

## PSYCHOLOGY OF CRIME AND LEGAL RESPONSE

***Responsible Faculty Instructor:***  
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Lecturer

Credits: 4

Credits Type: Law

Cross-registration: NA

Pre-requisites: This course is primarily designed for law students. Individuals with backgrounds in forensic science, psychology, or related disciplines are also encouraged to enroll, as the course integrates interdisciplinary perspectives on crime and legal responses.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION (COURSE VISION):

The course 'Psychology of crime and legal response' analyzes crime as a psychological phenomenon and outlines how the legal system interprets and responds to criminal behavior. Drawing from forensic psychology, criminology, cognitive science, personality theories, and psychophysiological research, the course explores the biopsychosocial antecedents of crime, relevant psychopathology (DSM-5-TR and ICD-11), and the cognitive and emotional mechanisms underlying crime. Students will get to understand psychological processes across the continuum of crime, from initiation of criminal behavior to policing, criminal investigations, and courtroom proceedings.

### TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

1. Core psychological theories will be delivered through structured lectures, supported by relevant case studies and documentary excerpts.
2. Structured and semi-structured debates on contemporary empirical studies in criminal psychology.
3. Guided group discussions on contested forensic and legal issues, including (but not limited to) reliability of memory evidence, insanity defenses, and police interrogation ethics.
4. Reflective and analytical assignments to assess case vignettes, critique investigative errors, and integrate psychological constructs with legal standards of culpability.

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Weightage (%)	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments
1. Conceptual understanding of biopsychosocial foundations of crime and psychological processes, including personality, cognition, and emotions	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused lectures on foundational psychological processes and the implications of key domains (personality, cognition, and emotion) in understanding criminal behavior</li> <li>• Guided reading of core theoretical texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class short analytical writing</li> <li>• MCQs</li> <li>• Mid-semester examination (Open book)</li> </ul>
2. Application and critical evaluation of psychological principles in criminal investigations, policing, and courtroom processes	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured debates and group discussions</li> <li>• Seminar presentations on policy controversies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written case analysis</li> <li>• Group seminar presentation</li> </ul>
3. Conceptual understanding and implications of psychological theory with legal responsibility, culpability, and justice outcomes	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrative lectures connecting theory with applied legal scenarios</li> <li>• Guided reading of core theoretical texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End-semester examination (Closed book)</li> </ul>

READING LIST:

1. Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2002). Human aggression. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 27–51. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135231>
2. Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology*, 3(3), 265–299. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0303_03)
3. Baron, R. A., & Misra, G. (2018). *Psychology* (5th ed.). Pearson Education India. ISBN 9789332558540

4. Bonta, J., & Andrews, D. A. (2024). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (7th ed.). Routledge. ISBN 9781032272856
5. Butcher, J. N., Hooley, J. M., & Mineka, S. M. (2017). *Abnormal psychology* (17th ed.). Pearson. ISBN 9781292157771
6. Sahni, S. P., & Bhadra, P. (Eds.). (2021). *Criminal psychology and the criminal justice system in India and beyond*. Springer. ISBN 9789811645693

WEEKLY READING PLAN (WEEKLY OUTLINE):

A weekly plan is provided below:

MODULES	WEEKS
<p><b>MODULE 1: BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL FOUNDATIONS OF CRIME</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Childhood adversity and trauma; Family systems and attachment; Peer influence and gang dynamics; Socioeconomic fabric of crime.</li> </ul>	Week 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Genetics, neuroanatomy of aggression and violence; Hormonal and chemical influences.</li> </ul>	Week 2
<p><b>MODULE 2: PERSONALITY, DEVIANCE &amp; PSYCHOPATHOLOGY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Big Five traits and antisocial tendencies; Dark personalities; Impulsivity and sensation seeking; Moral development.</li> </ul>	Week 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Personality disorders related to crime and violence; Conduct disorder in childhood; Substance abuse; Paraphilia and sexual deviance; Debates on insanity defense (Section 84 IPC; McNaughton rule).</li> </ul>	Week 4
<p><b>MODULE 3: COGNITION &amp; EMOTION IN CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Hostile attribution bias; Hostile information processing (Huesmann); General Aggression Model (Anderson &amp; Bushman); Moral reasoning (Kohlberg).</li> </ul>	Week 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Anger management issues; Role of emotional intelligence in crime; Empathy deficits; Shame and Guilt before and after crime.</li> </ul>	Week 6
<p><b>MODULE 4: CRIME ACROSS PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Crime across the levels of consciousness; Rational choice and cost–benefit evaluation; Premeditation and executive planning; Instrumental aggression and calculated violence.</li> </ul>	Week 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Affective violence; Impulse control failure; Hypnotic crimes; Automatism; Dissociation, depersonalization, and derealization.</li> </ul>	Week 8
<p><b>MODULE 5: POLICE PSYCHOLOGY &amp; FIRST RESPONSE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Role of police psychologists and welfare officers in Indian legal system; Stress, burnout &amp; PTSD in police; Crowd and negotiation psychology.</li> </ul>	Week 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Perception gaps in the police–public relationship; Custodial stress and coercion; Mental health in prisons.</li> </ul>	Week 10
<p><b>MODULE 6: COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN INVESTIGATIONS</b></p>	Week 11

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Basics of information processing; Memory process and types; Stress and memory consolidation; False and reconstructive memory.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Change blindness; Inattention blindness; Confirmation bias; Tunnel vision; Effects of availability heuristic; Decision making in false confessions.</li> </ul>	Week 12
<p><b>MODULE 7: PSYCHOLOGICAL ERRORS IN TRIALS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Misinformation effect; Memory contamination; Confidence-accuracy paradox; Source monitoring errors.</li> </ul>	Week 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Description: Jury &amp; Judge Decision Process - Stereotypes and bias; Expert testimony reliability; Daubert standard; Expert witness bias; Cognitive and emotional states of judges during trial.</li> </ul>	Week 14
<b>REVISION WEEK</b>	Week 15