

Psychology and Law

Questions such as: How reliable are eyewitness testimonies? And do serious criminals have a brain dysfunction that makes them permanently dangerous to society? Are typical in the psychology and law (PsyLaw) specialisation. Psychologists with a background in PsyLaw ask questions that have direct relevance to the legal arena, and conduct research in order to address these questions.

The aim of this programme is to familiarise students with typical themes in the PsyLaw domain. For example, students will learn how to analyse the reliability of eyewitness testimonies. This is achieved by studying memory from various perspectives. Students also look at methods of testing and how tests can be used to detect malingerers or to assess the reliability of statements.

Although the theoretical part of the PsyLaw specialisation is offered in English, students should be aware that many examples and illustrations are drawn from the Dutch judicial system. For example, the Dutch legal system utilises the TBS system (mandatory psychiatric treatment on behalf of the state). Moreover, legal decisions are made by professional judges rather than juries. Several important Dutch cases will be discussed that have had an impact on the field of Dutch PsyLaw. In the practical part of this specialisation (PsyLaw in Action), students visit Dutch court hearings and forensic settings. Although great care is taken to translate all relevant written and audio materials into English, and alternative English assignments are provided, some of the practical part(s) (e.g., Police visit, TBS system) of the PsyLaw specialisation may prove difficult to follow for those students who are completely unfamiliar with the Dutch language.

Psychology and Law Coordinator:

Kim van Oorsouw, Clinical Psychology Science (FPN), Phone +31(0)43 38 824050,
40 Universiteitssingel East, Room 3.767, Email: k.vanoorsouw@maastrichtuniversity.nl

See HSP

Title	Problem-Based Learning
Period	0
Code	PSY4950
ECTS credits	-
Organisational unit	Education Office
Coordinator	Wladimir van Mansum

Is equal to Forensic Master module PSY4602

Title	Eyewitnesses and Victims
Period	1
Code	PSY4012
ECTS credits	4
Organisational unit	Clinical Psychological Science
Coordinator	Tom Smeets
Descriptions	<p>This course provides contemporary insights into the psychology of eyewitnesses and victims. For example, students will learn about how well eyewitnesses and victims are able to recall the offence they experienced, and whether they are subsequently able to identify the culprit from a line-up. Students will also learn about the best practices in how to administer line-ups, the neurobiological processes in the brain that are responsible for storing emotional events during times of stress, and whether eyewitnesses and victims are able to deal with the consequences of having experienced traumatic events. Other issues that are addressed in this course relate to biological vulnerabilities to stress-related disorders, whether claims of repression and subsequent recovery of traumatic experiences can be valid or whether they (sometimes) reflect false memories, whether the testimonies provided by young children are as reliable as those of adults, and what all of the studied topics imply for the courtroom.</p> <p>By the end of the course students will: be familiar with current issues and controversies in eyewitness research and the psychology of victims; be familiar with the important terminology of Forensic Psychology (e.g., posttraumatic stress disorder, false memories, sequential line-ups, psychological debriefing, etc.); be able to give descriptions of typical methods and experimental work in these disciplines; and have insight into the problems that arise from court decisions which hinge upon testimonies from eyewitness and/or victims.</p>
Goals	<p>Knowledge of: Estimator variables, system variables, co-witness effects, post-identification feedback, reliability of testimonies, cognitive interview, self-administered interview. Line-up identification procedures, traumatic memories, stress, HPA-axis, neurobiology of learning and memory, resilience, acute and posttraumatic stress disorder, psychological debriefing, repression, recovered memories. False memories and behavioural consequences, forgot-it-all-along effect, coaching, truth-telling and lying in children.</p>
Instruction language	EN
Prerequisites	
Recommended literature	E-reader
Teaching methods	Lecture(s) PBL
Assessment methods	Attendance Written exam Presentation
Key words	eyewitnesses, victimology, trauma, memory

