

2018

Master of Science in Forensic Psychology 2018

Nova Southeastern University

Follow this and additional works at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cps_pgcoursecatalogs

 Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Master of Science in Forensic Psychology Curriculum 2018

The Master of Science in Forensic Psychology degree program requires a total of 36 semester hours of graduate course work. The program consists of a core of 24 credits and students are required to complete one of two possible 9-credit specialization tracks, and a 3-credit capstone course. Students can choose to complete either a thesis or a field experience for their capstone's content, although if students are looking to continue their studies it is recommended they chose the research option.

The Master of Science in Forensic Psychology degree program requires a total of 36 semester hours of graduate course work. The program consists of a core of 24 credits and students are required to complete one of two possible 9-credit specialization tracks, and a 3-credit capstone course. Students can choose to complete either a thesis or a field experience for their capstone's content, although if students are looking to continue their studies it is recommended they chose the research option.

Core Courses

PSY 0900 - Introduction to Forensic Psychological Science (3 credits)

This is a survey course designed to provide students with an understanding of psychology's use in assisting the law with clinical forensic cases. Focus will involve both practical and research applications in clinical and social-cognitive psychology. Additional topics will include admissibility of psychologists to provide expert testimony in the courts; assessment of various mental states to meet legal requirements for competency, insanity, abuse syndromes, and various other psychological harm; working in the criminal justice system; and child custody and dependency issues. The legal system itself will be reviewed with a major focus on the unique aspects of the law as it applies to detained and incarcerated persons. History of the law, the U.S. Supreme Court cases that determined today's mandates, parity between physical and mental health for incarcerated persons, and recent developments will be examined. Students will be expected to review and to understand the laws and research tools used to conduct legal and psychological investigation including library databases. The social-cognitive bases of trial consultation, jury selection, and the limits of eyewitness type of testimony will also be explored.

PSY 0901 - Psychopathology, Personality Disorders, and Behavioral Interventions in Forensic Settings (3 credits)

This course is designed to provide an understanding of the various psychological disorders and their impact on behavior. Legal issues raised in both criminal and civil cases that involve mental illness will be discussed. Psychological interventions that have been determined to have empirical evidence in helping to reduce the symptoms of the various illnesses will be covered, including how to adapt them to various legal settings. In particular, group therapy and cognitive-behavioral interventions commonly used in corrections settings will be discussed. Laws dealing with medication as well as laws associated with the management of violence will similarly be covered. Students will be expected to learn about the tools used by psychologists to conduct legal and psychological research.

PSY 0902 - Methods & Tools of Psychological & Violence Risk Assessment

This course is designed to review various psychological assessment tools and techniques used by psychologists in the forensic setting. Focus will include standardization properties and interpretation of the results. Tests covered will include standardized cognitive assessments including the Wechsler scales, neuropsychological tests, objective and projective personality tests, and other measures specific to forensic settings. Students will not be trained to administer psychological tests, but rather understand the results and when to choose them for particular assessments.

PSY 0903 - Evaluation, Methodology, and Psychological Research (3 credits)

This course will cover the basics of research tools utilized by psychologists, with a major focus on program evaluation and testing scientific hypotheses. The course will describe research methodology and its application in the forensic setting. Basic statistical techniques will also be addressed in order to review research findings. Additionally, the course will address the grant writing process, with specific focus on its use to conduct program evaluation or basic research. In addition, the course will include a review of NSU's electronic databases in the library system, such as PsychInfo, as well as granting foundations.

PSY 0904 - Ethical Concerns & Multicultural Issues in Forensic Psychology (3 credits)

This course will review the ethics of forensic psychology, including the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct and the Specialty Guidelines for Forensic Psychologists of the American Psychological Association (APA), as well as the American Bar Association (ABA) Ethics. Additionally, the APA Guidelines for Multicultural Psychology will be discussed, as well as their relevance in forensic psychology. Areas of conflict between the rules of legal procedure and the psychologist's administrative code will be highlighted. Ethical issues pertaining to supervision and consultation within forensic settings will also be an integral part of the course, as many psychologists engage in supervision of non-doctoral level associates. Consultation skills will be highlighted, as they are critical for the harmonious integration of laws and psychology. Finally, the ethical and legal aspects of detaining and confining people in the corrections system will be explored, with an emphasis on the responsibilities of those who work in the system.

