

The Psychology of Police Deadly Force Encounters
(AS.200.162.87)

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A forensic psychologist and SWAT team leader evaluate split second decisions employed by police who use deadly force. Police shootings, and the media report of police use of deadly force against black males, has contributed to a further deterioration of police community relationships. Relying on case studies, we will focus on how police officer decisions concerning deadly force are made, what cause bad decisions, and whether specific training can improve decision making.

Instructor information:

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Howard County Police Department
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Course objectives

Q: What will I get out of the course?

A: You should consider taking this course if you want to:

- Understand the role of a police psychologist following a police deadly encounter.
- Understand the various policy perspectives associated with policing the police.
- Understand the application legal rights associated with the use of deadly force.
- Develop reasoning skills that will enable you to apply psychological analysis of decision-making strategies when coping with police – citizen deadly encounters, and how best to diffuse these.
- Identify and analyze prominent cases involving the application of deadly force by police officers, taking the perspective of the police officer, and the perspective of the citizen.

Assignments:

1. **HOMEWORK:** Over the course of the class, you will be presented with an essay question, designed to deepen your understanding of precedent setting cases, which will require a detailed analysis. This will give you practice applying your knowledge derived from case based scenarios. Your essays are to be no more than eight single-spaced pages. Be prepared to learn and write about the following case: **Freddy Grey case.**
2. **Class Participation:** Attendance, and being involved are rewarded.
3. **Final Exam:** You will receive part of the final exam as a take-home portion, which will consist of short written answers. In addition, a second portion of the Final Exam is a two-hour in class open book test.

IMPORTANT DATES

	Due
Written essay draft	End of class Thursday, June 29, 2017
Written essay final copy	End of class Monday, July 3, 2017
Final Exam (take home)	Receive, July 5, 2017 Due Friday, July 7, 2017
Final Exam (in class)	Friday, July 7, 2017

Grading Criteria

HOMEWORK: The homework question you select will be graded and worth 30% of your overall course grade. Penalties for turning in homework late will result for students turning in homework after the class discussion of the assignment.

Final Exam Take Home: The exam will constitute 30% of the overall course grade, and will be closed book exam.

Final Exam In Class: The exam will constitute 40% of the overall course grade and will be an open book exam.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Class participation will be evaluated qualitatively and ratings will be used to move students, whose scores are near a grade cutoff point on the final distribution and who have excellent class participation, up a half grade. Class participation consists of three elements: attendance, preparation, and making thoughtful, relevant contributions to class discussions.

Additional Information

Policy on Academic Integrity: Please make sure you understand the following rules regarding collaboration on assignments and academic integrity. If anything about these policies is unclear, it is your responsibility to ask the instructor for clarification.

- **Homework Questions:** Your response to the homework question must represent your own work only. This is not a collaborative project. You should generate ideas for your answers and write your answers on your own. When you derive facts or ideas from reading and research, please indicate the source (It is not necessary to make attributions to course lectures).
- **Exams:** The in class final exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, true false questions. It will be an open book exam. The final exam must be completed independently. During the exam, you may consult your notes and course readings. You should acknowledge cases and other readings by short name (e.g., “Gostin describes...”; “In *Jacobson*, the court held...”). It is not necessary to make attributions to course lectures.
- **Senior option:** There is no senior option grading.
- **Classroom etiquette:** Please be prepared to refrain from relying upon computers, cell phones, or other devices during class, as these items are seductive, distract students from class discussions, and diminish learning in a classroom environment. If you require a computer for

note taking, please ask for special permission. I reserve the right to call on students without notice.

