Course: Forensic Science in Criminal Law
Spring 2012

Meeting Times: Mondays and Wednesday from 5:30 to 6:45pm

Faculty: Mark Skurka, B.A., J.D.
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Course Description:
This course is designed to assist forensic science students in understanding various aspects of legal procedures. The course examines various applications of science to the law, including practical applications both in and outside the courtroom. Topics included in the course are: legal ethics, report writing, testifying in court, rules of evidence, theories of legal admissibility, chain of custody, specific forensic sciences utilized in criminal law and proper courtroom procedures. Students will also be required to participate in a field trip to observe an expert witness in a criminal trial at the Nueces County Courthouse or Federal Courthouse and write a report on the same. Students also will be required to write a paper on a particular forensic science used in the courtroom, such as DNA, fingerprints, ballistics, etc. The student will be called upon to play the part of an expert witness in a courtroom environment.

Textbook:
Crime Scene Investigation, Criminalistics, and The Law.
Author: Thomas Buckles
Published 2007
Student Outcomes: At the conclusion of this course, the student will:

1. have greater understanding of the concepts behind trial procedures.
2. be able to prepare a forensic report.
3. be prepared to testify as an expert witness in court.
4. understand the necessity of preserving the chain of custody for evidence.
5. will have attended at least one trial and have observed the questioning of an expert witness.
6. gain an appreciation of legal ethics.
7. have studied and observed various applications of forensic science in the courtroom.

Grading:

Final grades will be based on the following:
- Term Paper = 20%
- Courtroom Observation report = 10%
- Courtroom Demonstration = 10%
- Tests (2) = 40%
- Final Exam = 20%

100%

Attendance and participation in class discussions may also be used in the determination of your final grade.

Class Standards:

The student is expected to attend each class. If you are absent, you are responsible for obtaining missed information from a classmate. Missed information includes not only missed lecture notes, but also any possible information regarding syllabus changes. If you are absent when hand-outs are distributed, you can pick up a copy from the plastic holder by CS 130D.

The student has several opportunities to demonstrate competency in the course.
Assessment and computation are performed by the instructor according to objective criteria. If a student experiences difficulty in the course, the instructor is available for consultation. However, it is the responsibility of the student to seek help, preferably when the investment made by the student can still be salvaged.

Academic integrity is expected. Cheating is not acceptable behavior. The student is not to give or receive help during testing nor to submit any work that is not his/her own product. All students are expected to conform to University standards of ethics, academic integrity, grammar and spelling. Review the 2008-2009 A&M-CC catalogue for more information.

Disabling Conditions:

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services Offices at (361) 825-5816 or at Driftwood 101.

Revised 1-9-12