



LAW 402: PSYCHOLOGY AND LAW

Fall, 2024 (4 units)

Wednesdays, 4:00-7:20 p.m. (WPH B27)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

- **Instructor:** Rakel P. Larson, Ph.D.
- **Email:** rlarson@law.usc.edu
- **Office Hours:** Mondays, 1:00-2:00 p.m. (online) and by appointment
 - Office hours will be held remotely on USC Zoom.
 - USC Zoom can be found under "Course Tools" in Brightspace.

COURSE MATERIALS

Readings: The following is a required textbook for the course:

Costanzo, M., & Krauss, D. (2020). *Forensic and legal psychology: Psychological science applied to law* (4th edition). New York, NY: Worth Publishers. ISBN: 978-1319244880

There will also be supplementary readings assigned throughout the semester. The readings may also include articles from scientific journals, book chapters, court rulings, or current event news articles. We will discuss seminal papers, current debates within the field, and relevant case studies.

Website: All course materials including announcements, the syllabus, readings, lecture slides, and exams will be available on Brightspace. You can log into the Brightspace website by going to <https://brightspace.usc.edu>.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to LAW 402! I am excited to have each of you in this course. At the outset of the semester, I want you to know that I am rooting for your success in this class and am here to help you reach your individual goals! Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns throughout the semester. I am here to help you.

This course examines psychological theory and empirical research as it relates to the law. Policies, procedures, and practices within the criminal justice system will be evaluated using an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on perspectives from cognitive, developmental, social, and clinical psychology. Particular attention will be paid to the experiences of witnesses, victims, and offenders as illustrated through real-world case studies. The role of psychologists in each stage of the legal process will be highlighted. This course explores issues of responsibility and credibility, intentional and unintentional behavior, and clinical biases. Topics include police-community relations, witness credibility, confessions, cults, hostages, battered persons, and repressed memories.



Diversity and Inclusion Statement. Dr. Linden and Dr. Wright from Brown University wrote an important diversity and inclusion statement that I do not feel I can improve upon, but which I agree with completely. Their thoughts are presented here:

In an ideal world, science would be objective. However, much of science is subjective and is historically built on a small subset of privileged voices. In this class, we will make an effort to read papers from a diverse group of scientists, but limits still exist on this diversity. I acknowledge that it is possible that there may be both overt and covert biases in the material due to the lens with which it was written, even though the material is primarily of a scientific nature. Integrating a diverse set of experiences is important for a more comprehensive understanding of science. I would like to discuss issues of diversity in psychology as part of the course from time to time. Please contact me if you have any suggestions to improve the quality of the course.

As a participant in course discussions, please honor the diversity of your classmates. Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, experiences, and honors your identities (e.g., race, gender, class, sexuality, age, religion, socioeconomic status, ability, and culture). To help accomplish this, please do not hesitate to talk to me if:

- you have a name and/or set of pronouns that you prefer.
- your performance in class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class. (I want to be a resource for you.)
- something was stated in class that made you uncomfortable and is affecting your participation in class.

Course Objectives:

- Examine policies, procedures, and practices within the criminal justice system using an interdisciplinary approach.
- Evaluate the roles of forensic psychologists in the legal system.
- Critically evaluate psychological theory and research as it relates to the law.

Student Learning Outcomes. By the end of the semester, students will:

- Critically evaluate and debate theories and research in psychology and law.
- Apply evidence-based knowledge to real-world case studies in the field of psychology and law.
- Analyze the literature, current debates, and relevant research in the field of psychology and law.
- Use an interdisciplinary approach to assess human cognition and behavior within a legal context.
- Integrate course concepts by reflecting and writing about research and practice in the field.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Discussion Board Posts. I will post a discussion topic for an assigned week's topic. You will (a) provide an original thought of your own regarding the topic in question (5 points per week), and (b) respond to two other people's posts (5 points per week). Due dates for (a) and (b) are listed on the course syllabus and will be announced on Brightspace. Discussion board posts must be completed in the weeks in which they are assigned and will not be posted in advance. Your comments should be substantive, thoughtful, provide some original insight, or raise questions about the topic raised. Specific instructions for (a) and (b) will be provided on Brightspace. **There will be 11 possible discussion board weeks. You must complete 10 discussion board posts to receive full credit.**



Thus, you may skip one week’s posts and still receive full points for requirement. Discussion board posts will account for **10%** of your final grade.

