



Stockholms  
universitet

Department of Psychology

Psychology II, 30 HP  
Spring term 2024

Course guide

# Forensic psychology

7.5 högskolepoäng (ECTS)

January 15th – February 14th  
2024

# *Welcome to the course Forensic Psychology in Psychology II!*

## **Purpose and content**

The course provides an orientation in forensic psychology, the part of psychology that integrates the psychological knowledge area in a legal and criminal context. The course provides in-depth theoretical and empirical knowledge regarding the evaluation and understanding of behaviors of witnesses, victims, and perpetrators in the context of crime.

The course mainly concerns:

- Witnesses' ability to remember and communicate memories of criminal events
- Techniques for interviewing and interrogating suspects and witnesses, including children
- Reliability and credibility assessment of testimonies
- Line-ups
- Lie detection
- Forensic psychiatry
- Perspectives from victims of crime

## **Course requirements**

You (i.e. the student) are assumed to take active responsibility for your own studies. In addition to lectures and seminars, the course requires reading in a pace equivalent to full-time. The mandatory sessions require active participation.

## **Learning outcomes**

To pass the course, the student must be able to use theory and empirical findings from research in cognitive, developmental, social and personality psychology, to understand the role of these factors in a legal context. This involves the ability to:

- 1) Explain how children, adults, witnesses, victims and perpetrators experience, remember and talk about crimes, as well as explain the formation of false memories and false confessions
- 2) Explain the consequences of crime from the perspective of victims of crime
- 3) Make assessments of (point out the strengths and weaknesses of) psychological investigative methodologies in legal contexts, such as interrogation methods and lie-detection tests
- 4) Describe and problematize forensic psychiatric assessments
- 5) Explain reasons behind entering and exiting violent-extremist organizations, including justifications of violence
- 6) Explain risk factors for sexual offences and evaluate rehabilitation methods

## **Course design**

This is an online-only course, with all lectures and seminars taking place online, via Zoom. During each lecture, the teacher will talk about a specific subtopic in forensic psychology. The content is usually based on course literature: either the course book and/or scientific articles. During seminars, students are a) introduced to the written report-assignment (Seminar 1), b) present their findings (Seminar 3) and c) answer preparatory questions for the oral exam (Seminar 2). Being present at lectures is not mandatory but strongly recommended, as information both from the course literature and lectures form the basis of the oral exam. Every lecture is accompanied with a book chapter and

article, which you are expected to have read *before* the start of the lecture.

The course contains three mandatory elements: a written report, an oral presentation of that report, and seminar attendance. Active participation in Seminar 1 and 2 is mandatory. Active participation is also mandatory at two of the seminars during Seminar 3: the one where you present your written report, and one other, freely chosen.

### **Written report**

The written report constitutes a mandatory element in this course and should span around 2500-3000 words. The report should scrutinize theory and research in a subject within forensic psychology. The choice of subject is free within the scope of the course, and we suggest that you choose a subject that is brought up in one of the lectures. It is important that chosen subject has a clear and narrow aim, so as to limit too long reports and avoid too general conclusions. A good idea is to start with a specific question that you then attempt to answer in the report. The report must contain a minimum of four and maximum six scientific (i.e. peer-reviewed) articles, written in English. The report is mandatory and graded as Pass/Fail (revision). If the revision of the written report is not completed within the time specified by the examiner, the written report may be submitted the next time the course is held.

The subject for the written report is chosen preliminarily at Seminar 1, and must be approved by the course head before you begin writing. Suggestions for topics will be provided during this first seminar. It is not prohibited to have the same subject as another student, but the contents must be produced individually. The chosen subject for the written report must be sent in for approval on [Athena](#) at the latest **Friday September 1<sup>st</sup>, 17.00**. The course head will return feedback within two working days.

**The submission deadline for the finalized version of the written report is Tuesday January 30<sup>th</sup>, 17.00 (Swedish time) on Athena.**

*Please note! Delayed submissions will limit the final grade on the course to “E”.*

### **Student Presentations (Seminar 3)**

During the final seminars, the content of the written reports is presented. It is mandatory to partake in your own seminar session, as well as one other session of your choice. Each student briefly (5 minutes) presents their written report and conclusions. Following this presentation, there will be 5 minutes for discussion. Presenting is mandatory and graded as Pass/Fail.

