions. As a third issue, cognitive biases in the legal context will be dealt with. Students will get acquainted with the interpretation and reliability of forensic evidence and the role of biases in experts' decisions. Lastly, as a fourth area, students will learn about the association of mental illness and crime. Within this topic students will examine the psychopathic mind and the psychology of sex offenders. Different case studies, tools and experiments will be discussed in order to allow the students to get acquainted with the methods used in this discipline. In each tutorial, research articles and case material descriptions related to a theme will be studied and discussed. The examination will consist of question-based tests taken throughout the course, a final symposium where students will present and discuss topics related to Forensic Psychology and a final paper.

Disclaimer trips: trips and visits related to the course are conditional. E.g. Dutch travel advice should be positive regarding the region that will be visited and institutions should be able to accept visitors. In case a proposed trip or visit cannot continue due to circumstances, alternatives may be organized.

Disclaimer ECTS: the number of ECTS credits earned after successfully concluding this course is the equivalent of 7,5 ECTS credits respectively according to Maastricht University's guidelines. Please consult with your home university if these credits will be accepted as part of your programme and, if necessary, converted to the credit system acknowledged by your home university.

**Goals**

- Provide knowledge of some of the the current issues, controversies and trends in the filed of Forensic Psychology
- Familiarize students with the terminology of Forensic Psychology
- Provide in-depth comprehension of the psychological and legal aspects of the field
- Give descriptions of the methods typically used and the experimental work done in this discipline

**Instruction language**

EN

**Prerequisites**

Students should have a basic background in psychology and an interested in the legal system.

**Recommend literature**

Various book chapters and journal articles will be provided digitally at the beginning of the course.

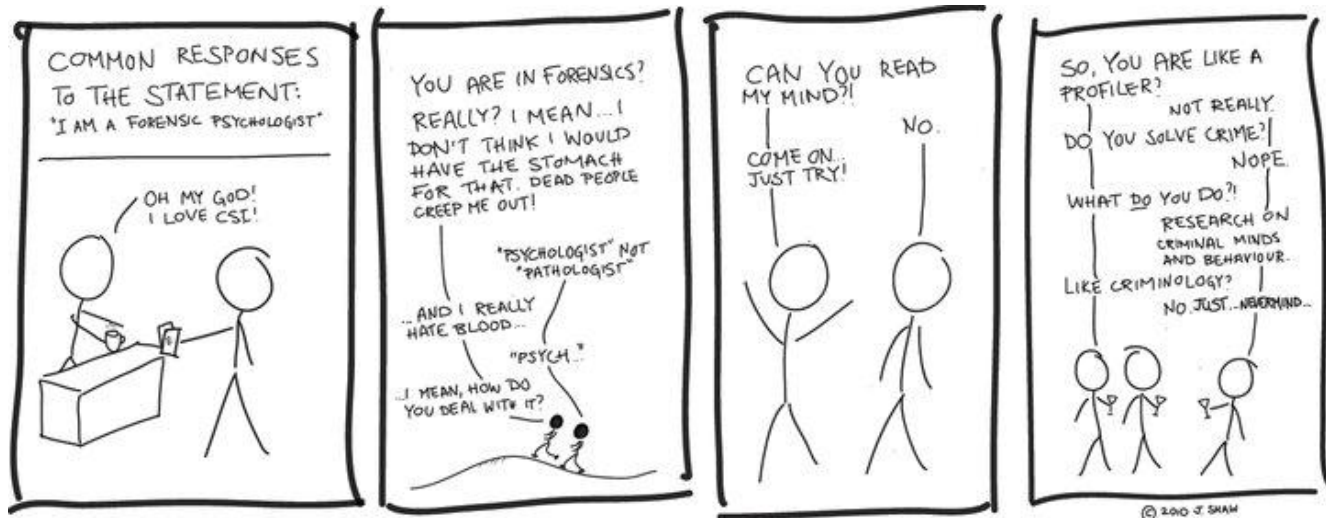
**Teaching methods**

▪ Assignments ▪ Lectures ▪ PBL ▪ Presentations ▪ Work in subgroups

**Assessment methods**

▪ Exams ▪ Final paper ▪ Presentation

## FOR2001 Forensic Psychology



Center for European Studies  
Maastricht University  
Maastricht, The Netherlands

Center for European Studies



# Introduction

## Introduction

The aim of the course Forensic Psychology is to introduce students to the application of psychology to the legal system and to raise awareness about the problems that arise when psychology is applied to law in practice. This course is interesting and relevant for all psychology students, but also to students interested in the legal field. The area of Forensic Psychology deals with all issues that lie at the intersection of human behavior and the law. Such issues range from how reliable eyewitness identifications are to whether some criminals have a brain dysfunction making them permanently dangerous to society and not responsible for their actions, to the role of experts in court and procedures of police interrogations. The role of psychologists within these themes is to ask questions that have a direct relevance to the legal arena and to conduct research to address these questions.