Essays. There will be two essays in which you will critically evaluate current research in the field. Each paper will be approximately 3-4 pages in length (typed, double spaced, 12-point font) and will be worth **20%** of your final grade (10% each). Essay prompts will be provided and posted on Brightspace.

Midterm Exams. There will be **three midterm exams** in this course. You will know the format of each exam before you take it. Exams will typically be comprised of approximately 40 multiple choice/true false questions and a few short answer questions. They will cover information from lecture (including slides and videos) and reading assignments. A study guide will be provided for the exam. The midterms will account for **45%** of your final grade (15% each).

Final Exam. The final exam will be cumulative. Information regarding the format of the final exam will be announced in class and on Brightspace. The final exam is scheduled for **Wednesday, 12/11**. The final exam will count towards **25%** of your final grade.

Summary of Course Requirements and Grades.

Item	% of Final Grade
Discussion Board Posts	10%
Essays (2)	20% (10% each)
Midterms (3)	45% (15% each)
Final Exam (cumulative)	25%

Class Percentage	Grade*
93%+	A
90 – 92%	A-
87 – 89%	B+
83 – 86%	B
80 – 82%	B-
77 – 79%	C+
73 – 76%	C
70 – 72%	C-
67 – 69%	D+
60 – 66%	D
0 – 59%	F

**Grades will be rounded to the nearest whole number.*

CLASS POLICIES

You are responsible for the standards that apply in this course, including knowing the information in this syllabus (e.g., make-up policy, test dates, grading policies) and course website. Please feel free to ask me questions but be aware that it is your responsibility to earn the points necessary for the grade you desire. I also encourage you to connect with other students in the course to study.

Important Semester Dates. Please keep the following important dates in mind during the semester.

- Last day to add course: Friday, September 13, 2024
- Last day to change to Pass/No Pass: Friday, September 13, 2024
- Last day to drop without a mark of “W” and receive a full refund: Friday, September 13, 2024
- Last day to drop without a mark of “W” on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade: Friday, October 11, 2024



- Last day to drop with a “W”: Friday, November 15, 2024
- Study days: Saturday, December 7 - Tuesday, December 10, 2024
- Final exams: Wednesday, December 11 through Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Missed Assignments. I understand that life happens, and on occasion, you may have trouble making a deadline through no fault of your own. However, it is your responsibility to notify me about any difficulties in turning in your assignments before the due dates. Assignments, discussion board posts, and exams are due on the date listed. You can always turn in assignments early. If you know in advance that you will have difficulty turning in an assignment by the due date for a reason that is not an emergency, please talk to me at least two days before it is due. Proper documentation should be provided to me. **You are allowed to turn in one late assignment (e.g., discussion board) per session without incurring a penalty.** As a reminder, you only need to complete 10 of the 11 discussion boards in the term. Missed assignments should be made up within **five days** of the original due date. **If an emergency occurs that may impact your ability to keep up in the course, please contact me and we work together to come up with an appropriate solution. In short, talk to me. I want you to succeed in this course.**

Make-Up Exams. You should do everything in your power to ensure you take the tests as scheduled. You need to take the final exam as scheduled. Make-up exams will be given only for serious illness, family crises or death, university business, or observance of religious holiday. Proper documentation is required (e.g., a note from a physician). **You must make up the exam within one week of the original test date.**

Academic Integrity. The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct contrasts with the university’s mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form). This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

NOTE: Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Programs is Not Allowed. Except where expressly permitted, all work submitted for this course, including quizzes, discussion boards, and papers, must be completed by you, personally. Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly) to generate text as part of preparing your work is strictly prohibited. Submission or presentation of material generated by AI, including summarizing, paraphrasing, or editing such material, will be considered a violation of academic integrity.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course,



suspension, or even expulsion from the university. For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Contacting Me. Email is the fastest, easiest, and most reliable way to contact me and I strongly encourage you to email me with any questions, concerns, or comments you may have. I check my email often, and will respond within 24 hours (and typically, much sooner). When emailing me, please follow these guidelines:

- The best email to reach me at is the one provided on this syllabus: rlarson@law.usc.edu
- Please put the course number (LAW 402) or "Psych and Law" in the subject heading so that I know the email is from a student and can prioritize responding to it.
- Make sure that your email is signed with your name.
- Feel free to reach out to me again if you have not heard from me.

