BIMS 4590.007 Special Topics: Medicolegal Death Investigations I
Department of Life Sciences
Summer I 2015

A. COURSE INFORMATION

Course number/section: BIMS 4590.007 Special Topics: Medicolegal Death Investigations I
Class meeting time: TBA Monday-Friday as scheduled
Class location: Nueces County Medical Examiner’s Office
Course Website: http://bb9.tamucc.edu

B. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructors: Ray Fernandez M.D. and Adel Shaker M.D.
Office location: 2610 Hospital Blvd., Corpus Christi 78405
Office hours: 0800-1600 Monday through Friday
Telephone: 361-884-4994 ext. 223
e-mail: ray.fernandez@nuecesco.com
Appointments: E-mail required

C. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Course Description
This course is designed for both the student and investigative law enforcement personnel who have responsibility for the investigation of deaths, and who have had limited exposure to the various aspects of death investigation.

Extended Course Description
This course involves the process of analyzing all aspects of a death case so as to arrive at the true course and manner of death (homicide, suicide, accidental, natural and unknown). The importance of scene analysis, physical and psychological evidence, autopsy, etc. is emphasized. Motivations, both physiological and psychological, are discussed along with criminal investigative analysis and investigative psychology. The concepts of the investigative process, scene management, required documentation, case management for incidences of death and the legal jurisdiction of cases will be discussed.

D. PREREQUISITES AND COREQUISITES

Prerequisites
BIMS 3325.001—Professional Practicum in Forensic Science
BIMS 4340.001—Forensic Science in Criminal Law

Corequisites
None
E. REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S), READINGS AND SUPPLIES

Required Textbook(s)


Supplies
Students are required to wear scrubs during their assigned shift. No open toed shoes or shirts with logos are allowed in the building. Standard, comfortable tennis shoes are recommended.

F. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

Students will be given three written exams during the course of the instruction. Progressive assessment of skills and documentation procedures will be conducted daily. Students will be given a comprehensive pre-test during orientation. A table of terms and definitions will be provided. Students will be tested daily on the use of terms and the use of the language as it pertains to the field of study. A total of four quizzes will be given throughout the course, each building on the previous material. The quizzes are in addition to the three written exams and are counted as part of the overall grade. An ungraded post test will be given at the end of the semester to compare student’s learning to the outcome of the pretest given at the beginning of the semester.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe the history and evolution of the discipline of forensic pathology.
2. Explain the role of the forensic pathologist in the criminal justice system.
3. Describe the importance of proper crime scene response in a death investigation.
4. Explain the various types of evidence typically available at a crime scene in a death investigation.
5. Identify and evaluate relevant methodology of identifications of the dead.
6. Describe the circumstances when an autopsy is appropriate and the proper protocol and procedures followed by coroners and medical examiners in conducting an autopsy.
7. Identify and evaluate relevant methods for determining time, cause, and manner of death.
8. Describe, compare and assess various types and methods of injury for potential lethality.
9. Define, interpret and apply relevant medical and legal terminology to real and hypothetical issues, problems and case studies.
10. Identify and evaluate the ethical issues which are common to death investigations.
11. Appraise and interpret current literature, case studies, materials and developments regarding forensic pathology.

G. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND ACTIVITIES

Lecture: Instructor in a lecture format will present Text material.
Audio/Visual: Video material and PowerPoint presentations make up a portion of the presentations.
Written: Case analysis and documentation of findings required.

H. MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>% of FINAL GRADE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams (3)</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes (1-4)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Homework</td>
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<td>Presentations</td>
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<td>Papers</td>
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<td>Other activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
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I. COURSE CONTENT/SCHEDULE

Topical Outline:
- History of forensic pathology
- Education, training and duties of forensic pathologists
- Determination of time of death
- Determination of cause of death
- Determination of means of death
- Autopsy protocol
- Case studies in forensic pathology
- Ethical issues in forensic pathology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE (BY DAY OR WEEK)</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>CHAPTER(S)</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>DEATH INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>CAUSE AND MANNER OF DEATH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>NATURAL, ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDE, HOMICIDE, UNDETERMINED</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>FORENSIC PATHOLOGY</td>
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<td>Report I due</td>
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### Week 6
- **FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY**

### Week 7
- **FORENSIC EPIDEMIOLOGY**

### Week 8
- **Exam 2**

### Week 9
- **FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY**

### Week 10
- **FORENSIC ODONTOLOGY**

### Week 11
- **ADVANCED RADIOLOGICAL IMAGING**

### Week 12
- **MICROSCOPY**

### Week 13
- **DRUG PARAPHERNALIA**

### Week 14
- **CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATORS & HOMICIDE DETECTIVES**

### Week 15
- **COURTROOM PREPARATION**

### Week 16
- **PRACTICAL SCENE INVESTIGATION**

### Final Exam/project, etc

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**Note:** Changes in this course schedule may be necessary and will be announced to the class by the Instructor. The assignments and exams shown are directly related to the Student Learning Outcomes described in Section F.

