DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

PSYO 2444: Forensic Psychology
SUMMARY of the course outline (see p. 2 for details)



Professor: Dr. Julie Blais (she/her)

julie.blais@dal.ca OFFICE HOURS: Mon 12:30-1:30pm (LSC 3336)

LECTURES: Every MONDAY and WEDNESDAY, 2:35-3:55pm (Dunn 117)

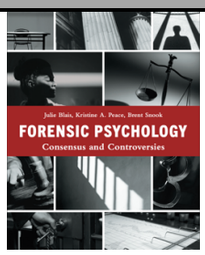
TOPIC





Learning how psychology works within the legal system.

REQUIRED TEXT



TEXTBOOK (Blais et al., 2026) – See p. 3

SKILL BUILDING OUTCOMES

Critical thinking



Studying/ Learning



Time management



MODALITY

Lectures



Readings/Videos/ Podcasts

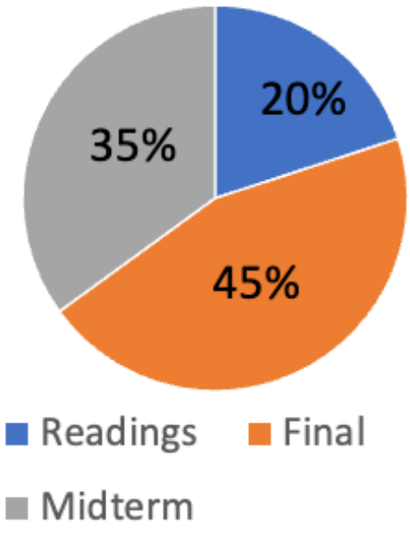


Reflect/Discuss/Apply



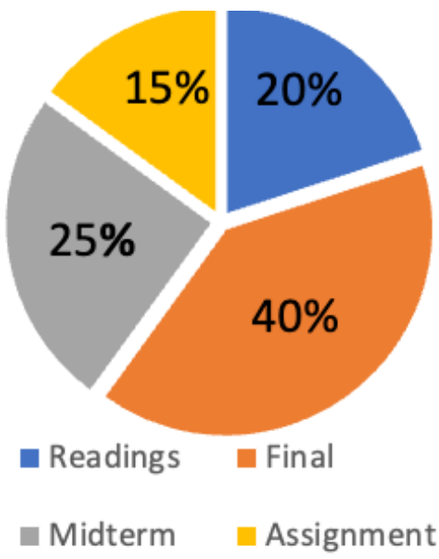
GRADE BREAKDOWN (YOU CHOOSE!!!)

OPTION 1



OR

OPTION 2



DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Science Course Syllabus
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience
PSYO 2444, Forensic Psychology
FALL 2026

Instructor: Dr. Julie Blais (she/her)
Office hours/location: Mondays 12:30-1:30pm (LSC 3336)
Email: julie.blais@dal.ca
*Feel free to email me or come by office hours to ask any questions you may have or simply to chat about psychology or your progress in the course. This time is for you so I hope that you will use it. I look forward to getting to know you better.

Lecture times: Mondays AND Wednesdays – 2:35pm to 3:55pm
Lecture location: Sir James Dunn Building (Room 117)
Laboratories/Tutorials: Not applicable (this is a lecture course only)

Teaching Assistant (TA): Callia Fieldhouse
Email: c.fieldhouse@dal.ca
Contacting marker: The TA will be grading short answer questions on the exams and the optional assignment. You are welcome to contact them for more feedback on anything they have graded. ANY OTHER course related questions should be posted to the Q&A board on Brightspace or directed to me.

Course prerequisites

PSYO 1011.03 or PSYO 1021.03 or PSYO 1031.03 and PSYO 1012.03 or PSYO 1022.03, or SCIE 1505X/Y.18, SCIE 1515X/Y.36, 1520X/Y.30 or 1540X/Y.27 (with a grade of B- or better)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course will offer an introduction to the various topics related to forensic psychology from police investigations to profiling and serial murder. How do police officers conduct interrogations? How accurate is eyewitness testimony? How do we measure psychopathy? Together we will explore these questions and others through the evaluation of scientific research and the examination of specific case studies. In-class activities will include lectures, discussions, and videos.

In addition to learning about these interesting topics, my goal is to help you further develop skills that will aid you in completing your degree. These skills include effective studying for different types of exams (e.g., multiple choice, short answer), critical thinking, reading, and time management. Overall, I hope that this course will help you become a critical consumer of information as well as a successful University student.

I expect that this course will:

1) Provide you with a theoretical, empirical, and practical understanding of several topics related to forensic psychology;
2) Develop your study skills, test taking skills, and critical thinking skills;
3) Provide a learning environment that encourages active and collaborative learning.

Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.

Dalhousie University also acknowledges the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotians, who have been here for over 400 years.