Contesting Grades. Everyone makes mistakes, including me, so if you feel that I have made an error grading an essay or exam, please discuss the matter with me as soon as possible. If you wish to contest a grade that you have received, you have **one week** from the class it was passed back to contact me and let me know what and why you wish to contest your grade. Your appeal must contain why you think the answer you put was correct (and a better one than the one provided) and should be based on material from lecture or the readings.

Class Disruptions. Please demonstrate the utmost respect for your colleagues and me by ensuring that course disruptions do not occur, such as talking loudly unmuted or playing sound loudly.

Interpersonal Sensitivity. Because the subject matter of this course is sometimes sensitive or controversial, you are asked to **treat each other and the subject matter with respect and sensitivity**. You are further asked to respect other students' right to privacy and confidentiality both inside and outside of the classroom. Please be advised that all discussions will be held in the spirit of acceptance, inclusion, and equity and that all participants are expected to respect each other and differing points of view.

Tips for Doing Well in this Course. It is important for me that you do well in this course. It is strongly recommended that you treat this class like you would a 15-week job that you **have** to have.

- Know the policies of the class. Read and re-read the syllabus on occasion to remind yourself.
- Come to the lecture online. If you are unable to make the meeting time, watch the recording of the lecture.
- Connect with your fellow classmates.
- Testing yourself on the material is a more effective study technique than just reviewing it (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006). Distribute your learning instead of cramming. Get a good night's rest before exams.
- Connect with your fellow classmates.
- Pay attention and think critically.
- Do not miss a test date. Complete and turn in every assignment.



- Keep up to date with the assigned readings from your textbook. Read with a purpose. Make up questions before reading a section in an article. This facilitates later memory retrieval (e.g., Robinson, 1961).
- Ask questions! Make sure to use me as a resource. Ask questions before, after, or during class. See me in office hours and send me emails.
- It is important for me that you do well in this course. Please contact me if you are having any difficulty. Do not wait until it is so late in the semester that there are few to no options left.

Academic Accommodations. If you have any condition or disability that may impact your ability to adhere to the conditions stated in this syllabus and/or carry out the assigned course work, please contact me and/or the USC Office of Disability Services and Programs. They will review your concerns and determine, with you, what accommodations are necessary and appropriate (e.g., extra time, tutoring, notetakers, interpreters, etc.). All information and documentation are completely confidential. *NOTE: Please let me know if you require accommodations before the exam and essay due dates so I can accommodate you.*

USC Office of Disability Services and Programs

Website: <https://dsp.usc.edu/>

Phone: (213) 740-0776

Email: ability@usc.edu

Religious Observance. If you will require academic accommodations for a religious observance, please provide me with a written request to consider a reasonable modification for that observance day at least one week before the date requested. Contact me after class or by individual appointment to discuss the dates. When requesting a makeup quiz, exam, assignment, or activity, state the specific reason for your request and the date(s) on which your religious obligation(s) will conflict with the course calendar requirement.

DISCLAIMERS

This syllabus is meant to be suggestive, not absolute. In other words, it may be flexible. Information, such as the course schedule, is subject to change, and will adapt to the current times we are living in. Any changes will be announced on the course website and through email.

Content warning. Much of the research and literature in psychology and law is founded on criminal cases involving violent crimes against women, children, people of color, and the LGBTQ community. It is important that I tell you this at the outset. Our discussions will sometimes involve discussing terrible crimes and violence in an open manner. A guide for mental support services has been provided below and will be posted on Brightspace.

Also in the interest of full disclosure: As we discuss matters of law, please be advised that I am not an attorney and cannot provide legal assistance or advice regarding legal strategy. I am not licensed to practice law in California or any other state.

