

Syllabus:
Introduction to Forensic Science
The School of Arts & Sciences
St. Thomas Aquinas College

Course Description: This course examines the principals, theories and practices of forensic science utilized within the law enforcement community and the American legal system. Forensic science is the study and application of science to the process of law and involves the collection, examination, evaluation and interpretation of evidence. Students will gain a basic understanding of the scientific and analytical approach to determining the value of evidence as it relates to the court of law.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, students should have an understanding of:

- The history and development of forensic sciences
- The proper procedures for securing, assessing and processing crime scenes
- The handling, value, and capabilities of DNA evidence
- The various types and analysis methods of physical and trace evidence
- The basic analysis of ballistic evidence, tool mark, and other impressions
- Serology and blood spatter analysis
- Forensic anthropology, taphonomy and time since death determination

Preparation and Class Participation: The assigned readings are the basis of discussion for each class. Students are expected to have read the assigned material before class. Active participation is expected in all class discussions. Solid preparation and participation will result in an improved final grade.

Course Grading:

The final grade will be assigned based upon the following scale:

95-100 = A
90-94 = A-
87-89 = B+
83-86 = B
80-82 = B-
77-79 = C+
73-76 = C
70-72 = C-
65-69 = D
Failure = F
Incomplete = Inc

Make-up Exams: The administration of make-up exams will be contingent upon a legitimate excuse (i.e. illness, family death, unexpected emergency situation) presented via email *prior* to the test period specified. The make-up will be given immediately after the week of the regularly scheduled exam and may be substantially different from the original.

Attendance: Every effort must be made to attend all classes. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING LECTURE NOTES FROM MISSED CLASSES, KEEPING UP WITH ALL ASSIGNMENTS AND BEING PREPARED FOR ALL EXAMS. Poor class attendance will result in a definite reduction in the final grade.

Attendance is factored into 20% your final average. Each student begins with a 100% attendance average and each absence deducts 10% from that average, up to three absences. If you miss four (4) classes, your final average will drop by one full letter grade. Five absences will result in course failure.

Lateness: It is essential that you arrive on time for the beginning of class. Chronic latecomers will be excluded from class and the day noted as an absence.

Cheating or Plagiarizing: If plagiarism occurs on any required paper, it will result in a grade of F. If one engages in test cheating (i.e. cheat sheets or copying from another student) a grade of F will be assigned. Students may be dismissed.

Late Submissions: It is essential that all requirements be completed on the dates specified by the Professor.

Supplemental Material: This course may utilize films, field assignments, guest speakers, and current media coverage on a variety of related subject matters.

Methods of Instruction: Lectures, discussions, practical exercises, and research projects.

Basic Requirements for Completion of Introduction to Forensic Science:

- a. Class attendance
- b. Participation in class discussions
- c. Completion of all assignments
- d. Research paper and projects (if applicable)
- e. Reading assignments
- f. Passing cumulative average of all quizzes, tests and examinations:
 - There will be mid-term and final examinations that are cumulative. There will be two additional tests that focus on select chapters (to be announced); one prior to the mid-term and the other prior to the final exam. There may be short “pop quizzes” that focus on one chapter or lecture at a time. These pop quizzes will be factored into the assignments and participation grade noted below (the 20%). Again, **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CLASS CONTENT AND ASSIGNMENTS YOU MISS DURING AN ABSENCE FROM CLASS.**

Methods of Evaluation:

Test 1:.....	20%
Midterm:.....	20%
Test 2:.....	20%
Final Exam:.....	20%
Attendance, class participation, assignments.....	20%

Assignments: Reading assignments to be determined. You will be required to evaluate and submit reports for two mock crime scenes during the course of the semester.

Academic Integrity Statement

Academic Integrity, a commitment to honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility, is the foundation of the learning process. All members of the St. Thomas Aquinas College community are held to the highest standards of academic honesty. While we recognize the participatory nature of education, we take academic integrity very seriously, and the College policy on academic dishonesty details consequences that can include dismissal from the College. That policy can be found in both the Student Handbook and the College Catalog.

As a student in this class, you must demonstrate your commitment to academic integrity by submitting work that originates in your own thinking and imagination, your ability to analyze and evaluate information, and your own knowledge, that you have done yourself, and that represents your very best efforts. When appropriate,

your work should be supplemented and supported by other sources; however, you must always ensure that these sources are properly cited using the recommended documentation system.

Academic Disability Statement

Students requiring accommodations for a documented disability should notify the instructor before the end of the first week of class.

College Policy on Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Students are not to use any electronic device at any time without the expressed consent of the professor. This policy covers cell phones, laptop computers, or any other device the use of which constitutes a distraction to the professor or to the other students in the class, as determined by the professor. Students with documented disabilities that require the use of a laptop in class may use them after informing their professor.

When a professor designates a time during which laptop computers may be used, they are only to be used at the discretion of the faculty member and in accordance with the mission of the college; visiting sites which the professor deems to be inappropriate to the needs of the class is forbidden.

Professors have the latitude to develop specific and reasonable policies to deal with violations of these general policies as they see fit. For more extreme cases of classroom disruption, see the College's Disruptive Student Policy.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- Class 1: Introductions, Syllabus, **Chapter 1** (Introduction/history).
- Class 2: **Chapter 2** Securing and Searching the Crime Scene, review for Test 1.
- Class 3: **Short test 1, Chapter 3** Recording the Crime Scene
- Class 4: Time Since Death, **Chapter 4** Collection of Crime-Scene Evidence
- Class 5: **Chapter 5** Physical Evidence, Chapter 18 Computer Forensics
- Class 6: **Chapter 6** Death Investigation
- Class 7: **Midterm Exam**
- Class 8: **Chapter 7** Crime-Scene Reconstruction, **Chapter 8** Fingerprints
- Class 9: **Chapter 9** Firearms, Tool Marks, and Other Impressions
- Class 10: **Chapter 10** Bloodstain Pattern Analysis
- Class 11: **Short test 2, Chapter 11** Drugs, **Chapter 12** Forensic Toxicology
- Class 12: **Chapter 13** Trace Evidence I: Hairs and Fibers, **Chapter 14** Trace Evidence II: Paint, Glass, Soil
- Class 13: **Chapter 15** Biological Stain Analysis: DNA, **Chapter 16** Fire and Explosion Investigation
- Class 14: **Final Exam (cumulative)**