

Psychology 860
Forensic Assessment I
3 Credit Hours
Fall, 2007

Location: Psychological Services Center

Time: Monday, 6-9

Instructor:

Mary Alice Conroy, Ph.D., ABPP

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Hours: 8-9 MTTh

Required Books

Melton, G. B., Petrila, J., Poythress, N. G., Slobogin, C., Lyons, P. M., Otto, R. K.
(2007). *Psychological evaluations for the courts: A handbook for mental health
professionals and lawyers* (3rd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.

Course Description

The course is designed to introduce students to the literature on forensic assessment and the methods utilized in this endeavor. Ethics in forensic evaluation and the dilemmas encountered in dealing with the diverse criminal population are emphasized throughout the course. Students have the opportunity to observe and participate in actual forensic evaluations.

Course Objectives

1. To differentiate forensic assessment from other types of clinical evaluations and practice the thought processes necessary to this endeavor.
2. To provide an overview of the literature regarding forensic assessment, with special emphasis on assessments in the context of a diverse criminal population.
3. To familiarize students with specialty instruments utilized in forensic assessment.
4. To acquaint students with research methodology and problems unique to forensic assessment.
5. To prepare students to participate in criminal forensic assessments during practicum assignments and to consult with attorneys and the courts.

6. To analyze ethical dilemmas common to the forensic arena.

Schedule

The schedule outlined below is tentative and provided to assist you in planning your reading. Topics do not always fit neatly into 3 hour blocks, and the pace may be slowed or accelerated depending upon class response. You are strongly encouraged to begin reading immediately, as class sessions will be of limited value if you have not first read the material.

- Aug 27 What differentiates a forensic assessment? What competencies/credentials are needed?

Readings:

- Heilbrun, K., Marczyk, G., DeMatteo, D., & Mack-Allen, J. (2007). A principles-based approach to forensic mental health assessment: Utility and update. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.) *Forensic psychology: Emerging topics and expanding roles* (pp. 45-72), NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Heilbrun, K., Warren, J., & Picarello, K. (2003). Third party information in forensic assessment. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 69-86), NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Goldstein, A. (2003). Overview of forensic psychology. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 3-20), NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Grisso, T. (2003). *Evaluating competencies: Forensic assessments and instruments* (2nd ed.) (pp. 21-40). NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Krauss, D. A., & Sales, B. D. (2003). Forensic psychology, public policy, and the law. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 543-560), NY: John Wiley & Sons.

- Sept. 10-Sept. 17 Role of psychodiagnostics: Including analysis of psychological testing and assessment of malingering

Readings:

- Archer, R. P., Stredny, R. V., & Zoby, M. (2006). Introduction to forensic uses of clinical assessment instruments. In R. P. Archer (Ed.), *Forensic uses of clinical assessment instruments* (pp. 1-18). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Borum, R., & Grisso, T. (1995). Psychological test use in criminal forensic evaluations. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 26, 465-473.
- Erickson, S. K., Lilienfeld, S. O., & Vitacco, M. J. (2007). A critical examination of the suitability and limitations of psychological tests in family court. *Family Court Review*, 45(2), 157-174.
- Heilbrun, K. (1992). The role of psychological testing in forensic assessment. *Law and Human Behavior*, 16, 257-272.
- Greenberg, S. A., Shuman, D. A., & Meyer, R. G. (2004). Unmasking forensic diagnosis. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 27, 1-15.
- Grisso, T. (2003). *Evaluating competencies: Forensic assessments and instruments* (2nd ed.) (pp. 461-482). NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Resnick, P. J. (1997). Malingered psychosis. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *Clinical assessment of malingering and deception* (pp. 47-67). New York: Guilford Press.
- Rogers, R. (2003). Evaluation of malingering and deception. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 109-129). NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Sept. 24

Report writing/record keeping

Readings:

- Bush, S. S., Connell, M. A., & Denney, R. L. (2006). *Ethical practice in forensic psychology: A systematic model for decision making* (pp. 59-89). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Heilbrun, K. (2001). *Principles of forensic mental health assessment* (pp. 241-253). NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Weiner, I. B. (2006). Writing forensic reports. In I. B. Weiner & A. K. Hess (Eds.), *The handbook of forensic psychology* (3rd ed.) (pp. 631-651). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Oct. 1-Oct. 8 Evaluating criminal competencies

Readings:

Melton et al. Chs. 6 & 7

Bonnie, R. (1992). The competence of criminal defendants. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 10, 291-316.

Felthous, A. R. (Ed.). (2003). Competence to stand trial [Special issue]. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 21(3).