Welcome to Psychology and Law! It is a pleasure to have you in the course! 😊



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Many people experience persistent difficult or upsetting feelings at some point in their lives. Support services can also aid overall well-being and learning. Below is a list of resources that you or someone you know may find helpful.

- **USC Counseling and Mental Health** - (213) 740-9355; available 24/7 on call
 - <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/>
 - Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
- **USC Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP)** - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – available 24/7 on call
 - <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault/>
 - Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.
- **USC Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)** - (213) 740-5086 | **Title IX** - (213) 821-8298
 - <https://equity.usc.edu/>; <https://titleix.usc.edu/>
 - Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.
- **USC Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment** - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
 - https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report/
 - Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.
- **USC Student Basic Needs** - basicneeds@usc.edu - basicneeds@usc.edu
 - <https://studentbasicneeds.usc.edu/>
 - Provides resource information to address food, housing, and financial insecurity. The website also has resources for COVID-19 specific needs.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** - 1(800) 273-8255; available 24/7 on call
 - <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
 - Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



- **National Alliance of Mental Health (NAMI)** - 1(800) 950-NAMI; In a crisis, text "NAMI" to 741741
 - <https://www.nami.org/Home>
 - Provides education on mental health and support services.
- **Mental Health Resources for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)**
 - [This is a list of mental health resources specifically designed for the BIPOC community.](#)
- **The Trevor Project** - 1(866) 488-7386; available 24/7 on call. Confidential online instant messaging (see website) and text messaging also available (Text START to 678-678).
 - <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
 - Provides support, crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for LGBTQ+ young people under age 25.
- **Resources for LGBTQ+ Individuals Compiled by GLAAD**
 - <https://www.glaad.org/resourcelist>
- **RAINN - National Sexual Assault Hotline** - 1(800)-656-HOPE(4673); available 24/7 on call for free, confidential service
 - <https://www.rainn.org/>
- **Civil Rights Organizations**
 - <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/civil-rights-organizations>
 - This UCLA website contains links to a variety of civil rights and advocacy organizations.
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** - 1(800) 662-HELP (4357); available 24/7 on call for free, confidential services in English and Spanish
 - <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>
 - Provides support and services for individuals and families dealing with substance abuse issues.
- **Mental Health Resources for Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families**
 - Veteran's Crisis Hotline - available 24/7 on call for free, confidential support - 1(800) 273-8255 and press 1, text to 838255, or chat online at [**VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat).
 - <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/>





LAW 402 (FALL, 2024): TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE*

WK	LECTURE DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	READINGS	EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS	DISCUSSION BOARDS
1	Wed, 8/28	Syllabus	C&K: Ch. 1	--	Discussion Board 1A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 1 (DUE: No later than Sun, 9/1, by 11:59 p.m.)
		Introduction to Psychology and Law; Defining Justice			Discussion Board 1B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 1 (DUE: No later than Tues, 9/3, by 11:59 p.m.)
2	Wed, 9/4	Policing; Police Community-Relations	APA (2020)	--	Discussion Board 2A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 2 (DUE: No later than Sun, 9/8, by 11:59 p.m.)
		Witness Participation	Morgan & Oudekerk (2019, p. 8-9)		Discussion Board 2B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 2 (DUE: No later than Tues, 9/10, by 11:59 p.m.)
3	Wed, 9/11	Eyewitness Memory and Testimony	C&K: Ch. 6	--	No Discussion Board this Week

WK	LECTURE DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	READINGS	EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS	DISCUSSION BOARDS
4	Wed, 9/18	Eyewitness Memory and Testimony (cont.)	Wells et al. (2020)	--	Discussion Board 3A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 4 (DUE: No later than Sun, 9/22, by 11:59 p.m.)
		Forensic Evidence	C&K: Ch. 4		Discussion Board 3B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 4 (DUE: No later than Tues, 9/24, by 11:59 p.m.)
5	Wed, 9/25	MIDTERM 1 (Weeks 1-4)	--		Discussion Board 4A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 5 (DUE: No later than Sun, 9/29, by 11:59 p.m.)
		Children as Victims and Witnesses			Discussion Board 4B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 5 (DUE: No later than Tues, 10/1, by 11:59 p.m.)
6	Wed, 10/2	Repressed and Recovered Memories	C&K: Ch. 7	--	Discussion Board 5A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 6 (DUE: No later than Sun, 10/6, by 11:59 p.m.)
			Case Study: <i>Taus v. Loftus</i> (Corwin & Olafson, 1997)		Discussion Board 5B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 6 (DUE: No later than Tues, 10/8, by 11:59 p.m.)