Is equal to Master module PSY4603

Title	Perpetrators and Defendants
Period	1
Code	PSY4013
ECTS credits	4
Organisational unit	Clinical Psychological Science
Coordinator	Ewout Meijer
Descriptions	<p>This course covers the issue of perpetrators and defendants. The two are not synonymous; not all perpetrators of a crime are apprehended and put to trial, and not all defendants are guilty of the crime of which they are accused. During this course students will learn more about the psychology and behaviour of offenders of serious crimes. Knowledge of the psychology of the offender can be of great help during the different stages of criminal prosecution. In the first phase, the investigative phase, the police can use this knowledge to help apprehend the unknown offender. When a suspect has been arrested, forensic psychological knowledge is useful in planning the interrogation. For example: How can we avoid false confessions? How can we detect deceitful behaviour? What should the police do when a suspect seems too psychologically disturbed to be interviewed at all?</p> <p>In the second phase of criminal prosecution, the defendant is sentenced. In this stage, forensic psychologists may advise the court whether the defendant is to be held fully responsible for his or her offence. A judgment of diminished responsibility may lead to a shorter prison sentence and/or mandatory forensic psychiatric treatment. An example of a topic that forensic psychologists deal with are crimes allegedly committed while the offender was sleepwalking ("It wasn't me, I was sleeping"). Students will learn how a forensic psychologist can evaluate such a claim, and determine how likely it is that the defendant was truly sleepwalking. Another aspect for consideration is genetic makeup; Is there such a thing as a gene predisposing an individual to commit murder? And if so, does this diminish criminal responsibility? And can recent insights from neuroscience help in establishing responsibility?</p> <p>At the end of this course students will have gained knowledge about current issues and controversies connected to the psychology of offenders.</p>
Goals	Knowledge of: Filicide, false confessions, deception, somnambulism, profiling, behavioural genetics.
Instruction language	EN
Prerequisites	
Recommended literature	E-reader.
Teaching methods	Lecture(s) Presentation(s) PBL
Assessment methods	Attendance Presentation Written exam
Key words	filicide, false confessions, deception, somnambulism, profiling, behavioural genetics

Is equal to Forensic Master module PSY4611

Title	Forensic Neuropsychology
Period	2a
Code	PSY4016
ECTS credits	2
Organisational unit	Clinical Psychological Science
Coordinator	Marko Jelacic Conny Quaedflieg
Descriptions	<p>Criminal courts are becoming increasingly aware of the unique and important contribution neuropsychological assessment may have to mental health evaluations in forensic practice. This pertains especially to cases with specific central nervous system pathology. As a result, neuropsychological expertise is requested in a substantial number of criminal and civil cases. Evidence suggests that traumatic brain injury is highly prevalent in individuals in forensic settings. The use of high-tech brain imaging techniques in defendants and forensic patients, to explain or underscore specific theories on brain-behaviour relationships, is becoming increasingly common nowadays. But what is the value of such brain images in individual defendants? Given the increased demand for experts in forensic neuropsychology, it is desirable for forensic psychologists to have expertise in this particular field.</p> <p>Defendants in criminal cases increasingly state that they do not have any memory for their offence. This raises the question of whether this is always a valid defence. Besides this, defendants and witnesses with traumatic brain injury and/or functional or neurodegenerative disorders are becoming more common in legal settings. It is often assumed that these persons can, as a witness or as a defendant, give accurate statements. In search for answers on the validity and credibility of these issues, forensic psychologists should have state-of-the-art knowledge of clinical neuropsychology, neuropsychological assessment, neuropsychology of memory, and neurological vulnerability.</p>
Goals	<p>Knowledge of: Brain structure and function, neurological disorders, confabulation, amnesia, violence, structural brain scans in court, functional brain scans in court, neuropsychological assessment (psychometrics and psychodiagnostics), aggressive behaviour, mental retardation.</p>
Instruction language	EN
Prerequisites	
Recommended literature	<p>Young, S., Kopelman, M., & Gudjonsson, G. (2009). Forensic neuropsychology in practice: A guide to assessment and legal processes. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press;</p> <p>E-reader.</p>
Teaching methods	<p>Lecture(s) PBL Skills</p>
Assessment methods	<p>Attendance Written exam</p>
Key words	forensic neuropsychology, brain structure, functionality, violence, brain disorders