PSY 0906 - Best Practices and Policies for the Mentally Ill in the Criminal Justice System (3 credits)

Studies suggest that communities can develop a best practices model to keep the mentally ill out of jail or prison, while still maintaining public safety. This course covers the approach to training law enforcement in crisis intervention skills in order to avoid making an arrest when possible. If not possible, deferral into a mental health or drug court for treatment rather than incarceration should follow the arrest. Subsequently, the availability of treatment programs in the jail or prison is important for those who need to be detained. Finally, this course will discuss practices and policies and how to implement them for

PSY 0907 - Gender Violence: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Abuse (3 credits)

This course reviews the victims and the perpetrators of crimes of gender, specifically those of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. The focus of this course will address the growing literature related to the psychological damage caused by these traumatic events, including the role of mental illness and how it impacts issues in criminal, civil, family and juvenile law.

PSY 0922 - Communication Skills, Tools and Expert Witness Testimony (3 credits)

Communication of psychological evaluation results is a critical part of psychological evaluations. Most communication is done with the referral source (attorney, client, judge, case manager) through oral or written reports. If sworn expert testimony is required, usually by deposition or at trial, the attorney will form the questions usually with the psychologist's assistance. Understanding the different parts of a report and preparing for expert witness testimony will also be covered including voir dire, direct, and cross-examination.

Students will choose one of the following two specialization tracks:

Track 1: Forensic Psychology in the Legal System

9 credits - choose 3 courses from below

PSY 0908 - Psychological Issues in Dependency & Family Law Cases (3 credits)

This course will focus on reviewing psychological assessment instruments and their use during child custody and parenting fitness evaluations. The application of psychological tools to assist the court in development of parenting plans according to family law principles such as the Uniform Child Custody Act and other such legal documents will be reviewed. Child abuse laws followed by dependency courts will also be presented.

PSY 0909 - Therapeutic Jurisprudence & Problem-Solving Courts (3 credits)

Due to the criminalization of the mentally ill, jails and prisons have transformed into de facto hospitals for countless inmates with serious mental illness and substance abuse problems. Innovative diversion strategies have emerged to reduce the disparities in the jails and prisons and assist with access to community-based mental health and substance abuse care. Students will learn the philosophies in criminal and juvenile justice relating to the emerging practices of integrated and collaborative models of problem-solving therapeutic approaches. Focus will integrate theory and practical applications from a recovery and problem-solving perspective. Various legal philosophies such as therapeutic jurisprudence and restorative justice will be reviewed. The course will survey important U.S. and International policy reports, introduce students to leaders and pioneers in the field, review the consumer movement, and discuss and identify how to translate and to apply these philosophies and values into key areas from policy development to implementation.

PSY 0910 - Assessment of Psychological Injury for Legal Cases (3 credits)

Psychologists are frequently called upon to assess psychological injury in civil cases. Most common are tort cases where someone has been in an accident and is claiming psychological injury. Other areas include competency to enter into contracts, neuropsychological injuries due to open or closed head trauma or exposure to toxins, and damages from malpractice cases. This course will explore the signs and symptoms of psychological injuries and the tools/tests psychologists use to measure what if any damage has occurred. Students will learn to apply them to understand the concept of proximate cause that is 'but-for' what happened to the person, he or she would not be in this condition.