### J. COURSE POLICIES

#### Attendance/Tardiness
Every effort will be made to accommodate students, who through no fault of their own, are absent from class. Consideration will be given to students who suffer medical or family tragedy.

Students who are consistently late interfere with lectures, miss important information and disrespect their fellow classmates. Please be on time to class. Five percent (5%) of your grade will be based on not having unexcused absences and/or tardies.
You will get 10 points subtracted for the first unexcused absence (receive 40), 20 for the second (receive 30), and 50 pts for the third (receive zero). For the fourth absence, I subtract additional points, so you get 50 points taken away (-50). Three unexcused tardies equals one unexcused absence.

Late Work and Make-up Exams
Late work will be due one week after the assigned date. Make-up exams will be completed prior to the end of the semester unless there are circumstances beyond the student’s control which led to the exam being late.

Safety Issues
Students must observe all posted safety signs in the facility.

Extra Credit
There is no extra credit given in this course.

Cell Phone Use
Cell phones and cell cameras are not allowed in the facility. Any use of personal electronic devices must be conducted outside the facility during times when students are allowed a break in instruction.

Laptop Use
Laptops and notebooks are allowed in the classroom area of the facility for instructional use only. No photographs are allowed. No documents not approved by the Medical Examiners are allowed to be downloaded onto the device.

Food in Class
A refrigerator is available for those who wish to bring lunch or snacks. Food is not permitted in the forensic investigation area.

Participation
The working environment for this course is by nature stressful. Students will be exposed to the forensic investigation of death, in all its’ forms. Death is not pretty but it is our reality. The various procedures performed are necessary to conduct investigations in the cause an manner of death. We conduct these investigations to learn how better to serve the living and to answer questions relative to the person’s death which may impact the living. If at any time a student finds themselves unable to participate in any particular procedure, other arrangements will be made to allow the student to explore the other factions of the industry. There is no loss of face in admitting you cannot perform a particular necessary procedure. We recognize this work is not for everyone. Every effort will be made to make you feel comfortable in your desire to learn. However, death is what it is. And this cannot be changed. You are expected to participate to your level of comfort. No more than this will be required. The purpose is to learn. There is plenty to learn.
K. COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

- **Academic Integrity (University)**
  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. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade.

- **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. 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.

  Information given in this office is subject to on-going investigations, the legal system and HIPAA regulation. What is seen, heard or experienced in this office must be kept confidential at all times and is subject to local, state and federal laws. Any violation of this policy may subject you to criminal prosecution and civil litigation.

- **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.

- **Deadline for Dropping a Course with a Grade of W (University)**
  The grade of W will be assigned to any student officially dropping a course. Please consult with the instructor before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Just stopping attendance and participation **WILL NOT** automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, visit the Office of the University Registrar for the Course Drop Form that **must** submitted. No student is eligible to receive a W without completing the official drop process by this deadline. Please consult the Academic Calendar.
(http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/calendar/) for the last day to drop a course.

- **Grade Appeals (College of Science and Engineering)**
  As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules website at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html, and the College of Science and Engineering Grade Appeals webpage at http://sci.tamucc.edu/students/GradeAppeal.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the chair or director of the appropriate department or school, the Office of the College of Science and Engineering Dean, or the Office of the Provost.

- **Disability Services**
  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 (361) 825-5816 or visit Disability Services 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.

  http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/

- **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.

L. **OTHER INFORMATION**
• Academic Advising
  The College of Science & Engineering requires that students meet with an Academic
  Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set
  up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the
  department chair. Meetings are by appointment only; advisors do not take walk-ins.
  Please call or stop by the Advising Center to check availability and schedule an
  appointment. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Center for
  Instruction 350 or can be reached at (361) 825-3928.

GENERAL DISCLAIMER
The instructors reserve the right to modify the information, schedule, assignments,
deadlines, and course policies in this syllabus if and when necessary. They will announce
such changes in a timely manner during regularly scheduled lecture periods. **However,**
because of the nature of this profession, situations may change rapidly and deviations
in the syllabus may occur suddenly to comply with medicolegal incidents.