

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**PSYCH 330/LS 372**  
**Criminal Profiling**  
**Winter 2019**  
**1:00pm-2:20pm Mondays & Wednesdays, SJ2 1002**

**Instructor and T.A. Information**

Instructor: Christopher T. Burris, Ph.D.  
Office: Sweeney 2031  
Office Phone: (519) 884-8111, ext. 28213  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Email: cburris@uwaterloo.ca

T.A.: Tansyn Hood  
Office: Sweeney 2035  
Office Phone: (519) 884-8111, ext. 28256  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Email: twhood@edu.uwaterloo.ca

**Course Description**

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 Goals and Learning Outcomes**

I hope you'll walk away from this course with a psychologically informed understanding of the:

- 1) underlying assumptions of criminal profiling;
- 2) basic techniques of criminal profiling based on these assumptions;
- 3) limitations that must be kept in mind when critically assessing profiling's usefulness.

We'll approach these goals through a combination of lectures, videos, in-class exercises, assigned readings, and outside assignments.

**NOTE #1:** This course has substantial "learning by doing" components. Crime scenes don't come with flow-charts or fill in the blank questions, so profiling requires organizing the available information in a way that makes the most sense given the specifics of a case. Succeeding in this course requires the ability to think critically *and* to work collaboratively.

**NOTE #2:** I have zero desire to sensationalize offenders or their crimes or to appeal to ghoulish interests. Having said that, this course will contain occasional graphic images or descriptions of crime scenes. It's unavoidable given the subject matter – so please check with yourself to be sure that taking this course is a good decision for you.

**Required Readings and Course Schedule**

The schedule for readings, assignments, and tests appears below. Readings are on e-reserve (see schedule below) and accessible via the LEARN coursepage.

- 07 Jan – Profiling the Instructor, the Course, and Yourselfes**  
**09 Jan – Profiling Profiling I (History, Goals, Limitations, Mythologies)**

**Reading:** Devery, C. (2010). Criminal profiling and criminal investigation. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 26, 393-409.

**14 Jan – Profiling Profiling II**

**16 Jan – Profiling Profiling III**

**Reading:** Snook, B., Cullen, R. M., Bennell, C., Taylor, P. J., & Gendreau, P. (2008). The criminal profiling illusion: What's behind the smoke and mirrors? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35, 1257-1276.

**21 Jan – Profiling the Profiler I (Biases, Backgrounds, Egos)**

**Reading:** Bennell, C., Corey, S., Taylor, A., & Ecker, J. (2008). What skills are required for effective offender profiling? An examination of the relationship between critical thinking ability and profile accuracy. *Psychology, Crime, and Law*, 14, 143-157.

**23 Jan – Profiling the Profiler II**

**28 Jan – Profiling the Victim I (Why Him/Her?)**

**Reading:** Young, T. J. (1992). Procedures and problems in conducting a psychological autopsy. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 36, 43-52.

**30 Jan – Profiling the Victim II**

**04 Feb – TEST ONE**

**06 Feb – Profiling the Offender I (A General Model)**

**Reading:** Crabbé, A., Decoene, S., & Vertommen, H. (2008). Profiling homicide offenders: A review of assumptions and theories. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 13, 88-106.

**11 Feb – Profiling the Offender II (General Model continued)**

**13 Feb – Profiling the Offender III (General Model continued); TRASH REPORT DUE**

**18 Feb – READING WEEK – NO CLASS**

**20 Feb – READING WEEK – NO CLASS**

**25 Feb – Profiling the Offender IV (General Model concluded)**

**27 Feb – Profiling the Offender V (Typologies)**

**Reading:** Mjanes, K., Beauregard, E., & Martineau, M. (2017). Revisiting the organized/disorganized model of sexual homicide. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 44, 1604-1619.

**04 Mar – Profiling the Offender VI (Geographic Profiling)**

**Reading:** Snook, B., Taylor, P. J., & Bennell, C. (2011). Geographic profiling: The fast, frugal, and accurate way. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 18, 105-121.

**06 Mar – Profiling the Offender VII (Geographic Profiling continued)**

**11 Mar – Profiling the Offender VIII (Linguistic Profiling)**

**Reading:** Woodhams, J., & Grant, T. (2006). Developing a categorization system for rapists' speech. *Psychology, Crime, and Law*, 12, 245-260.