Grisso, T. (2003). *Evaluating competencies: Forensic assessments and instruments* (2nd ed.) (pp. 69-148). NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Notsinger, S. G. (2001). Restoration of competency practice guidelines. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 45(3), 356-362.

Skeem, J. L., & Golding, S. L. (1998). Community examiners' evaluations of competence to stand trial: Common problems and suggestions for improvement. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 29, 357-367.

Skeem, J. L., Golding, S. L., Cohn, N. B., & Berge, G. (1998). Logic and reliability of evaluations of competence to stand trial. *Law and Human Behavior*, 22, 519-547.

Siegel, A. M., & Elwork, A. (1990). Treating incompetence to stand trial. *Law and Human Behavior*, 14, 57-65.

Oct. 15-Oct. 22 Mental state at the time of the crime

Readings:

Melton et al. Ch. 8

Goldstein, A. M., Morse, S. J., & Shapiro, D. L. (2003). Evaluation of criminal responsibility. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 381-406). NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Slovenko, R. (1999). The mental disability requirement in the insanity defense. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 17*, 165-180.

Zapf, P. A., Golding, S. L., & Roesch, R. (2006). Criminal responsibility and the insanity defense. In I. B. Weiner & A. K. Hess (Eds.), *The handbook of forensic psychology* (3rd ed.) (pp. 332-363). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Oct. 29-Nov. 5 Risk assessment

Readings:

Banks, S., Robbins, P. C., & Silver, E. (2004). A multiple models approach to violence risk assessment among people with mental disorders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 31*, 324-340.

Claussen-Schultz, A. M., Pearce, M.W., & Schopp, R. F. (2004). Dangerousness, risk assessment, and capital sentencing. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 10*, 471-491.

Conroy, M. A. (2003). Evaluation of sexual predators. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 463-484). NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Douglas, K. S., & Webster, C. D. (1999). Predicting violence in mentally and personality disordered individuals. In R. Roesch, S. D. Hart, & J. R. P. Ogloff (Eds.), *Psychology and law: The state of the discipline* (pp. 175-239). NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Heilbrun, K. (1997). Prediction versus management models relevant to risk assessment: The importance of legal decision-making context. *Law and Human Behavior, 21*, 347-359.

Litwack, T. R. (2001). Actuarial versus clinical assessments of dangerousness. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 7*, 409-443.

Monahan, J. (2003). Violence risk assessment. . In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 463-484). NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Quinsey, V. L., Harris, G. T., Rice, M. E., & Cormier, C. A. (2006). *Violent offenders: Appraising and managing risk* (Chs. 8-9). Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association.

Rogers, R. (2000). The uncritical acceptance of risk assessment in forensic practice. *Law and Human Behavior*, *24*, 595-605.

Nov. 12-19

Sentencing/the death penalty

Readings:

Melton et al. Ch. 9

Ackerson, K. S., Brodsky, S. L., & Zapf, P. A. (2005). Judges' and psychologists' assessments of legal and clinical factors in competence for execution. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, *11*, 164-193.

Bonnie, R. J. (1990). Dilemmas in administering the death penalty: conscientious abstention, professional ethics, and the needs of the legal system. *Law and Human Behavior*, *14*, 67-90.

Cunningham, M. D. (2006). Dangerousness and death: A nexus in search of science and reason. *American Psychologist*, *61*, 827-839.

Cunningham, M. D. (2006). Informed consent in capital sentencing evaluations: Targets and content. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *37*, 452-459.

Cunningham, M. D., Reidy, T. J., & Sorenson, J. R. (2005). Is Death Row obsolete? A decade of mainstreaming death-sentenced inmates in Missouri. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, *23*, 307-320.

Cunningham, M. D., & Goldstein, A. M. (2003). Sentencing determinations in death penalty cases. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 407-436). NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Cunningham, M. D., & Reidy, T. J. (1998). Integrating base rate data in violence risk assessments at capital sentencing. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, *16*, 71-95.

- Cunningham, M. D., & Reidy, T. J. (2001). A matter of life or death: Special considerations and heightened practice standards in capital sentencing evaluations. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law, 19*, 473-490.
- Dekleva, K. B. (2001). Psychiatric expertise in the sentencing phase of capital murder cases. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law, 29*, 58-67.
- Foot, P. (1990). Participation by forensic psychiatrists in capital trials. In R. Rosner & R. Weinstock (Eds.), *Ethical practice in psychiatry and law: Critical issues in American psychiatry and the law* (pp. 207-217). NY: Plenum Press.

