

Fall 2021

FRSC 201-001: Introduction to Forensic Science

David Fisher

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FRSC 201: Intro to Forensic Science
Fall 2021
T/Th 10:00-11:20am
ECEC 115
Course Syllabus

NJIT Academic Integrity Code: Students are asked to practice extra care and attention in regards 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. Finally, a large portion of the course will include interactive learning during class including: mock crime scenes searches, in class discussions, student presentations, field trip and more

Number of Credits: 3

Prerequisites: none

Course-Section and Instructor

Course-Section	Instructor
FRSC 201-001	Prof. David Fisher
T/Th 10:00-11:20am	Office: Tiernan Hall 323A or https://njit.webex.com/meet/dfisher
	Office Hours: Th at 11:30am & 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 Wednesday, November 10, 2021. 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: Class attendance 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.

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 that case played a critical role in the guilt or innocence of the defendant. 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 (not including title page or bibliography), 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. All papers will be run through Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. (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 **at least 3** credible **peer reviewed** sources from scientific journals. The word “forensic” must appear in the title of these scientific journals. Ok to use other (i.e. news articles, media, etc.) sources in addition.
6. Communicate effectively through scholarly writing.

For this paper, you are expected to be able to locate and use 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 NJIT librarian who provides assistance to students in Forensic 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 26, 2021
Final Exam	Final Exam Week (Date TBD)

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 problem. The student must also notify the 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** 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: [2021 Academic Calendar](#))

Date	Event
Sep 1	First Day of Classes
Sep 6	Labor Day - no classes
Sep 8	Monday Classes meet & last day to add/drop
Nov 10	Last day to withdraw
Nov 25-28	Thanksgiving recess
Dec 10	Last day of classes
Dec 13-14	Reading Days
Dec 15-21	Final Exams

Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	Sep 2	Introduction; Professional Practice; History of Forensics	Read Ch1
2	Sep 7	Library Presentation (Guest speaker)	
	Sep 9	9/11 Memorial Lecture & Discussion (20 th Anniversary)	Read ABC Code of Ethics
3	Sep 14	Ethics & What would you do hypotheticals	
	Sep 16	Yom Kippur (class will not meet)	Watch Netflix " How to Fix a Drug Scandal "
4	Sep 21	Work on Ethics presentations with group in class	
	Sep 23	Ethics Presentations	
5	Sep 28	Watch " I Am Evidence " documentary	Post one comment to Discussion Board
	Sep 30	Documentary Discussion; Forensic Nursing	Read Ch2
6	Oct 5	The Crime Scene w/interactive search of virtual scene	Read Ch3; Federal Rules of Evidence
	Oct 7	Physical Evidence	Read Ch4
7	Oct 12	Crime Scene Reconstruction; Bloodspatter analysis	Read Ch5
	Oct 14	Death Investigation; In class virtual autopsy	Read Ch6
8	Oct 19	Fingerprints; visit to NJIT PD	
	Oct 21	Guest Lecture from fingerprint examiner	
9	Oct 26	Midterm	Read Ch9
	Oct 28	Firearms & Toolmarks	Read Ch12
10	Nov 2	Drugs	
	Nov 4	Guest speaker (Prof. Candice Bridge from UCF)	Read Ch15
11	Nov 9	Serology	Read Ch16
	Nov 11	DNA and Forensic Genetic Genealogy	Read Ch17
12	Nov 16	Fire Investigation; In class fire scene: Arson or Accidental?	Read Ch18

	Nov 18	Document Examination; in-class handwriting exercise	Read Ch19
13	Nov 23	Computer Forensics	Read Ch20
	Nov 25	Thanksgiving (No class – University Closed)	
14	Nov 30	Mobile Forensics; Is Big Brother watching you?	
	Dec 2	Introduction to Jurisprudence; Expert Testimony	Work on Term Papers
15	Dec 7	Bias: Are we guilty of it?	Complete Term Papers
	Dec 9	Review for Final; Last Day of class	Term Papers Due; Study for Final
	TBD	Final Exam	

*Updated by David Fisher - August 15, 2021
Department of Chemistry & Environmental Sciences
Course Syllabus, Fall 2021*