### **Exam study questions and the exam-study seminar (Seminar 2)**

In order to facilitate reading of the literature and as a support for the final oral exam, there will be a number of study questions available on Athena. During Seminar 1, each student will be randomly assigned to a group, and throughout the course, your group is tasked with answering all the study questions\*. Make sure to divide the questions so that everyone in the group answers an equal amount of questions. During the exam-study seminar, each group will be asked to respond to some of the exam-study questions. This will be randomized, so make sure that you and your group have answered all the questions. The oral exam will then be based on these study questions (but not necessarily exclusively those questions). Performance is not graded during this seminar.

\* Please note: These study groups are separate and do not correspond to the “presentation groups” in the schedule.

### **Compensating missed mandatory seminars**

Missing a mandatory seminar can be compensated by means of a supplementary assignment specified by the examiner (see below). Supplementary assignments must be submitted no later than as indicated by the examiner. A maximum of two mandatory seminars can be compensated with supplementary assignments\*. If the supplementary assignment is not submitted on time or if the student misses more than two mandatory seminars, the missed part may be retaken at a later course.

\* Please note: you may not compensate your oral presentation with a supplementary assignment.

**If you miss any of the mandatory seminars you must *immediately* contact the course head for the supplementary assignment.** The supplementary assignment is to write ~500 words about *your own reflection* on a freely chosen lecture from this course that you participated in. Please note that you have to write using your own words, it is prohibited to copy information from the presentation slides, as well as using AI-tools such as ChatGPT.

### **Examination**

The course is examined with an individual oral exam, carried out in a group of up to 8 students. The oral exam is based on all course literature and all the information that is brought up at the lectures and seminars. More information about the oral exam will be provided during the progression of the course (keep an eye out on [Athena!](#)). In order to pass the course and obtain the course credits, you must receive a passing grade both on the oral exam (graded A-F) and the written report (pass/fail; see above), as well as orally present the written report at a seminar, and partake in all mandatory sessions. The results of the exam will usually be made available within three weeks after the date of the exam.

Please note that the oral exam requires you to have one camera that is showing your face, and another camera that is showing your screen. This is mandatory.

You sign up for the exam on [Athena](#). Please note that you can only sign up for a specific day. You will be informed of the time for your specific slot on the week leading up to the exam week. The information will be posted on Athena.

**The deadline for signing up for the oral exam is Saturday January 27<sup>th</sup>, 17.00 on [Athena](#).**

### **Grading scale**

The grades on this course are as follows:

#### A – Excellent

The student is able to explain central concepts, theories and research in forensic psychology in a nuanced, thorough and relevant way. Moreover, the student is able to apply terms and models in forensic psychology with insight and confidence, and furthermore, problematizes and evaluates theory and research in a convincing and relevant way. The student is continuously demonstrating the understanding of a scientific approach and argumentation.

#### B – Very good

The student is able to explain central concepts, theories and research in forensic psychology in a thorough and relevant way. Moreover, the student is able to apply terms and models in forensic psychology with confidence, and furthermore, problematizes and evaluates theory and research in a

relevant way. The student is demonstrating a good understanding of a scientific approach and argumentation.

#### C – Good

The student is able to explain central concepts, theories and research in forensic psychology. Moreover, the student is able to apply terms and models in forensic psychology with confidence, and furthermore, problematizes and evaluates theory and research. The student is demonstrating an understanding of a scientific approach and argumentation.

#### D – Satisfactory

The student is able to explain central concepts, theories and research in forensic psychology. Moreover, the student is largely able to apply terms and models in forensic psychology, and to some extent, problematizes and evaluates theory and research. The student is largely demonstrating an understanding of a scientific approach and argumentation.

#### E - Sufficient

The student is able to—on a basic level—explain central concepts, theories and research in forensic psychology. Moreover, the student is able to apply terms and models in forensic psychology to some extent, and demonstrates attempts to problematize and evaluate theory and research. The student demonstrates a basic understanding of a scientific approach and argumentation.

#### F – Fail

One or several of the following shortcomings: The student is showing a lack of understanding for central concepts, theories and research in forensic psychology. A basic problematization and evaluation of theory and research is missing. Lack of nuance or a lacking understanding for a scientific approach and argumentation.

