Psy 1566: Social Psychology in the Legal Process  
Spring 2001  
Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00, Location: Vanserg 28  
Instructor: Dr. Sharon Kramer  
kramer@wjh.harvard.edu, 496-3346, 1480 WJH, Office hours: Thursdays, 2-4.

Overview: This course examines the relevance of social psychology to certain aspects of the American legal process. Topics include jury decision-making, reliability and credibility of eyewitness testimony, the impact of nonverbal behavior in the courtroom, and the social psychology of false confessions. Both theoretical and applied issues of social psychology and law are considered. The course focuses on criminal trials but will touch on civil trials as well.

Prerequisite: Psy 15 or similar

Course Website: http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~psy1566/

Course Requirements:
- Readings: Students will be expected to read the weekly required readings and to post their reactions to the readings to the "discussion" section of the course website by noon on Monday of the given week. These reactions will be the jumping-off point for our class discussions.
- Presentations: Each student will be part of a small group (3 or 4 students) that will be responsible for leading the class presentation/discussion on one topic. Discussion leaders from that week are also required to read an additional reading from that topic's additional reading list. Students are invited to bring in visual or media materials and/or to use the classroom for mini-experiments and demonstrations to enliven the discussion.
- Paper: Each student is required to write a final paper, 10-20 pages in length, expanding on an area covered in class or on another relevant topic. Possible approaches to the paper include: a critique of the research in a given area; a critique of an existing legal practice or procedure based on social psychological theory; an analysis of a real case, ongoing or past; or a proposal for a research study. The paper should not simply be a review paper. By April 10, each student must submit a one-page outline of his or her proposed paper topic. Students are invited and encouraged to meet with me to discuss their paper topics. Paper is due May 14.

Textbook/Course Packet: There is one assigned text for the course and a required reading packet.


Course packet: available at Gnomon copy.
February 6 - Introduction  
Overview of the legal system. Why psychology and law? What can psychology contribute to law?

Required Readings:
Wrightsman, Chapters 1 and 2.

February 13 - Jury Decision Making, Part I  
Behavioral approaches to decision making.

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:


February 20 - Jury Decision Making, Part II  
Effects of Pretrial Publicity and Instructions to the Jury

Required Readings:
Wrightsman, Chapter 15 and Ch.10, pp.268-275 (section on pre-trial publicity)


Additional Readings:


Broeder, (1959), The University of Chicago Jury Project, 38 Nebraska Law Review

February 27 - Expert Testimony / Trial Complexity/Civil Trials

Required Readings:

Wrightsman, Ch. 12.


Additional Readings:


March 6 - Eyewitnesses I: Are they reliable?

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:


March 13 - Eyewitnesses II: Are they credible?

**Required Readings:**


**Additional Readings:**


____________________________________________________

March 20 - Malleable Memories: Suggestibility of children and the repressed memory controversy.

**Required Readings:**

Wrightsman, pp. 446-453 (section on "children as witnesses...") and pp. 169-173 (repressed and recovered memories).


**Additional Readings:**


____________________________________________________
April 3- False Confessions: Why would an innocent person confess to a crime?

**Required Readings:**

Wrightsman, chapter 8


**Additional Readings**


---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

April 10- Nonverbal Behavior in the Courtroom

**Required Readings:**

Wrightsman, Chapter 18


**Additional Readings:**


April 17- Stereotyping in the Courtroom.

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:


April 24- Defendant or Victim: Syndromes and Defenses

Required Readings

Wrightsman, Chapter 16.


Additional Readings:


May 1- Methodological Issues: Laboratory vs. field research, using mock juries, and other questions of external validity.

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:
