

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

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Student drop-in hours: Tuesday & Thursday 12-1pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

The jury is praised by some as an important symbol of democracy, yet sharply criticized by others as incompetent and biased. This course uses a psychological perspective to evaluate claims about the strengths and limitations of the contemporary jury. In this course, we will examine the image of the jury in popular culture, then explore the work of lawyers, legal scholars, psychologists, and other social scientists who have studied the jury in depth. Questions we will address include: What are barriers to jury service? Do juries represent all segments of their communities? Can lawyers stack a jury in their favor? How do jurors use trial evidence and legal rules to decide verdicts, damage awards, or decisions to sentence a defendant to death? Are jurors influenced by the “CSI effect?” What should judges do about jurors’ use of the internet and social media? We will focus on how psychological theories and research can shed light on these issues, how the legal system can be informed by the results of research, and how to design future research to address remaining questions. The research in this field is interdisciplinary, so theories and methods from many subdisciplines of psychology will be featured, but because I am a social psychologist, there will be special emphasis throughout on understanding juries and juror decision making in their social context.

By the end of the semester, you should have acquired:

- Specific knowledge about issues affecting juries and juror decision making,
- The ability to identify legal assumptions that can be addressed through psychological research,
- An understanding of how psychological theory and science can be used to address issues related to juries,
- The ability to think critically and write clearly about research as it relates to juries and psychology and law,
- A deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to your own views and attitudes toward the jury.

Class meetings, reading assignments, individual and group activities, and writing assignments are all designed to meet these course objectives. Because this is a writing-intensive course aimed at providing undergraduate students with specialized knowledge about a particular content area, it is an advanced course that can be completed as a senior Capstone Seminar in fulfillment of the criminal justice major.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. Vidmar, N., & Hans, V. P. (2007). *American juries: The verdict*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
 2. Required readings (empirical, theoretical, and review journal articles and book chapters listed in the course calendar and available on Blackboard under Electronic Reserves)
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COURSE FORMAT, REQUIREMENTS, & GRADING

This course will be conducted as a seminar course. Weekly classes will generally include two parts: (a) discussion of key points from the weekly readings and (b) student presentations. Emphasis will be placed on the preparation and active participation of *all* seminar members during each class. The success of the course will depend, in large part, on student preparation and participation at a level appropriate for senior-level undergraduate students. Class preparation includes completing all readings prior to class and making notes that will prepare you to discuss the main points, theories, methods, and empirical findings from all readings. You should also be prepared to discuss the implications of readings for future psychological research and potential reforms related to juries. The “reaction papers” are assigned to help you achieve the level of preparation necessary to participate in class. If you are unwilling to speak up in class often, you will not do well in this course, and you should drop it.

Your performance in this course will be evaluated based on class participation (20%), reaction papers (20%), the image-of-the-jury assignment (5%), the interview assignment (15%), a special topic presentation (15%), and the grant proposal project (25%). I will not curve any grades and I will not issue extra credit on an individual basis.

CLASS PARTICIPATION = 20%

Class participation means self-motivated, regular, and thoughtful in-class verbal comments and questions that illustrate your mastery of the readings (scientific observations and thoughts, not just unfounded opinions). In each class, you will be expected to demonstrate your ability to think critically about, apply, and reflect on the assigned readings. Class time will be dedicated specifically to reviewing students’ reaction papers and reflecting on discussion and student presentations (see below). Think-pair-share and freewrite activities will be used to facilitate such reflections. Therefore, you *must* read the assigned material prior to class and be ready to discuss it and apply the readings to related issues each week. When reading, you should be thorough and analytical—make sure you understand the authors’ point, critically analyze the method and results of each study, point out contradictions, think about questions for discussion, relate the readings to real-world events, etc. Reading in this way will help you with class participation.

Class participation reflects in-class contributions to discussion and thoughtful reflections on the material covered, not simply class attendance or coming to class on time, which are assumed. However, unexcused absences will be graded as “0.” In addition, late arrivals, early departures, inappropriate technology use, sleeping, etc. will be penalized.

Participation will be graded as A–E. Your best 10 participation grades will be averaged to comprise 20% of your final grade. Please realize that even if you score all possible points on all other assignments (which is unlikely), this is a seminar course and you cannot make higher than a “B-” if you do not participate in class.

