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CJUS 125.50: Fundamentals of Forensic Science

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Syllabus

FUNDAMENTALS OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

CJUS 125: Online Version

See Moodle for this section's instructor and their contact information.

GOALS AND PURPOSE OF THE CLASS

Forensic science can be defined as the application of the scientific method to evidence that might be used in court. Although an increasingly necessary part of the justice system forensic science is distinct from law enforcement, a fact not often made clear in TV shows and other modern portrayals of forensic science and forensic scientists in the media. This class seeks to provide an introduction to the topic of forensic science by focusing on those branches of forensic science commonly found being practiced at a crime lab. The underlying theory, philosophy, and methods of forensic science will also be described, as will the education required for someone seeking a career in the forensic sciences. The scientific method and the basics of the sciences that form the foundation for forensic science will be covered.

This online version of the class has been designed to deliver an experience that is as similar as possible to taking the class face to face in a classroom.

Successful students in this class will:

- gain an appreciation for the scientific method as a way to learn about the world;
- be introduced to the basics of a wide variety of sciences;
- explore the breadth of forensic science as practiced in crime labs in the 21st century;
- understand the roles of police, forensic scientists, attorneys, expert witnesses and others in the process of a criminal investigation and trial;
- learn about careers in the forensic sciences and how to prepare for them.

ADMINISTRIVIA

Moodle: This class is delivered through the University of Montana's Moodle learning management system. Your instructor can only be responsible for the content placed on Moodle – not for its administration or for technical issues. For help with accessing Moodle contact the UMontOnline Help Desk at: 406-243-4999 or umonline-help@umontana.edu.

Lectures: Lectures for the class consist of videos that are available via Moodle.

Textbook: Skelton, RR. 2011. A Survey of the Forensic Sciences. www.Lulu.com. ISBN 978-1-4357-6762-1. You can purchase it from the bookstore or purchase it cheaper from www.lulu.com (search for "A Survey of the Forensic Sciences", with quotes). Half of the proceeds from this text go to support U.M.'s physical anthropology lab.

Assignments: (Approximately) weekly assignments will be required. These will be described on Moodle and submitted via Moodle. Assignments may be written, or may direct you to a web site to complete an activity.

Exams: Three regular exams and a cumulative final exam will be offered via Moodle. These exams will normally consists of 50 multiple choice questions.

Continuous Progress Policy: Research an experience have shown that it is essential for students to remain engaged with an online course on a weekly basis. The tempting strategy of putting everything off until the last week and expecting to finish the class successfully fails miserably when applied to an online class. If you have considered such a strategy, then online learning is probably not for you and you should take the traditional classroom-based version of this class instead of the online version. This online version of the class has been designed to maintain continuous engagement and progress through the material.

Late Work Policy: Allowing late assignments and exams is deadly in an online class for reasons explained above. It is neither a favor to the student nor to the professor. Therefore, this class will have rigorously enforced penalties for late assignments. Each assignment and exam is due on a Sunday around midnight, with exceptions allowed only for University designated excused absences (see the catalog).

Academic Integrity: Students will be held to the provisions of the Student Conduct Code, online at http://www.umd.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php with regards to cheating, plagiarism, abusive language, and other issues. Violations will not be tolerated.

Disabilities: Every effort has been made to make the online materials accessible to students with disabilities. If you have a problem accessing the materials, your instructor will help you to the best of their ability. I assume that accommodation services and facilities will be provided by the Disability Services for Students office (see <http://www.umd.edu/dss/>). Ultimately, however, online classes may not be suitable for all students.

Grading: Your grade will be based on your three best out of four exams, and on eight assignments. 75% of your grade will be based on exams, and the remaining 25% on the assignments. The following scale will be used for assigning grades: A: 90-100%, B: 80-89%, C: 60-79%, D: 50-59%, F: under 50%. If appropriate, I may assign + and - modifiers to these grades. The grading mode is "open" meaning that you can take the class for a traditional grade or CR/NCR. If you take a class CR/NCR you cannot count it toward specific major, minor, option, or certificate requirements that require a minimum grade.

SCHEDULE

The schedule of topics, lectures, readings, assignments, and exams is reflected in the weekly organization of the Moodle shell for this class. If unforeseen circumstances arise the schedule may change as we go, but the current version will always be reflected in the class organization.