Course Syllabus

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Course Description

This survey course introduces students to the fields of crime scene investigation and forensic science. Topics include the myths and realities of CSI, history and sub-disciplines of forensic science, types of evidence and analysis, and types and sources of error.

Prerequisites: None

This course is required for FS majors and FS minors. It is recommended for JS majors, and open to any student with a general interest in forensic science.

Course Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss milestones and pioneers of forensic science, the organization and operation of crime labs, and the roles of investigative personnel.
2. Explain fundamental nature and principles of science including the scientific method, and characteristics of applied science, pure science, and pseudoscience.
3. Categorize types of evidence, and select appropriate methods of analysis used for each type.
4. Evaluate the criteria for admission of scientific evidence in court and expert testimony.
5. Identify types and sources of error in forensic science.

Course Modality and General Expectations

This course is entirely online and will be delivered through SJSU's learning management system, Canvas. You will use your tower account and password to log in to the Canvas course.

In each module, you'll visit websites, view videos, read webpages and/or articles, and respond to questions (and classmates' posts) on the discussion board. There will be one quiz at the end of each module. There is no midterm exam and no final exam. Additionally, you will create two short presentations: one on a criminal case in which forensic science error caused a wrongful conviction or wrongful acquittal, and one on a special topic sub-discipline of your choice.

Although this is a science course, a background in science is not necessary for success. All content and materials that you'll need are provided in the course.

Required Course Materials

We will not use a textbook for our course. Instead, we will rely on **Forensic Science Simplified** ⬈ **(https://www.forensicsciencesimplified.org/)** for our required readings. Additional supplemental required readings will be posted on Canvas in each module.

Assignment Groups and Grade Weights

1. Discussion Board (40%) The discussion board is where you demonstrate your understanding of material, and interact with your classmates. Students are required to post a detailed, substantive, complete, and original response to each prompt, *and* at least one substantive response to a classmate in order to receive full credit for the discussion.
2. Quizzes (40%) There will be 9 quizzes. Format will include multiple choice, fill-in, matching, short essay, and diagrams.
3. Presentations (20%): Students will create presentations in small groups (recorded on Zoom). Topics will include forensic error and wrongful convictions, and forensic sub-topics (student choice), and others. Details of these assignments will be provided.

Final Grades

Grading Scheme

Grade	Percentage
A plus	98 to 100%
A	93 to 97.99%
A minus	90 to 92.99%
B plus	88 to 89.99 %
B	83 to 87.99%
B minus	80 to 82.99%
C plus	78 to 79.99%

Grade	Percentage
C	73 to 77.99%
C minus	70 to 72.99%
D plus	68 to 69.99%
D	63 to 67.99%
D minus	60 to 62.99%
F	Below 60%

Class Policies and Grading Policies

- All assignments in this class are graded based on adherence to directions, thoroughness, thoughtfulness, clarity, logic, effort, and accuracy. Please review the rubric of each assignment before you submit your work so that you can be sure you have met the requirements.
- I'm big on following directions, in particular, so be sure to READ THEM and FOLLOW THEM. Please ask questions if the directions of an assignment are not clear.
- Much of our exploration and learning in this class occurs on the discussion board. Please be sure to respond to discussion prompts completely, and respond *substantively* to at least one classmate for each discussion. Visit the **About the Discussion Board (https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1559070/pages/start-here-%7C-about-the-discussion-board)** page for more detailed information on how discussions are graded.
- Quizzes will typically be open for a 36-hour window in order to maximize flexibility. You are expected to take the quiz within this time frame. Please set reminders so that you do not miss quizzes. Make-up quizzes may be possible if you experience a *documented emergency*.
- Late work may be submitted for reduced credit, -10% for each week that it is late (turn it in asap to avoid deep reductions). This policy applies to all assignments in this class, including quizzes.
- Plagiarized work will result in a 0 grade on the assignment and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Please see "Academic Integrity" below.
- Please be respectful and kind to each other in Zoom meetings and in writing on the discussion board.
- Materials created by the instructor for the course (syllabi, module pages, lectures and lecture notes, PowerPoints, presentations, etc.) are copyrighted by the instructor and may not be used outside of this class without obtaining the instructor's written permission.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to pursue their studies with honesty and integrity. When students have a person other than themselves take a test or complete an assignment; cut and paste writing from a source into their assignments without giving proper credit; accept, buy, or copy the work of another; share or sell their own work; lie, cheat, or otherwise misrepresent their work product, they have committed the serious offense of *academic dishonesty.* I always begin with the assumption that all students are honest and committed to learning. However, unfortunately, that's not always the case. Please do not jeopardize your academic career by cheating, copying, or misrepresenting your work in this class in any way, including citation errors. Incidents of this nature will receive a 0 on the assignment and may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. You are expected, on all assignments and in all classes, to do your own thinking and writing, and turn in your best original work!