### **Course head**

Philip Gustafsson, assistant professor

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### **Teachers**

Jenny Yourstone, assistant professor

Johanna Lätth, PhD student

Maria Lindau, professor emerita

Raver Gültekin, PhD student

Torun Lindholm Öjmyr, professor

### *E-post*

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### **Course literature**

#### Main book

Howitt, Dennis (2022). *Introduction to Forensic and Criminal Psychology*. 7th ed. Harlow, UK: Pearson

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## Scientific articles

Boateng, F. D. (2018). Crime reporting behavior: Do attitudes toward the police matter? *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 33(18), 2891-2916. <https://doi.org/0.1177/0886260516632356>

Bond Jr, C. F., & DePaulo, B. M. (2006). Accuracy of deception judgments. *Personality and social psychology Review*, 10(3), 214-234. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1003\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1003_2)

Holtzworth-Munroe, A., & Stuart, G. L. (1994). Typologies of male batterers: three subtypes and the differences among them. *Psychological bulletin*, 116(3), 476-497. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.116.3.476>

Karni-Visel, Y., Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., & Blasbalg, U. (2019). Facilitating the expression of emotions by alleged victims of child abuse during investigative interviews using the Revised NICHD Protocol. *Child maltreatment*, 24(3), 310-318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559519831382>

Kassin, S. M., & Gudjonsson, G. H. (2004). The psychology of confessions: A review of the literature and issues. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5(2), 33-67. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1111/j.1529-1006.2004.00016.x>

Lindsay, D. S., Hagen, L., Read, J. D., Wade, K. A., & Garry, M. (2004). True photographs and false memories. *Psychological Science*, 15(3), 149-154. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0956-7976.2004.01503002.x>

Lindström, J., Lindholm, T. (2020). Suicide Terrorism. In: Shackelford, T., Weekes-Shackelford, V. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Psychological Science*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16999-6\\_586-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16999-6_586-1)

Tyler, N., Gannon, T. A., & Olver, M. E. (2021). Does treatment for sexual offending work?. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 23(8), 51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-021-01259-3>

Whiting, D., Lichtenstein, P., & Fazel, S. (2021). Violence and mental disorders: a structured review of associations by individual diagnoses, risk factors, and risk assessment. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 8(2), 150-161. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(20\)30262-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30262-5)

## **Reading guide**

Lecture	Literature
False memory & line-ups	Chapter 13 + Lindsay et al. 2004
Interrogation and interviewing, False confessions	Chapter 11 & 17 + Kassin & Gudjonsson 2004
Child interviewing	Chapter 20 + Karni-Visel et al. 2019
Lie-detection & eyewitness credibility	Chapter 18-19 + Bond & DePaulo 2006
Intimate-partner violence	Chapter 8 + Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart 1994
Victims of crime	Chapter 4 + Boateng 2018

Violent extremism	Chapter 12 + Lindström & Lindholm 2020
Psychich disorders and crime	Chapter 21 + Whiting et al. 2021
Sexual offenders	Chapter 9-10 + Tyler et al 2021

## **Schedule**

See time-edit.

## **Cheating and plagiarism**

Stockholm University takes cheating very seriously. Cheating refers to instances where students collaborate in an unauthorized manner, use prohibited aids (such as cheat sheets, unauthorized notes, or mobile phones), or attempt to deceive during examinations. Plagiarism is also considered a form of cheating and involves, for example, a student using their own work (self-plagiarism) or someone else's texts and ideas without correctly referencing the original source in an essay, take-home exam, or other assessment task.

Suspensions of cheating are initially investigated by the department. If the department determines that there is a reasonable suspicion of cheating, the case is reported to the rector, who may then refer the case to the university's Disciplinary Board. Cheating can result in students receiving warnings or being suspended from their studies for up to six months. A suspension is recorded as a temporary interruption of studies and can affect, among other things, student financial aid and the right to student housing. A decision regarding suspension usually takes effect immediately.

As a student, pay attention to the instructions you receive regarding examinations and the applicable rules. Even if you have completed the examination component in a previous semester, conditions may have changed, such as regarding permissible aids or collaborations. The responsibility for understanding and following the given instructions lies with the student.

Students who are accused or suspected of deceptive practices during examinations can contact Stockholm University Student Union (SUS) for advice and support as soon as the suspicion of cheating is directed towards them.

If you, as a student, are unsure about the rules and regulations for an examination, reach out to the responsible course instructor.