

Fall 2020

FRSC 201-001: Introduction to Forensic Science

David Fisher

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FRSC 201: Intro to Forensic Science
Fall 2020
Fridays 7:30-10:20am
KUPF 210
Course Syllabus

NJIT Academic Integrity Code: The shift to remote and converged teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic has required that both instructors and students make changes to their normal working protocols for courses. Students are asked to practice extra care and attention in regard to academic honesty, with the understanding that all cases of plagiarism, cheating, multiple submission, and unauthorized collaboration are subject to penalty. Students must properly cite and attribute all sources used for papers and assignments. Students may not collaborate on exams or assignments, directly or through virtual consultation, unless the instructor gives specific permission to do so. Posting an exam, assignment, or answers to them on an online forum (before, during, or after the due date), in addition to consulting posted materials, constitutes a violation of the University's Honesty policy. Likewise, unauthorized use of live assistance websites, including seeking "expert" help for specific questions during an exam can be construed as a violation of the honesty policy. All students should be familiar with the [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](#).

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description: Forensic Science is the application of science to the law. This course introduces students to the many disciplines of forensic science and how they are used in our criminal justice system. Students will be introduced to the science behind these disciplines and how forensic science techniques are used in crime laboratories throughout the United States and abroad. Guest lecturers and practitioners will offer insights into their day-to-day investigative work and how they face technological challenges and success. The scientific method will be emphasized throughout the course.

Number of Credits: 3

Prerequisites: none

Course-Section and Instructor

Course-Section	Instructor
FRSC 201-001	David Fisher
F 7:30-10:20am	Office: Tiernan Hall 385 or https://njit.webex.com/meet/dfisher
KUPF 210	Office Hours: M @ 5pm & by appt.
	Ph: 973-596-5295; email: dfisher@njit.edu

Required Textbook:

Title	Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13 th ed.)
Author	Richard Saferstein and Tiffany Roy
Edition	13
Publisher	Pearson
ISBN #	978-0-13-521831-0

and additional readings and videos as assigned. You must also have a computer with a reliable internet connection, webcam, and a microphone.

University-wide Withdrawal Date: The last day to withdraw with a **W** is Monday, November 9, 2020. It will be strictly enforced.

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, students will:

- Identify forensic science procedures and technologies used to examine and analyze physical evidence
- Evaluate the significance of physical evidence in a criminal investigation
- Identify applications of the scientific method when examining forensic evidence
- Communicate appropriate conclusions based on scientific data
- Apply critical thinking skills using methods of scientific inquiry through discussing recent high profile cases
- Discriminate between generally accepted science and “junk science”
- Describe how science is used in the criminal justice system
- Understand how data influences legal decisions and shapes scientific reporting requirements
- Be able to identify cognitive bias and its impact on the forensic sciences
- Understand forensic science failures and ethical violations

POLICIES

All CES students must familiarize themselves with, and adhere to, all official university-wide student policies. CES takes these policies very seriously and enforces them strictly.

Grading Policy: The final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Assignments	15%
Midterm	20%
Term Paper	20%
Final Exam	35%

Your final letter grade in this course will be based on the following:

A	90-100	C	70-76
B+	87-89	D	60-69
B	80-86	F	<60
C+	77-79		

Attendance Policy: This course will be delivered in a “[converged learning](#)” format. Class attendance (either in-person or online) will be recorded and is **mandatory**. Each class is a learning experience that cannot be replicated through simply “getting the notes.” After one unexcused absence, each subsequent absence will result in your class participation score being lowered by one percentage point. (All excused absences need to go through the Dean of Students). You are expected to read the relevant chapters and/or reading assignments prior to the lecture. Students who participate in lecture will receive points towards their class participation grade.

Term Paper: The term paper assignment is for you to select a modern criminal case that has been previously adjudicated and discuss how the forensic science in the case played a critical role in the outcome of the case. The term paper is designed to evaluate your writing skills and your understanding of the forensics that were used in the trial. The term paper should be 5-6 pages in length, double spaced, using Times New Roman 12 point font. You must get approval from me for your topic prior to the midterm. No two people may choose the same topic. Please enter your paper topic by replying to the “Term Paper Topics” Announcement. The term paper is due on the last day of class and must be turned in using Turnitin.com. (Turnitin.com is a software program that analyzes papers for plagiarism).

