FRESHMAN SEMINAR PROGRAM
PROPOSAL FORM

Please include this form with the completed proposal. You may either send your proposal electronically as an email attachment to seminars@fas.harvard.edu or as hard copy to:

Freshman Seminars Program, 6 Prescott Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

The Faculty of the Committee on Freshman Seminars meets occasionally during the fall and regularly through the spring. All proposals will be reviewed by the Committee as soon as possible after they have been received.

Instructor’s Name: Ronald Schouten

Title and Harvard Affiliation: Associate Professor Of Psychiatry

Email: ___________________________ Phone #: ___________________________ Fax #: ___________________________

Mailing Address: _____________________________________________________________

Title of the Seminar: Responsibility, the Brain, and Behavior

State the semester and year in which you would prefer to hold the seminar: Fall 2009

Please attach to this cover sheet:

1) a 350-500 word course description

2) a draft syllabus outlining the structure, readings, and assignments of the course or, alternatively, a list of topics, required readings, and course assignments.

3) a list of projected course expenses (e.g., guest speakers, theater tickets, etc.); please list as well any course-related trips. A field trip proposal form must be submitted for any off-campus outing, once your seminar proposal has been approved

4) a C.V., if you are a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Description

The individual’s responsibility for his or her behavior is a subject of constant inquiry in our society. This seminar will explore the philosophical and legal bases of the concept of individual responsibility as it is applied in the criminal justice system. We will examine how forensic mental health professionals assess an individual’s mental state at the time of an alleged criminal act, the legal standards applied, and the social and political forces that help to shape the legal decision. In the process, students will consider historical and modern examples of the insanity defense, including modern attempts to expand the range of disorders offered as a basis for an insanity defense, e.g. battered women’s syndrome, urban trauma syndrome, Gulf War syndrome. The seminar will examine modern concepts of the biological basis of behavioral disorders and their relationship to existing standards of criminal responsibility. A visit to Bridgewater State Hospital, Massachusetts’s maximum security forensic hospital, may be scheduled. There are no prerequisites; an interest in law, psychology, or related fields would be advantageous.

Syllabus

9/16 An introduction to the concept of criminal responsibility
- Please read http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-responsibility/ in preparation for this class.
- Case example: Homicide and the graduate student
- Discussion: The legal system, lawyers, and fundamental principles of criminal law
- Reading for 9/23: Philosophical and religious notions of responsibility
  - Moore: Law and Psychiatry: Rethinking the Relationship, Ch. 2: The Legal View of Persons

9/23 Who is responsible? Standards and practices
- Discussion: Criminal defenses: justification and excuse
- Reading for 9/30:
  - Buchanan: Psychiatric Aspects of Justification, Excuse & Mitigation, Ch 1 & 2
9/30  Exploring the bounds of justification and excuse
Reading for 10/7:
- Buchanan: Psychiatric Aspects of Justification, Excuse & Mitigation, Ch 3

10/7  Mental illness and crime
Lecture: Notions of psychopathology and early applications in the criminal justice system
Reading for 10/14:
- Moore: Law and Psychiatry: Rethinking the Relationship Ch. 5, pp 182-216

10/14  Massachusetts Mental Health Law
Guest: Judge Rosemary Minehan, District Court of the Trial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chair, Committee on Mental Health and Mental Retardation
Reading for 10/28:
- Simon: Detour: My Bipolar Roadtrip in 4-D, pp 1-211

10/28  Current concepts of mental illness
Lecture: From Freud to the DSM-IV TR
Case examples of psychiatric disorders: Delusions, Bipolar Disorder, Major Depression, Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder
Reading for 11/4:
- Antonucci A: Orbitofrontal correlates of aggression and impulsivity in psychiatric patients. (2006) 107

11/4  The relationship between mental illness and violent behavior
Reading for 11/11:
- Moore: Law and Psychiatry: Rethinking the Relationship Ch. 6, pp217-245
- Low, et al: The Trial of John W. Hinckley, Jr., pp 1-21
- Buchanan: Psychiatric Aspects of Justification, Excuse & Mitigation, Ch. 4 & 5

11/11  The insanity defense
Discussion: Evolution and application of the modern standards.
Reading for 11/18:
- Low, et al: The Trial of John W. Hinckley, Jr., pp 22-137
- Buchanan: Psychiatric Aspects of Justification, Excuse & Mitigation, Ch. 6 & 7

11/18 John Hinckley and the insanity defense (Part III of Low, et al)
Discussion: The insanity defense after Hinckley
“The Abuse Excuse”

Reading for 11/25:
- Mishima: The Temple of the Golden Pavilion

11/25 Overpowering obsession and responsibility
Discussion: Personality Disorders and crime
Film: “A Crime of Insanity” (PBS 2002)

Reading for 12/2:
- March: The Bad Seed

12/2 Nature, nurture, and responsibility
Lecture: Psychopathy

Reading for 12/9:

12/9 Sex Offenders and the Law
Guest: Fabian Saleh, MD

12/16 Wrap up and film (TBA)
My apologies for not being able to hold an informational meeting for “Responsibility, the Brain, and Behavior.” Here is some information, including restrictions and caveats that I think will be helpful in your consideration of the course.

- This course includes a fair amount of material that is not for the faint of heart. We will watch videos, read accounts, and hear described violent crimes and examples of severe mental illness. In addition, there is a field trip to Bridgewater State Hospital, which is generally a high point of the seminar, but is a unique experience that some find disconcerting.
- There is a good deal of reading, which everyone is expected to do. That said, the volume has decreased since I first gave the seminar, although the degree of difficulty has not. Expect readings in philosophy, law, and neuroscience that will stretch you.
- Brief (less than one page) response papers to the readings will be assigned on a rotating basis.
- There is no exam, but two papers will be assigned: a short (5 pages, double spaced) mid-term paper plus a final paper of 20 pages assigned.
- We have a total of 13 sessions together, in which we will cover a great deal of material and have some intense discussions. There will be no seminar October 21, as I have to be out of town for a conference. Otherwise, we will meet every Tuesday that the College is in session this Fall. Because we are a small seminar, attendance of all students is essential, not only for your education, but for the benefit your contributions provide to the others. So, here are a few restrictions on applications:
  - We will meet on Tuesday November 25, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. If your parents need to have you travel home that day, please do not apply for the seminar.
  - Do not apply for this seminar if you are taking Mathematics 23a, Linear Algebra and Real Analysis I; Catalog Number: 2486. Professor Bamberg gives his examinations on Tuesday nights, does not allow makeup’s during the day, and so you would miss three of our 13 sessions.
  - Similarly, if you are planning to be involved in theater, dance, or other extracurricular activities (all of which I value highly) please do not apply to the seminar if those activities will require you to be at Tuesday evening practices or rehearsals.
- The Bridgewater State Hospital field trip takes place on a Wednesday morning, so that we can sit in on Judge Minehan’s court. The field trip is not mandatory, but you won’t want to miss it.

I believe that is it. If you have any other pressing questions, please email me at rschouten@partners.org, and I will do my best to get back to you. I’m looking forward to reading your applications and working with you.