- **Exam accommodations:** Please follow standard Hopkins procedures for requesting accommodations relating to a disability. Requests to take the final exam at an alternative time for personal reasons will be considered, but granted only in exceptional circumstances. Please make such requests as early as possible.
- **Course Evaluations:** Johns Hopkins University requires completion of a course evaluation for each course you take, and the forms are available on line. Your grade may not be available until you submit the evaluation.
- **A last word:** College can be a very fun, but also at times a very stressful experience. Sometimes this class, in particular, can stir up old and new psychological problems/symptoms or just complicated feelings for students. Confronting traumatic events can negatively impact students, given they will become more aware of unexpected, problematic emotions. If you would like to talk about life stressors or traumatic feelings with a professional, there are lots of resources available to you. The JHU Counseling Center provides *free and confidential* counseling and referral services. More information is available at: <http://web.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/services/>. If you or a friend needs help, do not hesitate to call. If you or a friend experiences a crisis, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ([1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255)) is also a good resource.

SUMMER SEMESTER SCHEDULE

CLASS 1: Monday, June 26, 2017: “What is forensic psychology?” “What is a SWAT team strategy?”

Morning: What is forensic psychology?

Topic 1: Introduction to criminal law and the role of the forensic psychologist.

Topic 2: The forensic psychologist is an expert in counter-intuitive behavior analysis.

What is SWAT?

Topic 1: Common myths associated with SWAT team.

Topic 2: Introduction to the concept of SWAT and the various roles and responsibilities of SWAT team members.

Topic 3: Illustrative examples of SWAT team activities.

Afternoon: The Freddy Grey case presentation and initial analysis.

CLASS 2: Tuesday, June 27, 2017: Important background context, and historic case precursors

Topic 1: Policing the police: policy initiatives and the scope of the problem

- a. Frontline video, “Policing the police,” will be shown
- b. What is community policing?
- c. Assessing and comparing police attitudes toward the use of violence in urban settings.

- d. A discussion about demographic factors, including the special problem of race, police behavior, and violence.
- e. Bringing charges and jury nullification outcomes
- f. Citizen reprisals: The Micah Johnson ambush incident

Topic 2: Important historic precursor cases will be reviewed like:

- i. Trevon Martin—Zimmerman case
- ii. The Post-Katrina Hurricane police shootings

CLASS 3: Wednesday, June 28, 2017: Our analysis of the officer's decision to use deadly force.

Topic 1: The (instantaneous) decision to shoot—exercise and analysis that considers:

- a. Split second syndrome: officers misperceive danger and overreact
 - a. Excerpts from the movie *Crash*
- b. Contagious fire: one officer fires, then others fire
- c. Deadly force used on subject who is already surrendering
- d. Officer draws gun while handcuffing a subject
- e. Adrenalin overload occurs following high speed chase

Topic 2: When police shoot to kill?

- i. A psychological analysis
 - a. Gradual vs. explosive onset of violence
 - b. The psychology of running toward danger, not away
 - c. Adaptations of natural defenses in emergency situations
- ii. A SWAT team member analysis.
 - a. A discussion of deadly force critical incident procedures
 - On scene aftermath investigation
 - What constitutes an internal investigation?
 - Coping with psychological evaluation from the officer's point of view

Topic 3: Evaluating the challenge to avoid excessive use of force. Illustrative examples.

Topic 4: Post incident psychological assessment: what to look for?

- i. Deadly force short-term psychological reactions in 1 to 3 days
- ii. Longer term reactions: impact, recoil, resolutions, and PTSD
- iii. Post-incident psychological issues:
 - Decision to require mandatory vs. voluntary referral
 - Issues of confidentiality vs. privilege
 - Intensity of intervention/evaluation
 - Fitness for return to duty decision

CLASS 4: Thursday, June 29, 2017: Forensic Analysis of dangerous encounters following traffic stops.

Topic 1: Police officer training: Police stops, the protective search, and dealing with an uncooperative citizen response

Topic 2: Rules and Guidelines: Use of deadly force, least restrictive force

Topic 3: Deadly encounters following traffic stops: controversial cases

- a. Sandra Bland (Texas)
- b. Walter Scott (Charlestown, SC)
- c. Philandro Castile (Minnesota)

Topic 4: Guest speaker: TBA

CLASS 5: Friday, June 30, 2017: Forensic Analysis of dangerous encounters when police suspect citizen of possessing a weapon.

Topic 1: A US Constitution's right to bear arms: the view from law enforcement.