WK	LECTURE DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	READINGS	EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS	DISCUSSION BOARDS
7	Wed, 10/9 <i>NOTE: Fall Recess – 10/10 and 10/11</i>	Ethics, Therapy, & the Law	Case Study: <i>Tarasoff v. Regents of the Univ. of Calif.</i>	--	Discussion Board 6A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 7 (DUE: No later than Sun, 10/13, by 11:59 p.m.)
		Predicting Dangerousness	C&K: Ch. 15	--	Discussion Board 6B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 7 (DUE: No later than Tues, 10/15, by 11:59 p.m.)
8	Wed, 10/16	MIDTERM 2 (Weeks 5-7)	C&K: Ch. 5	--	No Discussion Board this Week
		Criminal Profiling; Psychopathy			
9	Wed, 10/23	Toxic Relationships; Cults	C&K: Selections from Ch. 11, 13	ESSAY 1 (DUE: No later than Sun, 10/27, by 11:59 p.m.)	Discussion Board 7A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 9 (DUE: No later than Sun, 10/27, by 11:59 p.m.)
					Discussion Board 7B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 9 (DUE: No later than Tues, 10/29, by 11:59 p.m.)

WK	LECTURE DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	READINGS	EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS	DISCUSSION BOARDS
10	Wed, 10/30 	Deception Detection	C&K: Ch. 3	--	Discussion Board 8A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 10 (DUE: No later than Sun, 11/3, by 11:59 p.m.)
					Discussion Board 8B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 10 (DUE: No later than Tues, 11/5, by 11:59 p.m.)
11	Wed, 11/6	Interrogations and Confessions	C&K: Ch. 2; Case Study: <i>California v. Catarino Gonzalez</i>	--	Discussion Board 9A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 11 (DUE: No later than Sun, 11/10, by 11:59 p.m.)
					Discussion Board 9B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 11 (DUE: No later than Tues, 11/12, by 11:59 p.m.)
12	Wed, 11/13	MIDTERM 3 (Weeks 8-11)	C&K: Ch. 8		Discussion Board 10A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 12 (DUE: No later than Sun, 11/17, by 11:59 p.m.)
		Competency to Stand Trial; Insanity Defense	C&K: Ch. 10		Discussion Board 10B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 11 (DUE: No later than Tues, 11/20, by 11:59 p.m.)

WK	LECTURE DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	READINGS	EXAMS AND ASSIGNMENTS	DISCUSSION BOARDS
13	Wed, 11/20	Jury Selection	C&K: Ch. 9	--	Discussion Board 11A: Post your original idea on topic for Week 13 (DUE: No later than Sun, 11/24, by 11:59 p.m.)
		Jury Decision-Making	C&K: Ch. 12		Discussion Board 11B: Responses on colleagues' posts for Week 13 (DUE: No later than Tues, 11/26, by 11:59 p.m.)
14	Wed, 11/27	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY WEEK			RELAX! (No new homework or material is assigned this week.)
					
15	Wed, 12/4	Corrections: Punishment, Recidivism, and Alternatives	C&K - Ch. 16	ESSAY 2: (DUE: No later than Sun, 12/8, by 11:59 p.m.)	No Discussion Board this Week
		Death Penalty	C&K - Ch. 17		
Study Days	Sat, 12/7 - Tues, 12/10	STUDY DAYS			
Final Exam Week	Wed, 12/11	Final Exam (60% material after Midterm 2; 40% cumulative) Location: WPH B27 (same as lecture)			--

**Course schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Brightspace. Supplemental readings will be provided to you.*