REACTION QUESTIONS = 20%

To encourage critical thinking and engagement with the material (not just passive absorption of it), you are required to submit *five* 1- to 2-paged papers that describe and summarize your reactions to the

readings assigned and generate at least two substantive discussion questions. Additional questions are welcome but at least two key points should be raised that seem worthy of discussion for class. These papers should be brief and focused, but with enough detail that they are clear, well developed, and reflect that you have thought critically about the readings. Participating in class would be difficult if you hadn't read and thought about the main points in the articles. These papers are designed to help you do that, and they will also help you gain a deeper understanding of the kinds of issues researchers in this field grapple with and the ways they go about answering their questions. Your questions should be theoretical and conceptual, and focus on the big picture rather than small and specific details. It is expected that you will highlight connections between readings within a given week or across weeks—how do the research findings tie together? I especially encourage you to develop questions that go beyond the readings by considering implications of the readings for future research (do you have a novel research question? a new hypothesis to test?) or policy or law (do the research findings suggest specific policies that should be changed or created?). Please note that these questions should not simply address things that you don't understand in a reading (although you should ask those kinds of questions in class discussions). I recommend that you make notes in the margins of your readings as you read—notes about even your most trivial reactions. When you're done reading, you'll have plenty of thoughts on which to base your questions.

You may choose to write a reaction paper for any 5 of the 11 classes from September 9th to December 2nd. These questions will be used to facilitate class discussion, and as such, they are **due on Blackboard by 1:15pm on the Monday before class**. You should also bring a copy of your questions to class to guide your comments during discussion.

Reaction papers will be graded as A–E based on how thoughtful, well prepared, and well written they are—spelling, grammar, formatting, and quality all count. Note that you may submit more than the required 5 papers, in which case your best 5 grades will be used to compute your final grade. Reaction paper grades will be averaged to comprise 20% of your final grade.

IMAGE-OF-THE-JURY ASSIGNMENT = 6%

Share an example of an image or depiction of the jury. Any jury! Any depiction! It could be a story about an old or new legal case decided by a jury, a favorite scene from a movie or TV show that features the jury, a YouTube video, a blog post rant about juror stupidity, a heartfelt account of a person's experience on jury duty, a research study on jury decision making, etc. Any text depictions (e.g., stories, articles) must be 5 or fewer pages long. Any video depictions must be 5 minutes or less in length.

In addition, submit a brief description (3 to 5 sentences) about what you think the image or depiction you selected says about trial by jury. In class on September 2nd, we will discuss the depictions, and reflect on what the set of images reveals about the cultural significance, values, and challenges of the jury system.

This assignment will be graded as A–E and will comprise 5% of your final grade. It is **due on Blackboard by 10:00am on September 2nd**.

INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT = 15%

As a class, we will develop a core set of questions that you will use to interview a person who has either (a) actively sought to be excused from jury service or (b) served on a jury. You will conduct a short interview of someone matching one of these descriptions, no more than 1 hour in length. Then you must write a 3-page paper summarizing and reflecting on the interview.

This assignment will be graded as A–E and will comprise 15% of your final grade. The core questions will be made available to you by September 9th. You must complete your interview and submit your paper **on Blackboard by 5pm on October 10th**.

SPECIAL TOPIC PRESENTATION = 15%

You will be asked to present a special reading related to one of the topics we will be studying this semester. The goal of this assignment is to reduce the number of readings assigned to the entire class each week while still allowing us to explore unique issues related to the topics at hand. In addition, by presenting a paper to the class, you will benefit from receiving the entire class's constructive feedback and gain excellent preparation and skills for future public presentations.

In the first class meeting, you will be asked for your top 3 choices and then you will be assigned to a topic. In your presentation, you should present a summary of your special reading. You should explain the main points of your reading and discuss how the article is relevant to the assigned readings for the week. If the article describes an empirical study, be sure to summarize the most important predictions, methodology, main findings, and conclusions. If the article is a theoretical piece, state the main premise and basic argument, as well as evidence used to support the thesis. For any article, present a critical analysis of the work (that is, add your own thoughts about the work and how you think it is relevant to the class).

You must submit a typed 1- to 2-page summary of relevant points (e.g., theoretical basis for hypotheses, main study findings) **by email no later than 1:15pm on the Monday before your report**. I will make copies of the summary to distribute to your classmates.