PSY 0911 - Understanding Psychological Reports and Expert Witness Testimony (3 credits)

When lawyers or others, such as consultants in the legal system, request a psychological evaluation they often receive a psychological report detailing the clinical results of that evaluation but it may not relate to the forensic issues. There are usually places and terms in psychological reports that need interpretation for someone who has little knowledge about psychological issues. This course will review the forensic psychological evaluation process and the manner in which to develop questions of the evaluator to ensure that oral and written reports are more relevant to the requestor. If the attorney believes that the psychological issues enumerated in the report will be helpful in his or her case, then a deposition or expert witness court testimony is requested. The course will also discuss preparing a psychologist for expert witness testimony in deposition or court, and how to develop psychologically informed voir dire and cross-examination questions for the opposition's forensic psychologist.

PSY 0912 - Psychological Evaluation of Competencies, Syndromes, & Sanity Issues (3 credits)

Forensic psychologists have been assisting attorneys and the courts in assessing criminal defendants for competency and sanity since the early 1900s. By the 1980s psychologists received parity with psychiatrists in the U.S. courts. Case law and legislation have informed forensic psychologists as to what the courts need in order to meet the legal tests for whether or not a defendant is mentally capable or competent to waive Miranda rights, proceed to trial, assist the attorney in preparing for a defense, voluntarily accept a plea bargain, know and understand the consequences of trial outcomes, etc. Additionally, mens rea or the state of mind at the time of trial is also assessed by a forensic psychological evaluation in order to determine if the defendant meets

the insanity laws or downward departure of sentencing guidelines. Newer syndromes like Battered Woman Syndrome or Rape Trauma Syndrome are also assessed by psychologists and will be covered in this course.

PSY 0913 / CJI 6230 - Behavioral Criminology (3 credits)

The purpose of this course is to familiarize the student with various techniques for analyzing and understanding criminal behavior through crime and crime scene analysis. These techniques include an introduction to the fundamentals of criminal investigative analysis and profiling. Critical thinking skills will be emphasized in crime and crime scene analysis in order to draw logical inferences regarding any underlying psychopathology, motive, criminal history or other dynamics unique to that particular offender.

Capstone: PSY 0930 Advanced Research OR PSY 0931 Field Experience

PSY 0930 - Advanced Research (3 credits)

Under the supervision of a faculty mentor, students will select a specific topic from the field of forensic psychology. They will prepare an outline of issues to be examined, conduct an extensive review of the existing research, and compose a paper suitable for publication or presentation. This course is strongly recommended for students who wish to pursue further education beyond the master's degree. Requirement: Final paper must receive approval from the faculty member and the director of the degree program.

PSY 0931 - Field Experience (3 credits)

Students will select a field placement site and complete a minimum of 90 volunteer/unpaid hours on-site over the course of the semester. Examples include experiential work in a forensic setting, performance of administrative functions, and clinical observation. Requirement: Approval of placement by a faculty supervisor and by the director of the degree program.

Track 2: Forensic Psychology for Mental Health Workers, First Responders and Disaster Teams

9 credits - choose 3 courses from below

PSY 0915 - Suicide Prevention & Crisis Intervention Skills (3 credits)

Suicide is one of the most dangerous actions in which depressed people engage that may, in fact, be preventable. This is true for those with suicidal ideation at all ages. This course will help the student learn how to identify the potential for suicide and how to respond and refer. Since suicide is often precipitated by situational crises, early intervention techniques, particularly the identification of suicide potential, is crucial. Suicide ideation is frequently seen in criminal defendants, especially those who make suicide attempts when first admitted to jail or prison. Suicide-by-cop and highly publicized intentional and random multiple shooting events will be studied to better understand the shooter's motivations and early identification. Effective suicide prevention and crisis intervention strategies will be explored.

PSY 0916 - Trauma Informed Assessment and Intervention (3 credits)

The large numbers of people using the legal system have reported experiencing trauma in their lives. This includes those in the civil area, those in domestic violence and child abuse cases, and those in other criminal areas. Most of these people remain in the community or re-enter fairly quickly. However, it is important to assess for trauma and provide these individuals with trauma-informed services, as psychotherapy or substance abuse treatment alone are insufficient. This course will cover trauma theories and address trauma-informed assessment tools, as well as best practices in intervention techniques to assist victim/survivors.