Topic 2: Police officer training to protect and defend: The protective search, and dealing with an uncooperative, armed citizen

- a. Definitions: Deadly force, Excessive force, Self Defense, Justifiable Homicide
- b. Decision to use force to protect and defend oneself

Topic 3: The cases:

- a. Alan Blueford (Oakland, California)
- b. Alton Sterling (Baton Rouge, Louisiana)
- c. Jeremy McDole (Wilmington, Delaware)
- d. Keith Lamont Scott (Charlotte, NC)
- e. Laquan MaDonald (Chicago, Illinois)
- f. Terence Crutcher (Tulsa, Oklahoma)

Topic 4: Guest speaker: TBA

CLASS 6: Monday, July 3, 2017: Police Confrontations with high profile (non-mentally ill) citizens

Topic 1: The police response to domestic violence situation calls.

Topic 2: Police officer training to protect and defend: The protective search, and dealing with an uncooperative, non-mentally ill citizen

1. Definitions: Deadly force, Excessive force, Self Defense, Justifiable Homicide
2. Police officer's decision to use deadly force: Supreme Court law governing the use of deadly force.

Topic 3: Illustrative cases:

1. Eric Garner (New York City, NY)
2. Michael Brown, (Ferguson, Missouri)

Topic 4: Visit to the Police Academy: SWAT team exercises

CLASS 7: Wednesday, July 5, 2017: Police Confrontations with mentally ill citizens

- Topic 1:* Understanding mental illness diagnosis: a brief introduction
- Topic 2:* The importance of police officer training to professionally encounter mentally ill citizens:
- a. Frequency and challenges to police posed by mentally ill citizens
- Topic 3:* Police encounters with mentally ill persons: introductory cases
- a. Kristiana Coignard
 - b. Alfred Orlango
 - c. Ethan Saylor (Downs syndrome diagnosis)
 - d. Michelle Cusseaus (Schizophrenia diagnosis)
 - e. Deborah Danner
 - f. Quntonio Le Grier
- More cases:
- a. Sioloseya Velega Nuufola
 - b. Michael Noel
 - c. Kely Thomas
 - d. Charles Kinsey
 - e. Keith Lamont Scott
 - f. Dianna Choate

CLASS 8: Thursday, July 6, 2017: Special investigation: Albuquerque police department

- Topic 1:* The cases:
- a. James Boyd
 - b. Mary Hawkes
 - c. Andy Snider
- Topic 2:* The Justice Department investigation
- Topic 3:* Implementing the recommendations

CLASS 9: Friday, July 7, 2017: Wrap up & Final Exam

- Topic 1:* The media role: a source for good or bad?
- Topic 2:* The role of technology contributor to accountability or further problems

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of students and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on "Academic Ethics for Undergraduates" and the Ethics Board web site (<http://ethics.jhu.edu>) for more information.

2. **The law of excessive force applied to police deadly force encounters: justifying violence. An Analysis of the precedence setting legal cases.**
3. Jury nullification in police deadly encounter cases;
4. **An (instantaneous) decision to shoot—**
 - a. **Why cops kill? A psychological analysis.**
 - b. **Why cops kill? A SWAT team member analysis.**
3. **Police shooting cases on video: several categories for analysis**
 - a. **Police encounters with mentally ill persons**
 - b. **Police encounters with armed citizens**
 - c. **Traffic stops that end in deadly results**
 - d. **Police conflict family conflicts**
 - e. **Interventions**
4. **A special case: SWAT team activities**
 - a. **What do SWAT teams do?**
 - b. **Common myths associated with SWAT team activities**
 - c. **What is meant by "SWAT team professionalism"?**
6. **Turning the tables: When the police become targets of violence.**
7. **Investigation of police shooting incidents.**

1. **The role of media.**
2. **The role of the psychologist.**
 1. **Do police officers experience PTSD following deadly encounters?**

7. **Psychologist roles as consultants to the police force**
 - a. **Police officer screenings**
 - b. **Psychologists role in the aftermath of a police shooting**

Movie: **Crash...** police shooting scene....