

DEGREE PROGRAM: INVESTIGATIVE SCIENCES
COURSE: METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS OF FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY

CREDITS: 6 Hours: 36

First Year - Second Semester:

A.Y. 2024/2025 **INSTRUCTOR: MARIA GRAZIA VACCARO** – Researcher M-PSI/03 - Psychometrics

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EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

The course aims to provide students with knowledge of the fundamental concepts related to forensic psychology, focusing on the role of the expert psychologist during investigation phases.

APPLIED KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

By the end of the course, students, encouraged to engage in critical and problem-based learning, will be able not only to recognize the main tools of forensic psychology and their theories but also to analyze and apply forensic methodology to the investigations they will conduct.

AUTONOMY OF JUDGMENT

Students will develop the ability to independently elaborate and argue solutions related to concrete cases with logical rigor and correct use of forensic psychology tools and methods.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Students will be able to present acquired knowledge coherently, with logical-systematic rigor, using appropriate technical-psychological language.

LEARNING ABILITY

Students will develop an aptitude for understanding the complexity of psycho-forensic phenomena. Their ability to source information and mastery of analytical methods will enable them to continue their studies independently.

COURSE PROGRAM

The program includes:

- Introductory concepts and fundamental principles of psychology, clinical psychology, and forensic psychology.
- General Psychology. Clinical Psychology. Forensic Psychology. Differences, strengths, and limitations between clinical and forensic psychology.
- Memory: The role of memory in judgment. Structure and functioning of memory. Limitations and distortions of memory. Information collection limits: selective attention, expectations, schemas. Recall limitations: suggestive questions, line-ups, additional information. Recognizing false memories. Case studies from current events.
- Sincerity, Deception, and Distortion: Intentional inaccuracies: lying and false testimony. Strategies of the liar.

- True and False Confessions: False denial. Characteristics of false confessions. Motivations behind false communications. Predisposing factors for false confessions: personality aspects. Analysis of case studies from current events.
- Person Recognition: Person recognition and judicial error. Where recognition errors occur. Tools to reduce recognition errors. Analysis of case studies from current events.
- Interceptions: Practical examples of interceptions. Cognitive mechanisms influencing transcriptions. Analysis of a transcription.
- Tools for assessing fitness to testify: Quantitative analysis of memory. Tools measuring intelligence and executive functions. Tools for assessing general abilities. Tools for assessing specific abilities. Tools measuring suggestibility.
- Tools for assessing capacity to understand and will: Mental illness. Personality tests. Predictive tests for recidivism. Tests for assessing social dangerousness.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- Giuseppe Sartori (2021). *The Memory of the Witness*. Giuffrè.
- Materials presented/cited during lectures (slides, national and international scientific articles, online reference links for practical exercises).

COURSE ORGANIZATION:

Lectures, Seminars, Practical Exercises.

MODE OF DELIVERY:

The course consists of frontal and interactive lectures often characterized by simulations, followed by classroom discussions on current cases with constant interaction with students.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance is optional but strongly recommended.

SUPPORT ACTIVITIES:

Support activities are conducted directly by the instructor during office hours.

METHODS AND CRITERIA FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT:

The exam consists of an oral interview. The evaluation will be aimed at assigning a final grade (from 18 to 30) based on the following parameters:

Knowledge and understanding	Analytical and synthetic skills	Use of references
Not suitable	Significant deficiencies; major inaccuracies	Irrelevant; frequent generalizations; inability to synthesize
18-20	Threshold level; evident imperfections	Barely sufficient skills

Knowledge and understanding	Analytical and synthetic skills	Use of references
21-23	Routine knowledge	Able to perform correct analysis and synthesis; argues logically and coherently
24-26	Good knowledge	Good analytical and synthetic skills; topics expressed coherently
27-29	More than good knowledge	Notable analytical and synthetic skills; has explored topics deeply
30-30L	Excellent knowledge	Notable analytical and synthetic skills; significant insights