REQUIRED TEXT

Title: Forensic Psychology: Consensus and Controversies
Authors: Julie Blais, Kristine A. Peace, and Brent Snook
ISBN-13: 9780195402049

Purchase from the bookstore: You can purchase a hard copy of the book ($133.99) or receive access to a digital copy for 180 days ($88.96) through the bookstore.

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE BOOKSTORE PAGE FOR THE BOOK!

Note from the instructor about the text
I have adopted this text for three main reasons: 1) it is the most recent Canadian book written by three experts and teachers; 2) it focuses on contrasting consensus vs. controversies to encourage critical thinking, and 3) it contains relevant case studies and application activities in each chapter.

Everyone is required to use the textbook because there are quizzes associated with the readings that you will submit for course credit.

COMMUNICATION

IMPORTANT: Communication within business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 4:30pm)
The instructor and TA will do their best to answer all questions within 24 business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm). Questions and emails will not necessarily be answered outside of regular working hours or on weekends. Please keep this in mind as course deadlines approach. If you do not receive a response from the instructor or marker within 24 business hours, students should assume the email was not sent and make necessary arrangements to contact the instructor/marker as soon as possible.

Instructor announcements and weekly updates
I will post weekly announcements updating the class about where we are in the course and upcoming due dates. This announcement will be posted to Brightspace under "Announcements".

COURSE WEBPAGE (Brightspace)

The course webpage will be hosted on Brightspace. Please enable email alerts and check the page regularly as course materials (e.g., Q&A, optional readings, activities) will be added regularly. Any assignments will be submitted via the Brightspace portal.

COURSE POLICIES

Independent work: Any written work is to be completed independently and must be unique. Any plagiarism will be treated as an academic offence (see https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity/plagiarism-cheating.html)

Use of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT): While AI tools such as ChatGPT are now part of our world, it is important that you learn how to think independently and critically BEFORE you learn how to use AI. For this reason, the course has been designed to limit reliance on these types of tools. For example, the midterm and final exam will be written in person, and you are not permitted to use any form of technology during exams. You are also not permitted to use AI when writing the optional assignment. ***Use of AI.*** Violations of the course AI policy will be treated as an academic integrity offence.

COURSE CONTENT

Modules: This course is set up in modules on Brightspace. Each module corresponds with one week of the semester. The modules will contain all the information you need for the week (reading quiz, lecture slides, extra activities/ resources). The first module also contains *orientation* materials such as the course outline, resources to help you succeed, and more

information about careers in forensic psychology. There's also a Q & A discussion board that students can use to ask any course-related questions (I will check the board regularly).

COURSE ASSESSMENTS

Component	Weight (Option 1)	Weight (Option 2)	Due Dates
1. Reading quizzes	20%	20%	Mondays (before class)
2. Midterm	35%	25%	Oct. 21
3. Final exam	45%	40%	TBD
4. Assignment	Not applicable	15%	OPTIONAL: Dec. 4
5. Bonus	**+3%**	**+3%**	Anytime

1. Reading quizzes – Mondays starting Sept. 14 (before 2:35pm)
Each week you will be completing readings in the textbook. You are required to complete readings and quizzes BEFORE Monday's class (before 2:35pm). This will ensure that you are prepared for the week's content. The reading that is due each week is listed in the weekly topic schedule on p. 6.

Missing a reading quiz: You are allowed to miss up to TWO reading quizzes of the 10 that are assigned. Your final quiz grade out of 20, will be based on your top 8 of 10 quiz scores. Therefore, requests for extensions WILL NOT BE GRANTED (the accommodation is already built in). If you miss a reading that will be covered on the exams, it is your responsibility to study this material.

2. Midterm – Oct. 21 (IN CLASS)
The midterm will be written in class on Oct. 21 (2:35pm – 3:55pm). It will consist of 25 multiple choice (4 response options are provided [a, b, c, or d]) and 2 short-answer questions (each graded out of 8). Questions will come from lectures and the textbook, though lecture material will make up more of the exam questions (75/25% split). Midterm covers content from Modules 1 to 7. Both sections of the midterm are given equal weight when calculating your final midterm grade: 50% multiple choice and 50% short answer.

Missing the midterm: If you are unable to write the midterm because of illness, bereavement, or religious observance, you must inform me by email within 24 hours of missing the exam. ***Failure to contact me within 24 hours results in an automatic grade of 0 on the midterm.*** You must complete the **Student Declaration of Absence Form**. You will be given ONE MORE chance to complete the midterm. If you miss both the midterm and the makeup, you will get a grade of 0 on the midterm.

3. Final exam – Held during the official exam period (Dec. 11 – 20)
The final exam will be scheduled during the official exam period and will be scheduled for 3 hours. It will consist of 40 multiple choice (4 response options are provided [a, b, c, or d]) and 4 short-answer questions (each graded out of 8). Questions will come from lectures and the textbook, though lecture material will make up more of the exam questions (75/25% split). Final exam covers content from Modules 8 to 13. Both sections of the final exam are given equal weight when calculating your final exam grade: 50% multiple choice and 50% short answer.

