

SYLLABUS

Legal Psychology

University year 2025-2026

1. Information regarding the programme

1.1. Higher education institution	Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai din Cluj Napoca
1.2. Faculty	Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
1.3. Department	Department of Psychology
1.4. Field of study	Psychology – Cognitive Sciences
1.5. Study cycle	Bachelor level
1.6. Study programme/Qualification	Psychologist
1.7. Form of education	Full-time

2. Information regarding the discipline

2.1. Name of the discipline		Legal Psychology					Discipline code		PLE1644		
2.2. Course coordinator					George Visu, Associated Lecturer, PhD						
2.3. Seminar coordinator					Narcisa Prodan, Assistant Lecturer, PhD						
2.4. Year of study		3	2.5. Semester		6	2.6. Type of evaluation		E	2.7. Discipline regime		DS

3. Total estimated time (hours/semester of didactic activities)

3.1. Hours per week	3	of which: 3.2 course	2	3.3 seminar/laboratory	1
3.4. Total hours in the curriculum	36	of which: 3.5 course	24	3.6 seminar/laborator	12
Time allotment for individual study (ID) and self-study activities (SA)					hours
3.5.1. Learning using manual, course support, bibliography, course notes (SA)					20
3.5.2. Additional documentation (in libraries, on electronic platforms, field documentation)					12
3.5.3. Preparation for seminars/labs, homework, papers, portfolios and essays					8
3.5.4. Tutorship					2
3.5.5. Evaluations					2
3.5.6. Other activities:					
3.7. Total individual study hours	46				
3.8. Total hours per semester	100				
3.9. Number of ECTS credits	4				

4. Prerequisites (if necessary)

4.1. curriculum	Developmental Psychology Experimental Psychology Clinical Psychology Cognitive Psychology Introduction to neuroscience
4.2. competencies	- critical thinking - the ability to understand and apply research designs to legal psychology.

5. Conditions (if necessary)

5.1. for the course	Classroom Video projection system (PC/laptop, video projector) Audio system
5.2. for the seminar /lab activities	Classroom Video projection system (PC/laptop, video projector)

	Audio system
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6. Specific competencies acquired

Professional/essential competencies	<p>Knowledge and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to understand and explain the terminology of legal psychology General understanding of legal psychological topics Contrasting and criticizing current issues and controversies in legal psychological research Understand the importance and limitations of psychological research to the application of legal processes Understand the importance of developing testable theories and how these theories help to explain and predict human behavior within the legal system <p>Explanation and interpretation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the various ways that psychologists interact with the legal system Articulate the tensions that exist between psychology and law The ability to understand, explain, and criticize methods and the experimental work done in this discipline <p>Instrumental - applicative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning the main techniques for investigating several topics from the field of Legal psychology Developing skills to conduct a research project <p>Attitude</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manifestation of a positive and responsible attitude towards the scientific field Cultivating a responsible attitude towards the research activity in the field Interest in personal development in the field
Transversal competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written and oral communication skills Teamwork skills Time management skills and the management of resources Competences in using scientific terminology in the field of cognitive science Competences for the interdisciplinary use of knowledge and terminology in the fields of psychology and cognitive sciences

7. Objectives of the discipline (outcome of the acquired competencies)

7.1 General objective of the discipline	Provide students with an introduction to the theories, models, and research related to the field of Legal psychology
7.2 Specific objective of the discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine the various ways that psychologists interact with the legal system and apply research and theory to legal problems; To provide a working knowledge of the psychological theories that underpin human behavior in the criminal justice system, including the behavior of witnesses, children, judges, and offenders. To critically review the research in legal psychology and to enable students to become informant consumers of this research.

8. Content

8.1 Course	Teaching methods	Remarks
1. Introductory notions of legal psychology	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
2. Criminal behavior theories	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
3. Types of criminal behavior	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	

4. Personality disorders in legal settings	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
5. Memory and suggestibility	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
6. Detecting deception in legal settings	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
7. Malingering	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
8. Interrogation and investigative interviewing techniques	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
9. Involuntary Celibacy	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
10. False confessions	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
11. Juvenile delinquency	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	
12. Legal psychology - recap	Lecture, demonstrative example, synthesis of knowledge, guided discovery	

Bibliography

Bošković, I. (2022). Trust, doubt, and symptom validity. In *The Future of Forensic Psychology* (pp. 127-138). Routledge.

Haber, R. N., & Haber, L. (2000). Experiencing, remembering and reporting events. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 6(4), 1057.

Hagan, F. E., & Daigle, L. E. (2018). Part II: Theories in criminology. In *Introduction to criminology: Theories, methods, and criminal behavior*. Sage Publications.

Hartwig, M., Granhag, P. A., & Strömwall, L. (2007). Guilty and innocent suspects' strategies during police interrogations. *Psychology, Crime, & Law*, 13, 213-227.

Honts, C. R., Thurber, S., & Handler, M. (2021). A comprehensive meta-analysis of the comparison question polygraph test. *Applied cognitive psychology*, 35(2), 411-427.

Howitt, D. (2006). *Introduction to forensic and criminal psychology*. Pearson Education.

Phillips, K., Davidson, J. C., Farr, R. R., Burkhardt, C., Caneppele, S., & Aiken, M. P. (2022). Conceptualizing cybercrime: Definitions, typologies and taxonomies. *Forensic sciences*, 2(2), 379-398.

Tribbels, S., & Michels, M. (2025). Validity and effectiveness of interrogation techniques: A meta-analytic review. *Military Psychology*, 37(2), 127-137.