Nov. 26

Trial Consultation

- Drogin, E. Y., & Barrett, C. L. (2007). Off the witness stand: The forensic psychologist as consultant. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.) *Forensic psychology: Emerging topics and expanding roles* (pp. 465-488), NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gottlieb, M. C. (2000). Consulting and collaborating with attorneys. In F. W. Kaslow (Ed.), *Handbook of couple and family forensics: A sourcebook for mental health and legal professionals* (pp. 491-506). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Posey, A. M., & Wrightsman, L. S. (2005). *Trial consulting* (pp. 157-212). NY: Oxford University Press.

Dec. 3

Ethical Dilemmas in Forensic Assessment

Melton et al., Ch. 4

- Appelbaum, P. S. (1987). In the wake of *Ake*: The ethics of expert testimony in an advocate's world. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, 15*, 15-25.
- Bush, S. S., Connell, M. A., & Denney, R. L. (2006). *Ethical practice in forensic psychology: A systematic model for decision making*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Brakel, S. J., Goldstein, D. S., & Wilson, R. M. (2004). The independent lawyer consultation: A practicum of ethics for the forensic mental health expert. *Journal of Psychiatry and Law, 32*, 169-189.

- Faust, D. (1993). Use and then prove, or prove and then use? Some thoughts on the ethics of mental health professionals' courtroom involvement. *Ethics and Behavior*, 3, 359-380.
- Golding, S. L. (1990). Mental health professionals and the courts: The ethics of expertise. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 13, 281-307.
- Hess, A. K. (1999). Practicing principled forensic psychology: Legal, ethical and moral considerations. In A. K. Hess & I. B. Weiner (Eds.), *The handbook of forensic psychology* (2nd ed.) (pp. 673-699). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ogloff, J. R. P. (1999). Ethical and legal contours of forensic psychology. In R. Roesch, S. D. Hart, and J. R. P. Ogloff (Eds.) *Psychology and law: The state of the discipline* (pp. 403-422). NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Shapiro, D. L. (1999). *Criminal responsibility evaluations: A manual for practice* (pp. 9-28). Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press.
- Weissman, H. N., & DeBow, D. M. (2003). Ethical principles and professional competencies. In A. M. Goldstein (Ed.), *Handbook of psychology, volume 11, forensic psychology* (pp. 33-53). NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Dec. 10

FINAL

Attendance Policy

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected. SHSU policy is that no student will be penalized for three or fewer hours of absence. However, a major portion of the learning objectives will be met through class discussion.

Course Requirements and Grading

1. 30% of your grade will be based on a research paper to investigate some area of forensic assessment. The paper for this semester should take the form of a literature review, with the idea that you will revise it, develop hypotheses, and design a research project on the issue for Forensic Assessment II. The paper should be prepared in APA format. The exact topic is your choice; however, to assure it is truly a study of a reasonably circumscribed area of forensic assessment, I would like each student to discuss their topic with me prior to Sept. 28th. The final paper is due Nov.

19th; half a letter grade will be deducted for late papers; papers will not be accepted after Nov. 26th.

2. 30% of your grade will be based on the final examination. It will be essay and will be designed to determine if you have processed the major issues.
3. 30% of your grade will be based upon three reports you will be required to construct based upon video tapes and information provided in class. You will have one week to complete each of these reports.
4. 10% of your grade will be based upon class participation. Class attendance is required and you are expected to come prepared to discuss materials in the assigned reading.
5. Every effort will be made to allow each of you the opportunity to participate in a forensic assessment during the semester. This will prepare you for future practicum work and provide material for future mock trial exercises.

Professionalism

Attendance, punctuality, adherence to ethical standards, and the quality of your interactions with colleagues and supervisors all determine your level of professionalism, which in turn signals your readiness to advance to greater participation in forensic evaluations.

Instructor Evaluations

Each student will be asked to complete two course/instructor evaluation forms toward the end of the semester. One is the IDEA form required by the university; the other is a form created specifically to evaluate classes in the doctoral program. This instructor takes these evaluations very seriously and constructive criticism is appreciated. Changes in class format and techniques are regularly made in response to student comments.

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism collusion, or abuse of resources. During this course you will be involved in forensic evaluations and be privy to very sensitive material. Careful compliance with all ethical standards pertaining to confidentiality is essential. Substantiation of any unethical

conduct would result in a failing grade.

Americans with Disabilities Act

It is the policy of SHSU that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with the instructor so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I may best help you. All disclosures of disabilities are kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a)(2) defines religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code. . . .” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after that absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and the instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to the instructor a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will negotiate with the student how any missed work can be achieved.

Visitors in the Classroom

Given the highly confidential and sensitive materials discussed in class, visitors not assigned to the Psychological Services Center and/or registered for the class will not be allowed.

Required Supplies

Students are required to purchase the course text book.

Classroom Rules of Conduct

To avoid disruption, all students are expected to appear for class in a timely manner. All cell phones, pagers, etc. should be turned off during class.