Missing the final exam: A student's request for an alternate time for a final examination will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances include illness or other mitigating circumstances outside the control of the student. Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

4. OPTIONAL Assignment (15% - see Option 2 for how your grade will be re-weighted on p. 4) – Due on Friday, Dec. 4 (by 11:59pm)
There is an optional assignment that you can complete to help re-distribute your grade this semester. Instructions for the optional assignment are posted in Module 1 on Brightspace. The goal of the assignment is to critically evaluation a real interrogation using content from lectures and the textbook. More information will be shared in class.

Late assignments: EVERYONE automatically gets a 3-day extension on the assignment. BUT make sure that you only use this extension if you ABSOLUTELY NEED IT. Once the 3-day

extension is over, NO MORE ASSIGNMENTS will be accepted. There is no need to email me asking for an extension; you get the 3 days automatically. **NOTE:** The 3-day extension includes the 72-hour extensions offered through accommodations (you cannot stack the extensions – everyone gets the full 3 days).
Assignment – DUE Dec. 4 (before 11:59pm); LAST DAY TO SUBMIT is Dec. 7 (before 11:59pm)

5. Bonus (+3%) – Anytime during the semester
You can earn up to 3% bonus on your final grade in this course by participating in research through the SONA system. More information can be found here: https://www.dal.ca/faculty/science/psychology_neuroscience/research/credit-point-information.html

OR

Since I can't control how many studies are available through SONA, there will be several additional Bonus Assignments that can be completed throughout the semester to count towards your 3% bonus. Bonus assignments and instructions will be uploaded to Module 1, and an announcement will be made once they are available.

NOTE ON FINAL GRADES: I use standard rounding rules for calculating final grades. Grades of 0.5 and above get rounded UP to the nearest whole number; grades of 0.4 and below get rounded down. Example: 77.5 = 78% and 77.4 = 77%. Given the flexibility already built into the course AND the option to earn an extra 3% on your final grades, I will not adjust final grades.

Conversion of numerical grades to Final Letter Grades follows the Dalhousie Common Grade Scale

A+ (90-100)	**B+** (77-79)	**C+** (65-69)	**D**	(50-54)
A (85-89)	**B** (73-76)	**C** (60-64)	**F**	(<50)
A- (80-84)	**B-** (70-72)	**C-** (55-59)		

Intellectual property of course materials
Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

University Policies and Statements
All University policies and statements can be found here:
Syllabus Appendix: Student Supports & University Statements, Policies, and Guidelines

Tentative lecture schedule with assigned readings and due dates

The outline of topics is our plan, but we may diverge from this plan as the term progresses, if necessary. We won't simply "cover content" to keep to this plan if we are not learning together.

CONTENT AND WELLNESS: Some of the topics we will examine in this course—including violence, sexual violence, abuse, and trauma—may be sensitive or difficult to engage with. These topics are an essential part of forensic psychology, so students will be expected to engage with the course material, even when it is challenging. At the same time, I recognize that students may have different experiences and reactions to course material.

I encourage you to think proactively about your wellbeing and to make sure you have the supports you need to participate fully in the course. If there is a topic (see below for list) that you think may be difficult for you, remember that you can watch the recording of that lecture at home, instead of coming to class. In the past, students have told me that having that option and making sure that they have their own supports in place helped them through the content. Also, please see Module 1 for a list of recourses that you can access at Dal to help support your emotional needs. As always, you can also come to my office hours to discuss any concerns.

Module	Dates	WEEKLY TOPIC	READING
1	Sept. 9	Introduction to the course What is forensic psychology?	Course outline
2	Sept. 14 Sept. 16	Investigative techniques Criminal profiling	Chapter 2
3	Sept. 21 Sept. 23	Deception detection Polygraph	Chapter 3
4	Sept. 28 Sept. 30	Eyewitnesses NO CLASS (Truth and Reconciliation Day)	Chapter 4
5	Oct. 5 Oct. 7	Lineups Interrogations	Chapter 5
6	Oct. 12 Oct. 14	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving) False confessions	NO reading! (still in Chapter 5)
7	Oct. 19 Oct. 21	Midterm REVIEW **MIDTERM (Modules 1 – 7)**	NO reading!
8	Oct. 26 Oct. 28	Juries Juries (continued)	Chapter 6
9	Nov. 2 Nov. 4	Mental illness Mental illness (continued)	Chapter 7
FALL STUDY BREAK (Nov. 9 – 13)			
10	Nov. 16 Nov. 18	Psychopathy Psychopathy (continued)	Chapter 12
11	Nov. 23 Nov. 25	Sexual offences Sexual offences (continued)	Chapter 13
12	Nov. 30 Dec. 2	Intimate partner violence (IPV) Criminal harassment **Optional assignment due on Friday, Dec. 4**	Chapter 14
13	Dec. 7 Dec. 8 Dec. 9	Homicide Homicide (continued) Final exam REVIEW	Chapter 15
Final exam TBD (Dec. 11 – 20); Covers Modules 8 – 13			