Tips for Success

- Download the Canvas mobile app to your smartphone so that you will have access to the course if you are away from a computer
- Login to Canvas every other day so that you do not miss important announcements and assignment deadlines
- Bookmark frequently visited course sites and resources so that you can revisit them to study for tests
- Email me or meet me in office hours if you have questions

Important University Dates

https://www.sjsu.edu/registrar/calendar/spring-2023.php ↪ **(https://www.sjsu.edu/registrar/calendar/spring-2023.php)**

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' Syllabus Information web page at **https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php** ↪ **(https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php)**

Forensic Science Student Group (FSS)

Forensic Science Students ⤷ **(https://sites.google.com/site/forensicsciencestudents/home)** is a campus group open to all students interested in forensic science. The group meets biweekly during the semester and offers friendship, forensic science-related activities, networking opportunities, and mentorship. Members of the FSS participate and assist at conferences, CSI camps, guest speaking events, and other extra-curricular activities. FSS Peer Mentors assist forensic science students in navigating the major, understanding requirements and prerequisites, and making wise choices in their college careers. Mentors may also offer limited tutoring, and facilitate educational and professional opportunities. Contact **sjsu.fss@gmail.com (mailto:sjsu.fss@gmail.com)** for more information, or to get an application for membership.

Themis: Research Journal of Justice Studies and Forensic Science

Themis is a student-run journal that publishes original SJSU student papers on a wide range of justice- and forensic science-related topics. Themis runs as a 3-unit class spring only, publishing one volume annually in May in hardcopy and is hosted **online at Scholarworks** ⤷ **(https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/themis/)** . Researchers the world over have downloaded and cited our students. For more information, please see: **https://www.sjsu.edu/justicestudies/current-students/themis.php** ⤷ **(https://www.sjsu.edu/justicestudies/current-students/themis.php)** Contact **mary.juno@sjsu.edu (mailto:mary.juno@sjsu.edu)** to join Themis (JS 182) as an associate editor, and/or to submit an original paper for consideration in our next volume (deadline January 31).

About the Instructor

Juno earned an MSc in Forensic Science from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, and a BA in Biological Anthropology from San Francisco State University. Juno worked for many years as a CSI at the Oakland Police Department where she processed hundreds of major crime scenes. She coordinates the Forensic Science Minor and teaches FS courses in the Justice Studies Dept. She also teaches at CCSF and SFSU.

How to Contact Me

- Email: **mary.juno@sjsu.edu (mailto:mary.juno@sjsu.edu)** I will try to respond within 24 hours, M-F!
- Zoom Office Hours Tues & Thurs 11-12: **https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/93007422140** ⤷ **(https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/93007422140)**

Course Schedule

- Jan 25-29: Welcome Module
- Jan 29-Feb 5: Module 1: What is Forensic Science?
- Feb 5-12: Module 2: Science and the Scientific Method
- Feb 12-19: Module 3: Forensic Evidence
- Feb 19-26: Module 4: Crime Scene & Death Investigation
- Feb 26-Mar 12: Module 5: Forensic Biology
- Mar 12-26: Module 6: Forensic Chemistry
- **Mar 26-Apr 2: SPRING BREAK!**
- Apr 2-16: Module 7: Pattern Evidence
- Apr 16-23: Module 8: Scientific Evidence in Court
- Apr 23-30: Module 9: Forensic Science Error
- Apr 30-May 7: Module 10: Research Presentation
- May 7-14: Module 11: Special Topics and Course Wrap Up

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Fri Feb 3, 2023	🗨 Module 1 | Discussion | CSI Fact and Fiction	due by 11:59pm
Sat Feb 4, 2023	🗨 Module 1 | Discussion | History of FS	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 5, 2023	🚀 Module 1 | Quiz | Intro to Forensic Science	due by 11:59pm
Fri Feb 10, 2023	🗨 Module 2 | Discussion | The Scientific Method	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 12, 2023	🚀 Module 2 | Quiz | Facts and Opinions	due by 11:59pm
Thu Feb 16, 2023	🗨 Module 3 | Discussion | Types of Analysis	due by 11:59pm
Fri Feb 17, 2023	🗨 Module 3 | Discussion | Probability	due by 11:59pm
Sat Feb 18, 2023	🗨 Module 3 | Discussion | Probative Value	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
Sun Feb 19, 2023	🚀 Module 3 | Quiz | Forensic Evidence	due by 11:59pm
Thu Feb 23, 2023	🗨 Module 4 | Discussion | Elements of a Crime	due by 11:59pm
Fri Feb 24, 2023	🗨 Module 4 | Discussion | COD & MOD	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 26, 2023	🚀 Module 4 | Quiz | Crime Scene & Death Investigation	due by 11:59pm
Thu Mar 2, 2023	🗨 Module 5 | Discussion | Blood Types	due by 11:59pm
Fri Mar 3, 2023	🗨 Module 5 | Discussion | Bloodstains	due by 11:59pm
Wed Mar 8, 2023	🗨 Module 5 | Discussion | CODIS Profile	due by 11:59pm
Thu Mar 9, 2023	🗨 Module 5 | Discussion | Familial DNA Searching	due by 11:59pm
Sat Mar 11, 2023	🗨 Module 5 | Discussion | Castro Valley Jane Doe	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 12, 2023	🚀 Module 5 | Quiz | Forensic Biology	due by 11:59pm