Serial Murder Investigations

Course Description:
The Serial Murder course introduces the student to the phenomenon of serial murder and its various definitions. The course emphasizes the difficult investigations serial murders present, victim selection by serial killers, and the psychology of serial killers and serial killer investigations. Course topics include murder investigation techniques, the utility of homicide tracking systems, the Modus Operandi and signature aspects of serial killers, crime scene analysis, the effect of the news media on serial murder investigations, and assessing the quality of serial murder investigations.

Learning Outcomes:
1. Summarize the role of serial killer investigations and offender profiling in the criminal justice process.
2. Discuss the methods and techniques used by investigators in serial murder cases.
3. Identify and explain the legal problems that serial killer investigations present.
4. Describe the psychology of serial killer investigations, including the roles of denial, defeat, recognition, acknowledgement, control, modus operandi, and signature characteristics in investigations.
5. Evaluate the shortcomings of key, high profile, serial investigations and identify the best practices and techniques in successful investigations.
6. Describe what crime scene characteristics and evidence are most important in providing linkages of cases attributed to a same serial killer.
7. Assess news media, current events, and scientific discourse as they relate to serial murder.

Required Reading:

Additional handouts, reading assignments, and videos will be utilized by the instructor.

**Major Course Requirements**

Examinations: This course will have two exams, a mid-term and a final. The final is not comprehensive. The Exam dates will be listed in the course outline. The exams will consist of short essay, multiple choice, and short answer questions. There are no make-up exams unless I am notified prior to the examination and the circumstances are extenuating. Any make-up exam will
be in long essay format, and the student will have two days to complete the exam once it is assigned. After these two days, the student will receive a zero for that exam. No exceptions.

**Participation:** The student is expected to have read the assigned reading BEFORE the class date that the material is to be discussed. Pop quizzes will be heavily used to track both attendance and participation. This accounts for 25% of the student’s grade, so please take it seriously. Your lowest four quiz grades will be dropped.

**Serial Killer Project:** The student will be required to research either a particular serial killer of interest, or a serial killer typology/classification. Additional information about this project will be given to the students with specific details and requirements through Blackboard. Please do not hesitate to see me with questions.

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<tr>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>Exam 2</td>
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<td>Project</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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**Electronic Resources:**
This class will rely heavily on the Blackboard website. You must pay attention to announcements and class resources. Also, you will turn in your typed assignments using the Drop Box on Blackboard. Blackboard may be accessed here: [https://bb9.tamucc.edu/](https://bb9.tamucc.edu/)

**Extra Credit**
There will be NO opportunities for extra credit in this course, no exceptions.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**
Students are reminded of the university’s strict prohibition against cheating and plagiarism. University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a grade of 0.

Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work. Students should be aware that all quoted material must be put in quotation marks and the reference cited.
Paraphrasing requires completely rewriting the material, putting it into your own words. Passing off others’ work as your own is a violation of university academic policy, as is submitting the same paper to another class.

No academic dishonesty will be tolerated. If academic dishonesty is suspected, the disciplinary guidelines in the TAMUCC student code of conduct will be followed.

**Dropping a Class**
Dropping a Class I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

**Grade Appeals**
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html) For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

**Classroom/Professional Behavior**
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Students are expected to behave courteously and respectfully to everyone. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Academic Advising**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call (361) 825-3466.
Statement of Civility
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Disabilities Accommodations
The Americans 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 for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Statement of Academic Continuity
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

Course Outline: **This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

The detailed Course Outline is available in the Contents area of Blackboard

Important Dates
July 7th Course Introduction/Chapter 1
July 9th Chapters 2 & 3 – Submit your project topic
July 14th Chapter 4
July 16th Chapter 5
July 21st Chapter 6
July 23rd Mid-Term
July 28th Chapter 7
July 30th  Chapter 8
August 4th  Chapter 9
August 6th  Final Exam & Project Due