

HEFTY DISCLAIMER: The material covered in this class includes images and descriptions of crimes that are both graphic and disturbing – especially because many of them are real. I will never present this material in a gratuitous way: Case details will be presented only as much as they are regarded as essential to the profiling process. If you are squeamish, or if you have been (or are close to someone who has been) the victim of a violent crime, you need to make a careful, considered decision about whether to remain in this class. On the other end of the spectrum, I have ZERO desire to glamorize any of this material, so if you are the sort of person who really “gets off” on this sort of thing, please take a serious look at the source of your fascination. The last thing I would want to do by offering this course is to feed a person’s fears – or their fantasies.

PSYCH 330 –Criminal Profiling – Course Outline – F05 (MW 4:30 P.M.-5:50 P.M.)

Instructor: Christopher T. Burris, Ph.D.

Office: STJ 2016 **Phone:** (519) 884-8111, ext. 8213 **e-mail:** cburris@uwaterloo.ca

Office Hours: MT 10:00-11:30 A.M; by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Katrina Moore (STJ 2021; 884-8111, ext. 8231)

Course Description (from the *UW Undergraduate Calendar*): Foundational assumptions for, and basic approaches to, criminal profiling will be considered, along with a survey of relevant techniques in the context of numerous case studies. Limitations and alternatives to profiling will also be addressed.

Course Purpose, Structure, and Philosophy: Through a combination of lectures, videos, in-class exercises, and outside assignments, our goal will be to develop a working understanding of the process, problems, and promise of criminal profiling. In particular, we will attempt to use assumptions, principles, and techniques adapted from mainstream psychology in order to evaluate critically, and to offer constructive suggestions for improving, criminal profiling as it is currently practiced.

Profiling is an applied discipline, so this is very much a “learning by doing” course. There will not be a shred of rote memorization, not a single multiple choice question. Some tasks are intentionally presented with minimal structure because that is often the reality that profilers must face – Crime scenes don’t come with flow-charts or fill in the blank questions. Profiling requires organizing the available information in a way that makes the most sense given the specifics of a case. Thus, you will be asked to think, think some more, and justify your thinking. To put it frankly, if you want an easy mark or a structured course that places little demand on you as a student, please find another course. It IS possible to be extremely successful in this course, but only if you are willing to work for it. I am telling you this now so you can develop realistic expectations about what this course will require of you.

Resources:

Reading: I have yet to find a profiling textbook that I have judged to be psychologically sound, so I did not assign one. Having said that, I have attempted to put together a collection of resources for you to use outside of class to supplement your understanding of profiling as it is presented in-class. First, I have placed this article on reserve in the St. Jerome’s Library (it is also available electronically):

Canter, D. (2000). Offender profiling and criminal differentiation. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 5, 23-46.

You are strongly encouraged to read this article within the first couple of weeks of the course, as it touches on many of the larger issues addressed in class. St. Jerome’s/UW Library also subscribes to an e-journal geared specifically to this class, the *Journal of Behavioral Profiling*. You can access it through the UW Library website. There are also a number of other journals that sometimes have profiling-relevant articles (such as *Legal and Criminological Psychology* mentioned above). Check with the St. Jerome’s Library staff for the latest acquisitions.

Mind of a Killer CD-ROM: I have also placed this CD-ROM on reserve in St. Jerome’s Library; there is an in-library computer with headphones set up for its use. There are a lot of case summaries, interview clips with serial killers, and interviews with forensic specialists that will hopefully serve as a nice complement to what we will be doing in class. (There is even a specific section on profiling -- under “Criminology” rather than “Psychology,” interestingly enough.) You are strongly encouraged to browse this CD-ROM; I may also refer to specific portions of it in class as the subject matter merits.

Resources (continued):

Useful Websites: The three websites below all have sections devoted to criminal profiling. I don't necessarily endorse or agree with their contents, but they may nevertheless provide useful alternate perspectives. www.crimeandclues.com www.crimelibrary.com www.corpus-delicti.com
If you are aware of other potentially useful websites, please let me know.

A Reminder: You will get something out of this course in proportion to what you put into it. I strongly recommend that you take the initiative to consult the various resources I have made available here in lieu of a textbook. My guess is that doing so will help you to grasp the "big picture" of profiling, which will undoubtedly aid you in the construction of your end-of-term profile.