Through working with cases, students will be familiarized with various issues in the field in this course, for example police procedures, legal backgrounds, psychological experiments and the disputes that arise when psychology is applied to the law. Moreover, several small exercises in class will give students the opportunity to get a small taste of which tests and procedures are used by people working in the field.

Drawing from areas of social, cognitive, developmental, clinical, and neuropsychology this course will deal with questions such as: How can police interrogations lead to false confessions? How can the reliability of eyewitness identifications be measured? How dangerous are sex offenders? What are the dangers of bias in expert testimonies? Etc.

## Course structure

In the course of 3 weeks, students will take part in an intensive educational program that covers the most important topics in the field of Forensic Psychology. During the course, four main themes within the field of forensic psychology will be addressed: eyewitness memory, police interrogations, cognitive biases in the legal context, and the relationship between mental illness and crime.

The first is eyewitness memory, which consists of eyewitness identification and (false) memories. Students will learn about the reliability of eyewitness testimonies and how (false) memories are created. The second topic is about interviewing and interrogation. Within this topic, the students learn about police interrogation techniques, deception detection and (false) confessions. As a third issue, cognitive biases in the legal context will be dealt with. Students will get acquainted with the interpretation and reliability of forensic evidence and the role of biases in experts' decisions. Lastly, as a fourth area, students will learn about the association of mental illness and crime. Within this topic, students will examine the psychology of sex offenders.

Different case studies, tools and experiments will be discussed in order to allow the students to get acquainted with the methods used in this discipline. In each tutorial, research articles and case material descriptions related to a theme will be studied and discussed.

### Prerequisites

Students should have a basic background in psychology and an interest in the legal system.

### Class hours and credits

The course consists of 36 class hours divided over 3 weeks. Students earn 7.5 ECTS credits when they meet the attendance requirements and obtain a passing grade.

### Field trips

The course includes several visits and field trips to relevant institutions such as the Hague Institute for Global Justice and the Institute of Custodial Service.

# Objectives

Learning objectives:

By the end of the course students will demonstrate the ability to:

- identify current issues and controversies in the field of Forensic Psychology;
- explain terminology in Forensic Psychology;
- describe methods and tools typically used in this field and experiments that have been conducted;
- list ethical dilemmas that occur when collecting data and running experiments with human participants;
- provide reasons why raising awareness about the problems that arise when psychology is applied to law in practice are crucial;
- describe and analyze cases by applying various tools and methods.

# Assessment (Tentative)

## Course specific assessment overview

The final grade is made up of multiple grades: question-based tests taken during the course, a debate and a final essay.

The final grade is made up of multiple grades:

- 4 small question-based tests taken during the course (30%);
- a final group debate at the end of the course (30%);
- a final paper due four weeks after the course (40%).

When assessment is incomplete and no grade can be assigned (for example when students fail to do either the mid-term or the final exam), 'No grade (NG)' will be awarded which automatically constitutes a fail.

# Attendance rules

## Course specific attendance rules

This course is interactive and each class builds on the previous ones. Therefore we strongly urge students not to miss any classes. Active participation is a prerequisite for this course and you are expected to be on time. Absence, being late or not being prepared will negatively affect your participation grade.

At CES, students are expected to attend all meetings. In case circumstances should prevent students from attending class, they are not allowed to miss more than one meeting (2 hours). For a second missed meeting, or a missed double session (4 hours) or a missed field trip, students need to do a make-up assignment to comply with CES attendance requirements. **Students who miss more than 4 hours of class automatically fail the course.**

The professor notes attendance at the start of each meeting. In order to be registered as 'present' students need to be on time and participate in an active manner. Students who are more than 15 minutes late or who leave before the meeting has officially ended will be registered as absent.

In case of absence due to illness or other personal circumstances, students are required to email the professor and programme coordinator before the start of the meeting. The written notification should include the students name and a brief description of the reason or cause and the expected duration of the absence.

### Make up assignment

Students who miss 3 or 4 hours of class (not more!) or who have missed a field trip will not have met the attendance requirements of a CES course and can apply for a make-up assignment to comply with the CES attendance requirements. Students who miss more than 4 hours of class automatically fail the course.

The student should submit a written request to [ces.info@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:ces.info@maastrichtuniversity.nl) within 3 days after the missed meeting. The CES Examination Committee will decide upon the validity of the reasons given. **Please note that travelling is not a valid reason for missing a class.** The CES professor determines the nature and volume of the assignment, which will be proportional to the number of meetings missed and the topics discussed. Make up assignments related to missed field trips might require students to do the excursion independently and at their own expense. The assignment must be completed and submitted to the CES programme coordinator via email within 10 working days.

The responsible CES professor will grade the make-up assignment with a pass or fail. Students who receive a pass for the make-up assignment will have met the attendance requirement. No final grade can be awarded for courses in which students have not met the attendance requirement. This will result in a 'No Grade (NG)' on the transcript. An NG automatically constitutes a fail and no credit is awarded.



