

San José State University
College of Social Sciences / Psychology Department
PSYC 153-80, Psychology in the Courtroom, Fall, 2026

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Alen Yaghoubi, Ph.D.
Office Location:	Online - via Virtual Platform
Telephone:	None, email preferred
Email:	alen.yaghoubi@sjsu.edu (respond within 24-48 hours)
Office Hours:	By appointment
Class Days/Time:	Online Only - Asynchronous
Classroom:	Online Only - Asynchronous
Prerequisites:	PSYC 001

Canvas: SJSU Course Management

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on Canvas learning management system course website. You are responsible for regularly checking the Canvas course shell to learn of any updates.

Course Description

Role of psychology in the legal system: legal procedure and adversary system, jury selection, jury decision-making, eyewitness testimony, mental health law, criminal responsibility and legal insanity, expert psychological testimony, role of forensic psychologists.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to understand and explain:

CLO1 – The basics of the practice and science of psychology in a forensic setting;

CLO2 – The basics of how the court system functions;

CLO3 – Usual forensic issues that a forensic psychologist assesses and testifies about;

CLO4 – Various controversies that are related to the use of expert witnesses in the court system and apply critical thinking to such controversies.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of the psychology major requirements:

PLO1 – Knowledge Base of Psychology – Students will be able to identify, describe, and communicate the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.

PLO2 – Research Methods in Psychology – Students will be able to design, implement, and communicate basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretations.

PLO3 – Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology – Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and a scientific approach to address issues related to behavior and mental processes.

PLO4 – Application of Psychology – Students will be able to apply psychological principles to individual, interpersonal, group, and societal issues.

PLO5 – Values in Psychology – Students will value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and recognize their role and responsibility as a member of society.

Required Texts/Readings Textbook

Bartol, C. R., & Bartol, A. M. (2021). *Introduction to forensic psychology: Research and application* (6th ed.). ISBN: 9781071815342

Library Liaison

San José State University Library (408) 924-2823, <http://library.sjsu.edu>

Lauren DeCelle, Reference Librarian and Liaison for the Psychology Department lauren.decelle@sjsu.edu, (408) 808-2422

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

****For all assignments:**

- **More information and detailed grading guidelines are posted on Canvas.**
- **APA 7th edition formatting is required for all coursework** (double spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt Times New Roman font). Outside sources should be scholarly and should be cited in accordance with APA 7th edition requirements.

Class Participation (30 points)

According to University policy F69-24, "Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading."

Throughout the course, students will have to engage in **five Discussions** on Canvas, worth six **(6)** points each. Students are expected to have completed reading and homework assignments before each class to be able to discuss course content.

Quizzes (3 x 10 points = 30 points)

You will have three quizzes throughout the semester to test your knowledge on various forensic psychological concepts, principles, and facts. Quizzes will comprise of questions from, but not limited to, lectures, textbook, and the documentary.

Midterm Exam: Paper Tigers Documentary (15 points)

As part of the course requirements, students will complete a midterm examination based on the

documentary Paper Tigers. This film explores trauma-informed approaches to education, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and the intersection of psychology, behavior, and institutional systems.

Students are expected to:

- View the documentary in its entirety.
- Demonstrate understanding of key psychological concepts presented (e.g., trauma, stress response, attachment, resilience).
- Critically analyze how these concepts are applied within the school setting depicted in the film.
- Integrate course readings, lectures, and terminology when responding to exam questions.
- Reflect on ethical, clinical, and systemic implications relevant to applied psychology and counseling practice.

Final Exam (25 points)

The final exam will *not* be comprehensive, but rather will focus on the last four chapters in the textbook.

Assignment	CLOs	Due Dates	Points / Percentage of Grade	Your Points
Discussion/Participation (Canvas)	CLOs 1, 2, 3,	8/27, 9/17, 10/29, 11/12, & 11/19	30 / 30%	
Quizzes	CLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	9/18, 10/09, & 11/6	3 x 10 = 30 / 30%	
Midterm Exam	CLO 4, 5, 6, 7	10/23	15 / 15%	
Final Exam	CLOs, 2, 4, 6, 7	12/4	25 / 25%	
Total			100 / 100%	

Grading Policy:

A+ = 100-97%	A = 96-93%	A- = 92-90%
B+ = 89-87%	B = 86-83%	B- = 82-80%
C+ = 79-77%	C = 76-73%	C- = 72-70%
D+ = 69-67%	D = 66-63%	D- = 62-60%
F = 59-0% Unsatisfactory		

Note: A minimum aggregate 3.0 GPA is required to maintain satisfactory status as a graduate student within the department and university.

Note: “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See University [Policy F13-1](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf> for more details.

Note: No late assignments will be accepted. Exceptions can be made with instructor approval.

Classroom Protocol

Active participation and positive engagement are essential to the quality of the course. You are expected to review all lectures on time and actively engage in class discussions and exercises relevant to the course content. You are also expected to listen attentively to your classmates’ ideas and provide constructive feedback when appropriate.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

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The schedule is subject to change with fair notice and such changes will be announced via email.

Course Schedule:

Week	Date	Topics	Readings	Assignments	Due Date
PART I – INTRODUCTION					
1	8/24	• Introduction & Review Syllabus	Syllabus	(1) Week 1 Discussion on Canvas	Thursday, 8/27, by 11:59p
2	8/31	• Introduction to Forensic Psychology	Ch. 1	None	None
PART II – POLICE AND INVESTIGATIVE PSYCHOLOGY					
3	9/7	• Police and Public Safety Psychology	Ch. 2	None	None
4	9/14	• Psychology of Investigations	Ch. 3	(2) Week 4 Discussion on Canvas	Thursday, 9/17, by 11:59p
				Quiz 1	Friday, 9/18 by 11:59p
PART III – LEGAL PSYCHOLOGY					
5	9/21	• Consulting and Testifying	Ch. 4	None	None
6	9/28	• Consulting with Criminal Courts	Ch. 5	None	None
7	10/5	• Family Law and Other Forms of Civil Litigation	Ch. 6	Quiz 2	Friday, 10/09 by 11:59p
PART IV – CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY					
8	10/12	• The Development of Delinquent and Criminal Behavior	Ch. 7	None	None

9	10/19	• Paper Tigers Documentary	No Reading	Midterm Exam	Friday, 10/23, by 11:59p
10	10/26	• Psychology of Violence and Intimidation	Ch. 8	(3) Week 10 Discussion on Canvas	Thursday, 10/29, by 11:59p
11	11/2	• Psychology of Sexual Violence	Ch. 9	Quiz 3	Friday, 11/6, by 11:59p
12	11/09	• Forensic Psychology & the Victims of Crime	Ch. 10	(4) Week 12 Discussion on Canvas	Thursday, 11/12, by 11:59p
PART V – VICTIMOLOGY AND VICTIM SERVICES					
13	11/16	• Family Violence & Child Victimization	Ch. 11	(5) Week 13 Discussion on Canvas	Thursday, 11/19, by 11:59p
14	11/23	• Correctional Psychology in Adult Settings	Ch. 12	None	None
PART VI – CORRECTIONAL PSYCHOLOGY					
15	11/30	• Juvenile Justice & Corrections	Ch. 13	Final Exam	Friday, 12/4, by 11:59p