Visu-Petra, G., Buta, M., & Visu-Petra, L. (2016). Psihologia copilului în context judiciar. Fenomene teoretice și aplicative. Editura ASCR.

Vrij, A. (2008). *Detecting lies and deceit: Pitfalls and opportunities*. John Wiley & Sons.

Vrij, A. (2018). Verbal lie detection tools from an applied perspective. In J. P. Rosenfeld (Ed.), *Detecting concealed information and deception: Recent developments* (pp. 297-321). San Diego, CA: Elsevier/Academic Press.

Wood, A., Tanteckchi, P., & Keatley, D. A. (2022). A crime script analysis of involuntary celibate (INCEL) mass murderers. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 1-13

8.2 Seminar / laboratory	Teaching methods	Remarks
1. Introductory notions of legal psychology – the psychologist's role	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
2. Criminal behavior theories – study cases	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
3. Types of criminal behavior - cybercrime	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	

4. Personality disorders in legal settings – prevalence and relevance	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
5. Memory and suggestibility in adults and children	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
6. Non-verbal cues to deception: limitations	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
7. Malingering assessment	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
8. Interrogation and investigative interviewing: REID and PEACE techniques	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
9. Involuntary Celibacy – relevance in legal settings	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
10. False confessions	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
11. Juvenile delinquency – risk factors	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
12. Recap – case studies	Presentation, knowledge synthesis, conceptual clarification, practical activities	
Bibliography Bošković, I. (2022). Trust, doubt, and symptom validity. In <i>The Future of Forensic Psychology</i> (pp. 127-138). Routledge. Haber, R. N., & Haber, L. (2000). Experiencing, remembering and reporting events. <i>Psychology, PublicPolicy, and Law</i> , 6(4), 1057. Hagan, F. E., & Daigle, L. E. (2018). Part II: Theories in criminology. In <i>Introduction to criminology:Theories, methods, and criminal behavior</i> . Sage Publications. Hartwig, M., Granhag, P. A., & Strömwall, L. (2007). Guilty and innocent suspects' strategies duringpolice interrogations. <i>Psychology, Crime, & Law</i> , 13, 213–227. Honts, C. R., Thurber, S., & Handler, M. (2021). A comprehensive meta-analysis of the comparison question polygraph test. <i>Applied cognitive psychology</i> , 35(2), 411s-427. Howitt, D. (2006). <i>Introduction to forensic and criminal psychology</i> . Pearson Education. Phillips, K., Davidson, J. C., Farr, R. R., Burkhardt, C., Caneppele, S., & Aiken, M. P. (2022). Conceptualizing cybercrime: Definitions, typologies and taxonomies. <i>Forensic sciences</i> , 2(2), 379-398. Tribbels, S., & Michels, M. (2025). Validity and effectiveness of interrogation techniques: A meta-analytic review. <i>Military Psychology</i> , 37(2), 127-137. Visu-Petra, G., Buta, M., & Visu-Petra, L. (2016). Psihologia copilului în context judiciar. Fenomene teoretice și aplicative. Editura ASCR. Vrij, A. (2008). Detecting lies and deceit: Pitfalls and opportunities. John Wiley & Sons. Vrij, A. (2018). Verbal lie detection tools from an applied perspective. In J. P. Rosenfeld (Ed.), <i>Detecting concealed information and deception: Recent developments</i> (pp. 297–321). San Diego, CA: Elsevier:Academic Press. Wood, A., Tanteckchi, P., & Keatley, D. A. (2022). A crime script analysis of involuntary celibate (INCEL) mass murderers. <i>Studies in Conflict & Terrorism</i> , 1-13		

9. Corroborating the content of the discipline with the expectations of the epistemic community, professional associations and representative employers within the field of the program






The proposed lectures and seminars are designed to engage students with both foundational and advanced topics in legal psychology, a discipline situated at the intersection of psychology and law that investigates how psychological principles can inform legal processes, institutions, and outcomes. The course content reflects current theoretical and empirical advancements in areas such as eyewitness testimony, investigative interviewing, and the psychological assessment of offenders.

By integrating state-of-the-art research findings, the program not only enhances students' academic understanding but also develops methodological and analytical skills that are transferable across both scientific inquiry and applied practice. These competencies are closely aligned with the expectations of the broader epistemic community in legal psychology, including international scholarly networks, professional associations such as the European Association of Psychology and Law (EAPL), and representative employers in the criminal justice system, forensic services, policy-making institutions, and academic research. The course structure supports students in meeting contemporary standards of evidence-based practice, scientific integrity, and interdisciplinary collaboration—key competencies valued by these stakeholders.

10. Evaluation

Activity type	10.1 Evaluation criteria	10.2 Evaluation methods	10.3 Percentage of final grade
10.4 Course	Understanding the basic theoretical concepts	Written exam	50%
10.5 Seminar/laboratory	Applying the theoretical knowledge to specific concepts and presenting them accurately	Semester project (oral presentation)	50%
10.6 Minimum standard of performance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final grade of minimum 4.5 points. 			

11. Labels ODD (Sustainable Development Goals)¹

	General label for Sustainable Development							
								
								

¹ Keep only the labels that, according to the [Procedure for applying ODD labels in the academic process](#), suit the discipline and delete the others, including the general one for *Sustainable Development* – if not applicable. If no label describes the discipline, delete them all and write „Not applicable.”.

Date:
25.04.2025

Signature of course coordinator

George Visu, Associated Lecturer, PhD



Signature of seminar coordinator

Narcisa Prodan, Assistant Lecturer, PhD



Date of approval:

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Signature of the head of department

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