In class, you should deliver your report using PowerPoint. For help on creating a presentation, visit www.actden.com/pp/. Because your presentation should be brief, you should have 5 to 8 slides (not including the title slide). Review your materials carefully—typos and such reflect a lack of professionalism and will negatively impact your grade. The prepared part of the report should last **no more than 10 minutes** (you must practice beforehand so that you do not go over 10 minutes), but the class discussion you generate can last longer. In fact, a goal of the report is to promote discussion, and the very best presentations will encourage this.

In general, the importance of expressing ideas orally is often overlooked in undergraduate training, but it is essential for success in any career you may choose to pursue. Students may be nervous at first about giving oral reports, but after we get comfortable with one another, the presentations will be easier and go quite smoothly. Here are a few guidelines that will be helpful.

- If you don't understand something about your special reading, see me well before your presentation so I can help you.
- Focus on your main points and explain them clearly, assuming your audience knows almost nothing about the topic. You can assume that your classmates have completed the assigned readings but, otherwise, do not assume any prior knowledge on the part of your classmates beyond that. One of the most common mistakes made by unskilled speakers is to assume people understand things you haven't explicitly stated. Give the report as if you were giving it to an 8th grader who has never studied anything about children, psychology, or law. I'm totally serious.
- Don't be nervous. Nervousness usually stems from being ill-prepared, which relates to the next point.
- There is nothing more tedious and even embarrassing than being forced to sit through an ill-prepared presentation. Think about bad presentations you've attended. Make a list of the things that made the presentation horrible, and avoid them all! Make sure your report is concise, accurate, and well-prepared—even over-prepared. I suggest you prepare by writing out every word you plan to say, and

then practicing your presentation several times. Advance preparation, including making sure your presentation is the appropriate length, is key to doing a good job. If you follow these recommendations, you'll find that your presentation will come out almost automatically in class.

- The best reports, and class atmosphere in general, are those given in a relaxed, but professional manner. If you don't want to be interrupted during your presentation, say so. However, it is generally helpful if we can interrupt you to ask questions or make comments.

- Give your presentation from notes rather than from the reading, but do not read from your notes or a "highlighted" version of the article (a sure way to bore us all and get a low grade). Your PowerPoint presentation and handout should be used to help you make the main points of your report. Do not, however, overuse slides—you will probably need no more than 5 to 8. Your slides should consist of only a scaffolding or outline of key points, not a lot of prose, and they should be in BIG font. And handouts are important because they will help your classmates take notes on your presentation. Remember, the rest of the class will be relying on you to convey the information included in the special reading, so you must be an effective teacher.

Grading will be based on the clarity and quality of your report, your ability to respond to classmates' questions and facilitate discussion, etc. Grades will reflect the percentage of points you earn out of 100, and that grade will comprise 15% of your final grade.

GRANT PROPOSAL PROJECT = 25%

You will write a formal grant proposal in which you will propose your own research about an important psychological issue related to juries. This paper is designed to help you formulate questions that are relevant to the field and will both advance the science of psychology and practically improve the jury system. You should clearly propose a research question and a testable hypothesis (a prediction). You must explain how your hypothesis flows from prior theory and research you reviewed in making your argument (why did you make that prediction? why should that result be expected?). You must then include a clear methodological design to test your hypothesis (how will you operationalize your independent and dependent variables? what kind of data should be collected to answer your question? how would you go about collecting it?). Finally, you should describe why your research question is important (why is this issue important? why is the topic worth studying? how can research advance theoretical, empirical, or practical understanding of the phenomenon?). You should propose only one study and develop a clear research plan. A sample grant proposal (one that I wrote and for which I received funding from the American Psychology-Law Society) has been posted on Blackboard for you to use as a model, as well as several guides to writing about research. I recommend you review those materials so you have a clearer idea of what I expect your research proposal to look like.

Your writing should be clear, concise and elegant. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation must be correct and will affect your grade. I recommend that you purchase a copy of *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White and review it. (It's short and inexpensive.) Writing beautifully is a skill that will transcend most other things you learn—its importance cannot be overstated. I hope you'll use this paper as a way to learn to write important things in concise ways.

To help you succeed, there will be several graded steps for this assignment, as described next. You should be sure to follow all directions very carefully.