PSY 0917 - Child Maltreatment and Trauma Assessment and Intervention (3 credits)

Child physical abuse, sexual abuse, and maltreatment can have a lasting impact on lifetime health and behavior. Assessment of trauma and trauma informed intervention strategies will be explored, including reduction and elimination of trauma triggers, desensitization, restoration of normal biochemicals and neurotransmitters in the brain and nervous system, and restoration of competency. Tools such as sand tray, play therapy, and cognitive-focused groups for older children will also be explored. Strategies for supporting and strengthening the non-offending parent will also be covered.

PSY 0918 - Intervening in School & Workplace Violence (3 credits)

The high publicity of school and workplace violence over the last decade has resulted in the development of psychological interventions to prevent and to intervene following such tragic events. Threat Assessment Teams with security and mental health experts working collaboratively can identify potential problems early on and intervene to interrupt plans to shoot and kill both intended and unintentional victims. This course will review the major high publicity cases such as Columbine H.S. in Colorado, Fort Hood massacre by a military psychiatrist, and the shooting of Congresswoman Gabriella Giffords. Crisis intervention following these tragic events will also be discussed.

PSY 0919 - Substance Abuse, Mental Illness and Trauma (3 credits)

The increased incidence of individuals with triple diagnosis, that is, adding a trauma diagnosis to the traditionally dual diagnosis term used to describe people with substance abuse and mental illness, continues to grow as our assessment tools improve. This combination is especially prevalent in jails, prisons, and those assigned to intervention in the community by the therapeutic jurisprudence courts. This course will first review the three areas independently and subsequently integrate them in the context of treatment.

PSY 0920 / CJI 6220 - Police Psychology (3 credits)

The purpose of this course is to examine current strategies and issues in the field of police psychology. Specific topics that will be covered include: selection and fitness for duty evaluations, mental health issues in law enforcement (e.g., stress, family problems, critical incident debriefings, and domestic violence), role of psychology in crisis (hostage) negotiations, and supportive functions of the police psychologist in police operations. Tactical operations and police procedures relevant to the work of the police psychologist will similarly be covered.

Capstone: PSY 0930 Advanced Research OR PSY 0931 Field Experience

PSY 0930 - Advanced Research (3 credits)

Under the supervision of a faculty mentor, students will select a specific topic from the field of forensic psychology. They will prepare an outline of issues to be examined, conduct an extensive review of the existing research, and compose a paper suitable for publication or presentation. This course is strongly recommended for students who wish to pursue further education beyond the master's degree. Requirement: Final paper must receive approval from the faculty member and the director of the degree program.

PSY 0931 - Field Experience (3 credits)

Students will select a field placement site and complete a minimum of 90 volunteer/unpaid hours on-site over the course of the semester. Examples include experiential work in a forensic setting, performance of administrative functions, and clinical observation. Requirement: Approval of placement by a faculty supervisor and by the director of the degree program.

Degree Plans

Below is a sample of a degree plan for a full-time student who begins their studies in fall term. Degree plans will be modified based on a student's enrollment date and pace of study.

DEGREE PLAN (YEAR 1)

Fall (September)

PSY 0901 - Psychopathology, Personality Disorders and Behavioral Interventions

PSY 0904 - Ethical Concerns and Multicultural Issues in Forensic Psychology

Winter (January) PSY 0900 - Introduction to Forensic Psychological Science

PSY 0902 - Methods & Tools of Psychological and Violence Risk Assessment

PSY 0903 - Evaluation, Methodology, and Psychological Research

Summer (April) PSY 0907 - Gender Violence Domestic: Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Abuse

PSY 0906 - Best Practices and Policies for the Mentally Ill in the Criminal Justice System

PSY 0922 - Communication Skills, Tools and Expert Witness Testimony

DEGREE PLAN (YEAR 2)

Fall (September) Specialty Track Course

Specialty Track Course

Winter (January) Specialty Track Course

Summer (April)

PSY 0930 - Capstone - Advanced Research

OR

PSY 0931 - Capstone - Field Experience