## Field trips

The field trips are an intrinsic part of the course and attendance is therefore mandatory – please note that individual travel plans that might clash with the excursion are not a valid reason for missing the trips!

# Literature

## Main literature

An assigned reading list will be available for each class.

Several chapters from the following basic book will be used during this course:

Costanzo, M., & Krauss, D. (2012). Forensic and legal psychology. Psychological science applied to law. New York: Worth Publishers.

The coordinators will indicate which chapters of the books are relevant for which task. Additionally, a list of pdf-files/e-readers is offered on Reference List (<http://referencelist.library.maastrichtuniversity.nl/>). Some of these readings provide a theoretical background for the problems discussed; others readings are a selection of examples of experiments and cases in the field of Forensic Psychology. Browse smartly through the example-readings offered and concentrate on those that help you answer the learning goals. Furthermore, links to interesting newspaper articles, and documentaries will be made available. Students can of course also look for additional literature but this is not required.

# Overview of Classes

## General overview of topics per meeting

Below you will find an overview of the topics that will be addressed during each meeting and selection of and the accompanying literature. Additionally, info about the guest speakers is available on page 11.

## Topics per meeting

### Tutorial 1: Mental Illness and Crime

The aim of this topic is to provide an overview of the prevalence and the type of mental illnesses one can encounter in a forensic setting. Additionally, we will examine to what extent mental disorders confer a greater risk of violent behaviour.

### Guest Lecture 1: Insanity Defense: A Comparative Perspective I

During this lecture, you will learn about comparative criminal law and investigate criminal liability in relation to the insanity defense.

### Guest Lecture 2: Neuroscience and the Law

Therein we will examine why and when neuroscience may be useful to law and the problems with the use of brain scans in the court.

### Tutorial 2: Sex Offenders

The goal of this session is to familiarize students with the topic of sex offenders. We will deal with question such as what are different types of sex offenders? Are they dangerous? Do current sex offender legislations make the public safer?

### Guest Lecture 3: Insanity Defense: A Comparative Perspective II

During this follow up lecture, you will be familiarized more in-depth with the insanity defense and its legal embedding in various countries.

### Workshop 1: False Memories

Students will be introduced to the concept of false memories and how false memories can lead to false accusation of sexual misconduct. Additionally, we will investigate the role of therapy on the creation of false memories.

### Guest Lecture 4: Bias in Forensic Speech Analysis

Students will learn about the effects of biases and context information on forensic experts' analyses and interpretation of results and how these can be avoided.

### Tutorial 3: Cognitive Biases in the Legal Arena

With this topic we aim to provide a glimpse of various biases that may undermine the quality of expert witnesses' and judges' decisions.

### Workshop 2: Deception Detection

We will attempt to debunk some of the popular myths about the ability of people to detect deception and we will look at promising methods such as the verbal credibility assessment methods.

### Tutorial 4 and Lecture 5: Eyewitness Identification

Under this topic, we will address factors that could lead to inaccurate identification decisions such as the cross-race bias and problems with the construction and the administration of line-ups, such as post-identification feedback.

## List of Potential Guest Speakers

### Prof. Dr. David Roef

Dr. David Roef is an extraordinary professor of Criminal Law and Neuroscience at Maastricht University. He is frequently involved in (comparative) legal research related to environmental criminal law, corruption and criminal liability of legal entities. He currently lectures in subjects including comparative criminal law, legal philosophy, neurolaw and criminal policy.



### Dr. Glynis Bogaard

Dr. Bogaard is a Lecturer at the section of Forensic Psychology at Maastricht University. Her expertise is in lie detection techniques and more specifically in verbal credibility assessment methods. During this course, she will provide a workshop about how to detect deception by assessing the content of written statements.



### Dr. Maartje Schreuder

Dr. Schreuder is a Forensic linguistics, speech and audio researcher at The Maastricht Forensic Institute and at Maastricht University. Her research focuses on forensic case work in the fields of speaker identification, intelligibility enhancement of audio recordings, authenticity and integrity of audio recordings, linguistic text analysis, and auditory confrontation for earwitnesses. During this course, Dr. Schreuder will give a lecture about the challenging work of a forensic linguist and she will explain some of common pitfalls and biases in this line of work.



### Prof. Dr. Marko Jelacic

Dr. Marko Jelacic is a professor of Neuropsychology and Law at Maastricht University. Prof. Jelacic is particularly interested in the interface between neuropsychology and criminal law. His expertise covers the following domains: flashbulb memories, brain scans evidence, witnesses with brain scan abnormalities, and suspects who feign neuropsychological disorders. During this course, Prof. Jelacic will give a lecture about the challenges of using brain scans in courts.



### Prof. Dr. Henry Otgaar

Dr. Henry Otgaar is an Associate Professor at the section Forensic Psychology and a Professor at the Leuven Institute of Criminology (KU Leuven). His research concentrates on developmental changes in memory from childhood to adulthood and in factors that relate to the development of memory illusions. During this course, Dr. Otgaar will give a workshop on false memories and the role of therapy in the creation of false memories.