- 1) You will complete 2 online tutorials on conducting library research and writing **by 4:05pm on September 16th** (worth 2% of your grade). The titles of the tutorials and links to them are listed next. Make sure you complete the "credit" versions of the tutorials and register for credit when you complete them.
 - a. Researching 101

<http://library.albany.edu/usered/tut/index.html>

b. Plagiarism 101

<http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html>

- 2) A **thesis statement** is due **by 1:15pm on September 23rd** (worth 3% of your grade). A thesis statement guide has been posted on Blackboard. Please see the guide for details about what a thesis statement is, how thesis statements work in your writing, and how you can discover or refine one for your draft. You must submit your statement on Blackboard.
- 3) An **annotated bibliography** is due **by 1:15pm on October 17th** (worth 3% of your grade). The annotated bibliography should describe and explain 5 sources you plan to use in writing your paper. An annotated bibliography guide has been posted on Blackboard. Please see the guide for details about how to write an annotated bibliography. You must include your thesis statement at the top of your annotated bibliography and submit it on Blackboard.
- 4) To help you prepare for your essay and receive additional feedback, you will prepare and submit a **detailed outline** by **10:15pm on November 4th** (worth 4% of your grade). Your outline (and, ultimately, your paper) should include:
 - a. A clear statement of your research question
 - b. Discussion of the importance of the question in light of existing psychological and legal literature
 - c. At least one clear hypothesis, supported by prior theory and research
 - d. Discussion of a detailed research plan, including a clearly identified sample, thoughtfully operationalized independent and dependent variables, and a study procedure
 - e. Discussion of the implications and consequences of proposed results

Within your outline, be sure to define concepts, acknowledge assumptions, and clearly reason through your research plan. A good outline not only states the topics that will be included, but it describes the specific information that will be discussed (cites prior literature). Remember, the more detail you include in your outline, the easier it will be to identify any potential holes in your paper (also, you will receive much better feedback from your peers). The time you put into writing a good outline pays off because it makes it much easier to write your actual paper.

You must submit your detailed outline on Blackboard and you must also **bring 2 printed copies to class on November 4th**. You will work with partners to review other students' outlines and receive feedback from those students on your own outline. If you do not attend class on this day, you will receive 0 points on this piece of the project, and you also will miss the opportunity to receive valuable feedback which could help to improve your grade on the final paper.

- 5) The final paper should include (a) a title page indicating the title of the project and your name; (b) an abstract of 100 words or less summarizing the project; (c) the purpose, theoretical rationale, and significance of the project; (d) the methods to be employed; and (e) references. Sections (c) and (d)—the project narrative—should comprise no less than 1200 and no more than 1500 words.

Using the skills you learn in the online tutorials, you must include citations in the text for all of the information you provide. You are allowed to use a maximum of two direct quotations in the paper, and neither can exceed 25 words. All other information must be paraphrased. If there is **any** evidence of plagiarism, you will receive a grade of "0" automatically, with no opportunity to redo the assignment. If you have any questions about paraphrasing or plagiarism, please see me

before you turn in the assignment. Your reference list should include a minimum of 10 scholarly sources, and will not count toward the word limit.

You should use APA Style (<http://www.apastyle.org/>) to format your paper (e.g., use double-spacing, 11- or 12-point font, 1-inch margins, etc.). You should use APA Style to format your paper (e.g., use double-spacing, 11- or 12-point font, 1-inch margins, etc.).

This paper is **due via Blackboard by 4:05pm on November 25th** (worth 10% of your grade).

- 6) **On December 9th**, you will make a short, 3-minute oral presentation about your proposed research (worth 3% of your grade). You should describe the issue at hand, provide a brief overview of why it is an important issue, and then describe your proposed research. Given time limitations, you cannot use visual aids such as PowerPoint, although you may have notes. Please plan on standing up in front of the class and talking for approximately 3 minutes. At the end of the presentations, students will vote on who made the most persuasive case for their research proposal. Your grade on this portion of the assignment will be based on your completion of the presentation and the ratings you receive on your own research proposal.

If you have questions at any point about this assignment, please ask them during class—other students may have the same questions.

GRADING SUMMARY AND SCALE

Decimal values of .5 and above will be rounded up, and all other decimal values will be rounded down.

<u>Domain</u>	<u>% Possible</u>	<u>Total % Earned</u>	<u>Letter Grade Assigned</u>
Class participation	20%	94-100	A
Reaction papers	20%	90-93	A-
Image-of-the-jury assignment	5%	88-89	B+
Interview assignment	15%	84-87	B
Special topic presentation	15%	80-83	B-
Grant proposal project	25%	78-79	C+
<u>Total</u>	<u>100%</u>	74-77	C
		70-73	C-
		60-69	D
		< 60	E

COURSE EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

ASSIGNED READINGS: Come to class having completed the assigned readings. Most class time will be devoted to discussing course material thoughtfully. If you do not complete the assigned readings before class, you will not be able to complete your reaction papers or participate in class discussions and reflections effectively, and you will not do well in this course.