Course Schedule:

- 12 Sep -- Profiling the Instructor, the Course, and Yourself
- 14 Sep -- Profiling Profiling I (History, Goals, Limitations, Mythologies)
- 19 Sep -- Profiling Profiling II
- 21 Sep -- Profiling Profiling III
- 26 Sep -- Profiling the Profiler I (Biases, Backgrounds, Egos)
- 28 Sep -- Profiling the Profiler II
- 03 Oct -- Profiling the Victim I (Why Him/Her?)
- 05 Oct -- Profiling the Victim II
- 10 Oct -- THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS (Profile who killed the turkey.)
- 12 Oct -- Profiling the Offender I (A General Model) **MASTERMIND REPORT DUE;**
TRASH REPORT ASSIGNED
- 17 Oct -- Profiling the Offender II (General Model continued)
- 19 Oct -- Profiling the Offender III (General Model continued)
- 24 Oct -- Profiling the Offender IV (General Model concluded)
- 26 Oct -- Profiling the Offender V (Typologies) **TRASH REPORT DUE;**
MIDTERM ASSIGNED
- 31 Oct -- Consultation Period. USE IT if needed.
- 02 Nov -- Profiling the Offender VI (Geographic Profiling)
- 07 Nov -- Profiling the Offender VII (Geographic Profiling continued)
- 09 Nov -- Profiling the Offender V (Linguistic Profiling)
- 14 Nov -- Profiling the Offender V (Linguistic Profiling continued) **MIDTERM DUE**
- 16 Nov -- Profiling the Offender VI (An Extended Case Example)
- 21 Nov -- Profiling the Offender VI (Case Example continued) **FINAL CASE ASSIGNED**
- 23 Nov -- Profiling, the Final I (Evidence Analysis)
- 28 Nov -- Profiling, the Final II (Evidence Analysis continued)
- 30 Nov -- Profiling, the Final III (Evidence Analysis concluded)
- 05 Dec -- Informal Case Presentations **FINAL CASE DUE**

Evaluative Tasks (Otherwise known as marking scheme; due dates as noted on the previous page):

(10%) **Logic Training** -- Because making logical inferences is so critical to the process of criminal profiling, it seems important to practice your inferential skills apart from a crime context as part of evaluation in this course. The practice will occur in game form. Specifically, you will be asked to complete AT LEAST 50 rounds of the game Mastermind, located at this site (if there are any problems with the site, let me know):
<http://www.start4all.com/mastermind/mastermind.htm>

Please follow the on-line instructions to set up the game for **six** colours (the most advanced level) before you play. Record your score for each new game (you are allowed up to 8 tries at inferring the correct combination; give yourself a 9 if you don't solve it in 8). *For each set of 10 games you complete*, report your average score (out of 8) for that set, followed by a summary analysis of the kinds of strategies you are employing, the kinds of mistakes you are making, and if/how these things change over time. Thus, you will need to submit a typed report that includes your average performance for at least 5 sets of 10 games, with each being followed by an interpretive analysis as described. You will be marked on having completed the assigned number of games, the clarity and correctness of your reported results, and the depth and quality of your self-analysis – NOT on your scores or their degree of

improvement over time (if any). The goals of this assignment are to give you practice making logical inferences, and to get you thinking about how you think. Start on this early, as other tasks come up quickly near its due date.

(15%) **Evidence Assessment Training** -- As a “hands on” exercise in physical evidence analysis, particularly as it relates to recognizing the appropriate limits of logical inference, you will be asked to go through someone’s trash. PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY, AND FOLLOW THEM TO THE LETTER.

1) Find a CONSENTING individual to participate in this task. You MUST ask them to provide a signed statement that they agree to have their trash analyzed as “evidence” for a class assignment. Ideally, you shouldn’t know the volunteer very well, because a lot of background knowledge about that person will seriously bias your analysis. (Be sure to state how you know this person.) The person should also have a reasonable trash “supply” -- a lone piece of gum in an otherwise empty bag will not be terribly informative. (But what might that tell you?)

2) Empty the trash, spread it out (presumably on a dropcloth, newspaper, etc.). As part of your writeup, make an inventory of each piece of “evidence.” (Feel free simply to state the number of repeated items: “approx. 100 pumpkin seeds” versus “booger-filled tissue #24”). Then, spend some time looking at each piece (or set of pieces), both separately and in relation to other pieces. What does this tell you about the person (or persons) -- their habits, interests, recent experiences, etc.? How confident are you? On what basis?

The rest of your writeup consists of whatever inferences you are making about the person(s) involved, how confident you are, and on what basis. In essence, you are to talk me through your reasoning, from physical evidence to arrived-at conclusion). You will be marked on the reasonableness of your inferences, and whether you have demonstrated awareness of what the evidence can and cannot tell you. Your writeup should be typed, and as long as it takes to do a thorough job.

3) Because collaboration is one of the essential practical skills that profiling requires, you are strongly encouraged to COMPLETE THIS ASSIGNMENT IN GROUPS of up to 4 or so individuals. Only one “set” of trash per group needs to be analyzed. Ideally, no other people, especially the “analyzed,” should be present during the analysis itself, once again to minimize bias.

4) Although not required, it would worthwhile to discuss the results of your analysis with the analyzed as an informal check on your accuracy. If you do so, feel free to include a brief summary of this discussion in your report.