**13 Mar – TEST TWO**

**18 Mar – Profiling the Offender IX (A Case Example) FINAL CASE ASSIGNED**

**20 Mar – Profiling, the Final I (Evidence Analysis)**

**25 Mar – Profiling, the Final II (Evidence Analysis continued)**

**27 Mar – NO CLASS (Case Preparation)**

**01 Apr – FINAL CASE DUE**

**03 Apr – Go. Be happy.**

## Course Requirements and Assessment (see schedule above for dates)

**Test 1 (20%) and Test 2 (20%)** – Both tests will be in class and multiple-choice format; they are intended to assess your retention and comprehension of the information and principles covered in lecture and the assigned readings. Scannable computer cards will be used, so please bring a couple of pencils and an eraser on test days. Be prepared to present your WAT card during tests. Tests are weighted proportionally to the material that they cover; they are not cumulative. There is no final exam. *The mark received for a test stands*, so if you have documented circumstances that may unfairly affect your performance, you need to address this BEFORE rather than after the test is written (see missed test policy below). Marks will be posted on LEARN as soon as they are available.

**Evidence Assessment Training (20%)** – 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 THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY, AND FOLLOW THEM TO THE LETTER.

0) Because collaboration is one of the essential practical skills that profiling requires, you are **REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THIS ASSIGNMENT IN GROUPS of 3-6 individuals**. Group members are expected to act responsibly: to show up for scheduled meetings, do their fair share of tasks, meet agreed-upon deadlines, etc. If a group member shows signs of unwillingness to meet his/her obligations, then other group members should first try to resolve the situation informally by respectfully reminding that group member of his/her responsibilities. If the group member is unresponsive, a second approach is to set up a meeting between (ideally ALL) group members and myself, in the hope that we can resolve the situation informally. Obviously, it will be important to attempt any resolution well in advance of the assignment deadline – otherwise, we end up in a “too little, too late” situation.

As a third safeguard, students will be expected to complete peer evaluations of all group members' contributions AFTER the assignment has been submitted. In order to ensure confidentiality, the evaluation form will be posted on LEARN to be downloaded, completed, and returned to me. Whether or not you choose to complete an evaluation form, other group members can still complete one in reference to you. Thus, unless everyone in your group is happy and agrees that everyone contributed equally, it is in your best interest to complete an evaluation form. If the evaluations show a clear indication that a group member did not make a fair contribution to the submitted assignment – *especially if there is evidence that the group attempted to resolve the situation before the assignment was submitted (for example, e-mail exchanges among group members or meetings with me)* – then that group member will be subject to a mark deduction of **no less than 10%** for the submitted assignment. Alternatively, if there is clear consensus that a group member “went above and beyond,” then s/he may receive a 10% bonus.

1) Find a CONSENTING individual to participate in this task. You **MUST** ask them to provide a (simple) signed statement that they agree to have their trash analyzed as “evidence” for a class assignment, and this signed statement MUST be included when you submit your report. Ideally, you should not know the donor at all: ***Having a third-party “mediator” who is willing to collect the trash to keep the source anonymous to you is therefore STRONGLY recommended.*** If prior knowledge of the donor is ABSOLUTELY UNAVOIDABLE, then you should state up front what you already know about the donor, and what specific measures you took to prevent prior knowledge from biasing your evidence analysis.

2) PLEASE RESPECT THE PRIVACY OF THE DONOR. If there is any sensitive information that should not be part of your report – credit card numbers, illegal items, etc., DO NOT include it. Simply list it as “undisclosed.” When in doubt, check with the donor before submitting your report.

3) Only one “set” of trash per group needs to be analyzed. Ideally, no other people – especially the donor – should be present during the analysis itself in order to minimize bias.

4) Empty the trash, make an inventory of each piece of “evidence.” Think about each piece (or set of pieces) by itself, and in relation to other pieces/sets. What might the “evidence” tell you about the person(s) –identity, demographics, connections, habits, interests, recent experiences, etc.? How do you know? How sure are you?

