

University of Roehampton International Summer School

Department of Psychology
Module Title: The Psychology of Murder
Module Code: PSY010N240H
Module Tutor: Sarah Johnson

Module Rationale

This module has been designed with ‘murder in mind’! Murder and why individuals commit such heinous crimes is a fascinating topic of study. Throughout history scholars have tried to understand the motivation behind taking another person’s life. The principle aim of this module is to introduce you to the psychology of murder.

Initial sessions will provide a background through exploring the importance of psychology in the field of criminology and what exactly do we mean by murder. Our intellectual journey will then progress to delve into the most fascinating area of murders: the world of the serial killer, mass murderer and the growing issue of terrorism. From exploring actual crimes we will gradually build up a picture of the psychological motivations behind such serious crimes – are murderers mad, sad or bad? To further understand the motivation behind murder we will explore why certain victims are selected (female, homeless, children) and debate how such crimes should be punished in our society.

The module will comprise lectures, workshops and debates as well as a walking tour of some of the famous London murder sites.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the module students will have an understanding of:

- The relationship between psychology and criminology
- Legal definition of murder and the issue of responsibility
- A range of psychological perspectives to understanding murder
- The forensic details of murder including profiling
- The psychology of victimology

Assessment

The assessment for this module will comprise of two components:

- A 2000 word case study of an actual murder case (80%)
- A class presentation of a case study (20%)

Proposed Timetable – indicative only

Day	10-11am	11.15-12.15pm	12.30 – 1.30pm
Monday	The psychology of murder	Psychological perspectives	Case study
Tuesday	Serial killers and psychopathology	Psychopathology	Case Study
Wednesday	Serial Killers and narcissism	Narcissism	Case Study
Thursday	Mass Murderers	Case study	Judge and Jury
Monday	Stalkers who kill	The use of profiling	Workshop
Tuesday	Children who kill	Children who kill (mass murder)	
Wednesday	Visit to local murder scene	Visit to local murder scene	A case of wrong profiling
Thursday	Murder and the role of social media	Workshop - How to detect liars	Workshop - How to detect liars
Monday	Day trip – London serial killer	Day trip – London serial killer	Day trip – London serial killer
Tuesday	Domestic homicides	Growing issues with terrorism	Class debate
Wednesday	Presentation preparations	Presentation preparations	Presentation preparations
Thursday	Group presentation	Group presentations	Group presentations

Indicative Bibliography

Roland, P (2007). *In the minds of murderers*. Arcturus: London

Wilson, C. & Seaman, D (2007). *The Serial Killers: A Study in the Psychology of Violence*. Virgin Books: London

Hollin C.R. (2012). *Psychology and Crime: An Introduction to Criminological Psychology*. Routledge: London

Newman, T. (2017). *Criminology*. Third Edition. Routledge: Oxon