5) Above all else, PLEASE RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF THE COOPERATING INDIVIDUAL throughout this process. If there is any sensitive information that should not be part of your report -- you know, credit card numbers, broken crack pipes, hand scrawled notes about killing Burris -- PLEASE do not include it in your report, simply list it as “undisclosed.” When in doubt, check with the analyzed.

(35%) **Take Home Midterm** -- There will be a midterm examination. It will be take-home, open-note, open-outside-resources, and group option. It will consist of one or more open-ended questions intended to foster original, critical thought about a number of profiling-related issues (in other words, material we’ve covered in class may be a starting point, but only that). Analysis of a video may be included. Additional details will be discussed in class.

(40%) **End-of-Term Profile** -- The final will consist of an annotated profile based on case materials to be distributed in class. You will get the basics: a crime scene sketch, autopsy results, and some evidential details. You will then come up with questions that you will present to me, the “talking case file.” They must be phrased so as to require “Yes/No” or short answers, and answerable based on physical evidence or testimony of survivors (eyewitnesses, people who had contact with the victim), not on private knowledge (“What did the fly on the wall see?”). Three classes will be devoted to question-and-answer sessions for the various “task force” groups that have assembled themselves. (Once again, profiling is a team effort, so group work is *strongly* encouraged.) Each group will subsequently prepare a complete profile of the presumed offender (if applicable) based on the initial and subsequent information. This document should be typed, and as long as necessary to do a thorough job. Additional details regarding the execution, submission, and marking scheme will be discussed when the case is distributed in class.

Class Attendance: Especially because there is no formal text for this course, I’d strongly recommend attending class. Should you miss, for whatever reason, you need to find someone in the class willing to provide you with

missing notes (if you “don’t know anyone,” then it’s time to introduce yourself). If your absence is not legitimate, you are on your own. If your absence is legitimate -- i.e., due to documented illness, family emergency, or religious observance -- then I am happy to answer questions about (but not reteach) missed material.

Deadline Extensions: Extensions will be permitted ONLY in the event of documented illness, emergency, or religious observance that made it impossible for you to complete the various take-home tasks in the allotted time. They will NOT be granted because you procrastinated, forgot, overslept, were in a bad mood, etc. Unless it is absolutely impossible, I should be notified of the situation BEFORE the due date, not after. You are aware of all deadlines well in advance, so please do not attempt to take illegitimate advantage of this policy.

Special Needs: In the event that you require an adapted learning environment due to a learning disability or something similar, you MUST provide me with documentation at the beginning of the term from Disabled Student Services in Needles Hall. I am happy to accommodate you, provided that you go through the appropriate channels.

Cheating: *I think cheating is lazy, disrespectful, and immoral, and I find it very sad that some people may try to get a course mark, or even a university degree, without having earned it honestly. I really hope that you’re not one of those people.* “All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts and its University colleges are expected to know what constitutes an academic offense, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offense is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline) which is supplied in the University of Waterloo Undergraduate Calendar (p. 1:10) and St. Jerome’s University Calendar (pp. 12-13). If you believe you have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized, you may grieve this decision in accord with Policy #70 (Student Grievance, p. 13, SJU Calendar). If you need help in learning how to avoid offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor, the appropriate St. Jerome’s departmental chair and ultimately the Appeals Officer (currently the Associate Dean) for St. Jerome’s University.”

CONSULTATION WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN THE COURSE INSTRUCTOR OR THE COURSE TA WITH REGARD TO A SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT WILL BE CONSIDERED CHEATING. THIS INCLUDES FORMER PSYCH 330 STUDENTS, LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL, FRIENDS OR FAMILY, ETC. FAILURE TO QUOTE ON-LINE OR PRINT SOURCES PROPERLY WILL BE CONSIDERED PLAGIARISM.

A Little Courtesy Is Nice: Please call me “Dr. Burris.” Questions and comments in class are welcome, just please try to keep on topic, and do not insist that you be heard on every possible occasion or interrupt others who are speaking. Feel free to use my office hours, e-mail, or appointment for questions, too. When e-mailing myself or the TA, be sure to include your name, UWID, and the class in which you are enrolled, and allow at least 24 hours for a response (I will, however, attempt to provide “same-day service” for case file questions re.: the end-of-term profile). I will do my best to accommodate inquiries outside of class, but please be aware that I won’t always answer your question in the way that you would prefer. In such cases, I’m not trying to be coy or obstinate, but have decided that whatever you want to know is something that you need to figure out for yourself.

MAKING AN INFORMED CHOICE: Criminal Profiling – as a third-year psychology course – will demand a lot of you, especially in terms of thinking and people skills. I have devised the course to represent fairly the subject matter, I hope, but that means that it is neither a traditional course, nor an easy one. Know what you are getting into, and decide – EARLY – whether you wish to commit yourself to it. If you have decided to do so, then welcome aboard. If not, I hope you find a course that better suits your expectations.