\*The main body of your write-up should include: (a) an explanation concerning how your trash sample was acquired, plus any safeguards you put in place to minimize acquisition-based interpretive bias; (b) an inventory of each piece of “evidence” (feel free simply to state the number of repeated items: “approx. 100 pumpkin seeds”

versus “bloody tissue #24”); and (c) the *strongest* inferences you can generate, accompanied by justifications based on convergent evidence and supplemented, where appropriate, by external documentation.

\*In your write-up, the following elements are ***strongly discouraged***: (a) a superfluous “profiling” introduction (just get to the task at hand!); (b) stream-of-consciousness weak inferences based on single pieces of “evidence” (go convergent as much as possible!); (c) mechanical use of profiling jargon from class or elsewhere (focus on what’s relevant!); and (d) assertions of either extreme confidence (“we know everything”) *or* unrealistic doubts (“we can know nothing”) concerning the inferences you present.

Although *not required*, you are encouraged to discuss the results of your analysis with the donor as an informal check on your accuracy. If you do so, please include a brief summary of this discussion in your report.

Your report should be as long as it takes to do a thorough job. Submit one hard copy (along with the signed consent you obtained from the donor) at the beginning of class on the due date listed in the course schedule above. Marking will be based on how well the report conforms to the criteria listed in two “\*” paragraphs above.

***End-of-Term Profile*** (40%) – 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 illustration and some evidential details. You will then come up with questions that you will present to 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?”). Two classes will be devoted to question-and-answer sessions for the various profiling groups that have assembled themselves. Because profiling is a team effort, **working in a group of 3-6 individuals is *REQUIRED***. (The membership need not be the same as the membership for the trash assignment – although this would be natural and sensible if you all work well together.) **THE SAME PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH A GROUP MEMBER WHO IS NOT DOING HIS/HER FAIR SHARE APPLY HERE, INCLUDING PEER EVALUATIONS.**

Each group will prepare a profile of any presumed offender(s) based on the case information initially presented and subsequently discovered. 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.

***NOTE: UNCREDITED CONSULTATION WITH ANYONE OTHER THAN THE COURSE INSTRUCTOR OR THE COURSE TA WITH REGARD TO EITHER ASSIGNMENT WILL BE CONSIDERED ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT.***

**Extra Credit:** Up to 4% extra credit is available via SONA research participation. Detailed instructions are available for download via LEARN. On a personal note, as an active researcher myself, I ask that you ***PLEASE TAKE ANY RESEARCH PARTICIPATION SERIOUSLY***. Careless completion of a study’s materials is a waste of everyone’s time and seriously undercuts the research process.

**UW Policy regarding Illness and Missed Tests:** UW Examination Regulations

([www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf](http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf)) state that: 1) A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at [www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health\\_Services/verification.html](http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html). 2) If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor. 3) The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations. 4) Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

Thus, you are entitled to test rescheduling for *legitimate* medical, compassionate, or religious grounds. Whenever possible, please inform me **PRIOR** to the scheduled test to arrange an alternate writing time. A make-up test should be written as quickly as possible upon your return to classes, with the obvious provision of access to missed material (see Class Attendance below). When arriving to write a make-up test, please have the appropriate documentation in

hand to support a medical, compassionate, or religious claim. Make-up exams may differ in format from the original.

## Attendance Policy

Whether or not you choose to attend class is entirely up to you, but you are responsible for all material covered. Should you miss class, for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to find a classmate who would be willing to provide you with the notes you missed. If your absence is *legitimate*, then I will be happy to answer questions about the missed material once you have consulted with a fellow student. To make the most of consultation time outside of class, come prepared with specific questions regarding whatever material you may be having trouble with, and be prepared to discuss what you know (or think you know) about a topic – that can speed up and simplify the clarification process tremendously.

## Electronic Device Policy

In-class use of any electronic devices for non-class-related purposes is discouraged, as it distracts other students and interferes with your own ability to absorb the material.

## Other Important Information

**Academic Integrity:** To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity](#) webpage for more information.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#).

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

**Note for Students with Disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

## A Final Note

Criminal Profiling is a third-year psychology course that will demand a lot of you, especially in terms of thinking and people skills. Make a thoughtful choice about staying in this course, and then commit yourself to it. Your fellow students are counting on you.