ATTENDANCE AND MAKE-UP WORK: You must attend class regularly to pass this course. Participation will be assessed in every class meeting and it will constitute a significant portion of your final grade, as detailed previously. Students who add the course late will be held responsible for all assignments (i.e., grades for work missed will be “0” regardless of whether it was due prior to or after adding the course). It is your responsibility to identify any scheduling conflicts that may interfere with your ability to attend class or complete coursework now. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to ask another student for notes. Please refrain from alerting me to the reasons you will not be in class unless you have a serious illness or other very special circumstances.

All assignments must be submitted electronically via Blackboard—do not let technical difficulties prevent you from getting them in on time (i.e., don't wait until the last minute to submit your work as the submission sites will close at specified due dates and times). Late work will not be accepted nor will make-up work be permitted except in the event of *documented* medical or family emergencies. In that case, at the end of the semester (i.e., **no earlier than November 18th and no later than December 9th**) you may request to complete a writing assignment to make up the work you missed *only if there is a chance that completing the work will actually increase your final letter grade*.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I do not tolerate cheating or other forms of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, or using written material from others, including peers or the Internet, for papers; etc.). If I become aware that you have cheated, I will give you a “0” grade on the assignment. I may also give you a failing grade for the course and/or to refer you to the University for further disciplinary action.

RESPECT & COURTESY: I will conduct this class in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I encourage your active participation in class discussions. We may discuss sensitive topics and each of us may have strongly differing opinions on some topics. The conflict of ideas is encouraged and welcome. The orderly questioning of others' ideas, including mine, is similarly welcome. I will, however, exercise my responsibility to manage the discussions so they can proceed in an orderly fashion. The ground rules for class discussions are these: (1) treat others' opinions with respect and courtesy, (2) maintain confidentiality of experiences shared by class members, (3) don't monopolize discussion, and (4) attack ideas rather than people. If your conduct during discussions disrupts the atmosphere of mutual respect I expect in this class, you will not be permitted to participate further. You should also refrain from telling things that are too personal, and exercise your right not to share your thoughts and ideas if you are uncomfortable talking about something.

Please turn off cell phones before coming to class. Talking to each other, talking on cell phones, texting, instant messaging, social networking, browsing the Internet, etc. are prohibited. If I see this behavior, it will negatively impact your class participation grade and I reserve the right to ask you to leave the class that day.

Please arrive to class on time, and avoid leaving in the middle of class or before class is over. Such interruptions are very distracting to me and other students and, if frequent, will not be accepted (i.e., I will ask you to leave the class that day).

BLACKBOARD: I will post course materials (e.g., this syllabus, course readings) and grades on Blackboard. Although I may use Blackboard to communicate with you, I anticipate making most announcements in class.

EMAIL: When considering emailing me, please first try to find the answers to your questions in this syllabus and on Blackboard. If you still need to email me, *please include the course number and your real name in the subject line of your email*. Make sure that any emails you send to me are professional. If you have questions about how to write a professional email, please see these links:

<http://grammar.about.com/od/developingessays/a/profemails.htm>

http://www.ehow.com/how_4679819_write-professional-email.html

In general, you can expect a reply from me within 3 days. If I cannot respond to your email within 3 days, you will receive an automatic reply explaining when I will be able to respond. Please be aware that, under some circumstances, you might be able to get answers sooner by visiting me during student drop-in hours. I also reserve the right to request an appointment with you to discuss your

questions rather than answer them by email. Please note that I will never participate in an email discussion about why a particular grade was given.

SYLLABUS: This syllabus is designed to be a resource for you to use throughout the semester. However, I reserve the right to modify assignments and dates throughout the course. Any such modifications will be announced in class. Otherwise, it is your responsibility to keep up with course deadlines, as well as university deadlines for registering, dropping the course, etc., and to know whether you need to meet with me to discuss something before deadlines approach.

RECOMMENDATION LETTERS: I will not write a recommendation letter for you unless we have met outside of class enough for me to have something substantial to comment on. I welcome you to drop by my office to chat about interesting material, current events, or your future plans.

ACCOMMODATIONS: If you have a disability and require accommodations, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide me with verification of your disability, and recommend appropriate accommodations.