1. Analyze a relevant criminal case involving Forensic Science.
2. Develop a topic for the paper.
3. Create an appropriate design.
4. Identify and show how forensic science impacted the case.
5. Provide credible academic and peer reviewed sources (at least 3). Ok to use other (i.e. news articles, etc.) sources in addition to the three peer reviewed sources.
6. Communicate effectively through scholarly writing.

For this paper, you are expected to be able to locate and use web AND library resources effectively and cite them correctly. Googling alone will not suffice. Most of the library materials are available online 24/7 from anywhere. Joseph Mercuri is the librarian who provides assistance to the students and faculty in Chemistry & Environmental Science. Contact him at jmercuri@njit.edu and take advantage of his expertise.

Exams: Exams will be taken on-line through Canvas. Exams will cover the readings and lecture. You will need to download Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor as the exams will be given through these platforms. You will also need a computer, webcam, and good internet connection when taking the exams. The Final Exam will be comprehensive and will test your knowledge of all the course material taught in the entire course.

Midterm	Oct 23, 2020
Final Exam	Final Exam Week

Makeup Exam Policy: There will normally be **NO MAKE-UP EXAMS** during the semester. In the event that a student has a legitimate reason for missing an exam, the student should contact the Dean of Students office and present written verifiable proof of the reason for missing the exam, e.g., a doctor’s note, police report, court notice, etc. clearly stating the date AND time of the mitigating problem. The student must also notify the CES Department Office/Instructor that the exam will be missed. A written assignment will be given in place of any missed exam.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Accommodation of Disabilities: Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (*formerly known as Disability Support Services*) offers long term and temporary accommodations for undergraduate, graduate and visiting students at NJIT.

If you are in need of accommodations due to a disability please contact Chantonette Lyles, Associate Director at the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services at [973-596-5417](tel:973-596-5417) or via email at lyles@njit.edu. The office is located in Fenster Hall Room 260. A Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the Office of Accessibility Resources Services office authorizing your accommodations will be required.

For further information regarding self-identification, the submission of medical documentation and additional support services provided please visit the Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS) website at:

- <https://www.njit.edu/studentsuccess/accessibility>

Important Dates (See: [2020 Academic Calendar](#))

Date	Event
Sep 1	First Day of Classes
Sep 7	Labor Day - no class
Sep 8	Monday classes meet / Last day to add or drop
Nov 25	Friday classes meet
Nov 26-29	Thanksgiving Recess
Dec 10	Last Day of Classes
Dec 11-12	Reading Days
Dec 15-21	Final Exams

Course Outline

Lecture	Date	Topic	Reading
1	Sep 4	Introduction; Professional Practice; History of Forensics	Saferstein_Ch1; NRC_Ch1&5
2	Sep 11	9/11 Memorial Lecture; Library Presentation	NRC_Ch2
3	Sep 18	Ethics; ABC Code of Ethics	AAFS Bylaws Art II , NRC_Ch7
4	Sep 25	The Crime Scene; Evidence ID, collection & processing	Saferstein_Ch2-3; NRC_Ch4
5	Oct 2	Crime Scene Reconstruction; Death Investigation	Saferstein_Ch4-5; NRC_Ch9
6	Oct 9	Fingerprints; The Microscope	Saferstein_Ch6&8; NRC_Ch10
7	Oct 14-16	NEAFS Meeting (www.neafs.org)	Attend virtual conference ; NRC_Ch8
8	Oct 23	Firearms; Midterm	Saferstein_Ch9; NRC_Ch7
9	Oct 30	Drugs; Toxicology	Saferstein_Ch12-13; NRC_Ch6
10	Nov 6	Serology; DNA	Saferstein_Ch15-16
11	Nov 13	Fire Investigation; Document Examination	Saferstein_Ch17-18; NRC_Ch11
12	Nov 20	Computer Forensics; Mobile Forensics	Saferstein_Ch19-20; NRC_Ch3
13	Nov 25 (Wed)	Introduction to Law; Courtroom Testimony	Finish Term Papers
14	Dec 4	Review for Final; Term Papers Due	Study for Final
15	TBD	Final Exam	