Title	Public policy in legal psychology
Period	2b
Code	PSY 4017
ECTS credits	2
Organisational unit	Clinical Psychological Science
Coordinator	Kim van Oorsouw
Descriptions	<p>To adequately prepare students for the job market, it is important that they develop skills related to policy development. In this 4-week course, students will learn the basics of public policy in legal psychology, and learn how to write a policy report on a relevant topic.</p> <p>Students will work in small groups (max 6), and select a topic of their interest at the beginning of the academic year (e.g., “Should the lie detector be used in the assessment of sex offender recidivism?”; “How to adequately assess post-traumatic stress disorder in asylum seekers?”; “Is there a reliable profile of a lone-acting terrorist?”; “Can we increase the successful detection of child abuse in schools?”).</p> <p>Groups will be coached by an expert staff member who will supervise the writing of the policy report. Students are expected to select relevant research papers and perform desktop research into existing policies and where possible, work with existing databases, such as the one from the <i>Wetenschappelijk Onderzoeks en Documentatie Centrum (WODC)</i>. Lectures will be given by policy makers from the field. End product will be a (short) policy report including clear practical guidelines. This report will be presented to a panel of experts.</p>
Goals	critical evaluation of research and theory, translation of research and theory into practical guidelines, writing of policy reports, writing new policy based on societal problems, evaluation of existing policy.
Instruction language	EN
Prerequisites	
Recommended literature	E-reader,
Teaching methods	Lecture(s) PBL
Assessment methods	Attendance Final paper
Key words	Public policy , legal psychology, science-based policy

Is equal to Forensic Master module PSY 4615

Title	Experts and their Decisions
Period	2
Code	PSY4014
ECTS credits	4
Organisational unit	Clinical Psychological Science
Coordinator	Harald Merckelbach
Descriptions	Some have argued that the story behind miscarriages of justice is, in fact, the story of expert errors and misjudgments. Experts do, indeed, play an important role in judicial decision making; the law expects them to reach their decisions on the basis of scientifically grounded principles. Consider the handwriting expert who has to decide whether a ransom note was written by the defendant. Or the child psychologist who has to decide whether a child should stay with an emotionally labile mother. Should we trust the expertise of these professionals? How can their decisions be optimised? Psychometrics and decision making and other issues typically thought to be the province of expert witnesses are discussed at length during this course: How do experts reason about the causality underlying, for example, accidents? Can modern techniques like fMRI assist experts in drawing conclusions on issues such as criminal responsibility of defendants? What about defendants who feign all kinds of psychiatric symptoms? How can the expert detect these? This course tackles these and related questions.
Goals	Knowledge of: Decisions making styles, biases, debiasing, signal detection theory, Receiver Operating Characteristics, expectancy effects, likelihood ratio's, heuristics, psychopharmacology, drugs and crimes, neuro-imaging and criminal responsibility, malingering.
Instruction language	EN
Prerequisites	
Recommended literature	E-reader
Teaching methods	Lecture(s) PBL Presentation(s)
Assessment methods	Attendance Presentation Written exam
Key words	expert witnesses, diagnostic accuracy, decision making, biases, malingering

Title	Practical training: Psychology and Law in Action
Period	1, 2
Code	PSY4015
ECTS credits	4
Organisational unit	Clinical Psychological Science
Coordinator	Kim van Oorsouw
Descriptions	Psychology and Law in Action offers students the opportunity to become familiar with the practical aspect of psychology and law. Students will acquire hands-on experience with the administration of instruments frequently used by experts in the legal field, including use of tools to measure suggestibility and malingering. Furthermore, lectures will be given by professionals working in the legal field. The basics of criminal proceedings in court will be outlined with an accompanying visit to a court hearing. In addition, field trips to different legal settings will be organised (e.g., forensic institution, jail). Students will spend a substantial amount of time in administrating tests and on reading relevant literature. At the end of the practical training, students are expected to act as an expert witness in a mock criminal law case and must submit a written expert report.
Goals	Knowledge of: Administration and application of tests; testing relevant for legal arena; working field of psychology and law; visit psychology and law settings.
Instruction language	EN
Prerequisites	
Recommended literature	E-reader.
Teaching methods	Assignment(s) Lecture(s) Paper(s) PBL Skills Training(s) Work in subgroups Working visit(s)
Assessment methods	Attendance Final paper Presentation
Key words	measurement of malingering, excursions, assessment, court hearing

See HSP

Title	Academic Skills & Research Proposal
Period	Period 3
Code	PSY4098
ECTS credits	5
Organisational unit	Clinical Psychological Science
Coordinator	Janneke Giesen/Dilana Schaafsma