

FS-11 Sec 03 Survey of Forensic Science Spring 2021

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Office Hours:	Mon 11am-12pm; Tue 10am-11am; Thr 3pm-5pm; Online only: https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/6339297996 (no need to book, just drop-in).
Class Days/Time:	This course is delivered entirely online without a dedicated meeting time (asynchronously)
Canvas Course Website:	https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1415986 Login using your Tower ID Card and Password → Courses → FS 11
FS Library Liaison:	Nyle Monday: Nyle.Monday@sjsu.edu
FS Lib Guide:	http://libguides.sjsu.edu/content.php?pid=57768&sid=2450175
FS Program Website:	http://www.sjsu.edu/justicestudies/degrees/fs-program/

Note: FS 11 is required for the successful completion of the FS biology and chemistry majors, as well as the FS minor. It is recommended for JS majors. However, it is open to any student with a general interest in the subject.

Course Description

This is an introductory course to forensic science, which is the application of science to criminal and civil laws that is enforced by police agencies in a criminal justice system. The scope of this course includes the history of forensic science and its sub-disciplines; recognition, documentation, collection, preservation, and analysis of physical evidence; analytical techniques for organic and inorganic materials; biological, chemical and physical types of forensic evidence and its analysis; capabilities and limitations of forensic trace analysis and its representation in court.

This course is delivered completely on-line via Canvas. You will need a computer with reliable internet access. Students are responsible for ensuring that they have access to reliable Wi-Fi during class. If students are unable to have reliable Wi-Fi, they must inform the instructor, as soon as possible to determine an alternative. See [Learn Anywhere](#) website for current Wi-Fi options on campus. Success in the course requires active participation by logging in daily for updates, to complete assignments, and to receive important and timely messages. If you having problems getting access to a reliable computer, you can easily borrow one from SJSU: <https://www.sjsu.edu/learnanywhere/equipment/index.php>

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Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- **CLO1** Define forensic science as it relates to criminal and civil contexts, as well as key concepts and principles such as the scientific method, chain of custody, class versus individual evidence, probative value, and Locard's exchange principle.
- **CLO2** Understand the roles of forensic and investigative personnel, their separate duties and how they work together.
- **CLO3** Display foundational knowledge in the history of forensic science, the structure and organization of crime labs, the analytical processes and procedures used, the sub-disciplines and contributing sciences of forensic science, and the types of evidence encountered.
- **CLO4** Understand the powerful capabilities and limitations of the field of forensic science with regard to various types of physical evidence.
- **CLO5** Perform a literature review on a specific forensic science topic and present the findings to an audience of peers in engaging manner.

Required Texts

- The recommended book for this course is: Saferstein, Richard. (2020) Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13th Edition), Pearson ISBN-13: 978-0134477596. This textbook is available for purchase in e-copy or hard copy online. Link: <https://www.pearson.com/store/p/criminalistics-an-introduction-to-forensic-science/P100001282980?viewAll=true>
- An alternative textbook that can be used for this course is by James, S., Nordby, J., & Bell, S. (2014). Forensic Science: An Introduction to Scientific and Investigative Techniques, 4/E. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press/Taylor & Francis ISBN-13: 978- 1439853832. The textbook is available for purchase in hard copy at the bookstore or can be accessed for free through King library: [link](#).
- **Links to additional resources will be posted on Canvas. Check the site frequently!**

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>

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Course format and schedule

Despite being delivered asynchronously, this class is not self-paced. You will have a set of dedicated readings, videos, discussions and assignments every week, so make sure to stay on the top of things and meet the deadlines.

There are six content modules in the course, ranging in length from 1 to 4 weeks + an introductory module. Each Module will begin officially at the beginning of each week, while each week's content (within a Module) will become available on Saturday before the start of that week (for those interested in getting started sooner). Each of Modules 1– 5 will culminate in a quiz, which aims to assess your understanding of the material in the respective Module. The due date for each quiz will be within 7 days of finishing the respective Module. The quizzes are not cumulative.

The dates are approximate and subject to change (with a fair notice) according to students' progress and/or any unforeseen circumstances. Any change to the class schedule will be announced via Canvas Announcements at the earliest opportunity.

Course schedule:

- Module 0: Jan 27-31; Welcome to FS 11. Log in and get familiar with Canvas, introduce yourself in the discussion forum, read the syllabus, check the requirements for Week 1. **Discussion questions;**
- Module 1: Feb 1- Feb 14 (2 weeks); Introduction to Forensic Science: brief history, basic principles, applications, limitations, evidence admissibility; matter, light, microscopy; CSI. Chapters 1-3, 8, 10. **Discussion questions; Virtual Lab/Review questions; Quiz 1.**
- Module 2: Feb 15- Mar 7 (3 weeks); Pattern evidence analysis: fingerprints (Ch 6), ballistics (Ch 9), blood pattern analysis (Ch 4), tool marks, shoe prints and other impressions (Ch 9). **Discussion questions; Virtual Lab/Review questions; Quiz 2.**
- Module 3: Mar 8 - Mar 21 (2 weeks); Chemical trace analysis: toxicology, drugs, arson and explosives investigation, GSR analysis. Chapters 9, 12, 13, 17. **Discussion questions; Virtual Lab/Review questions; Quiz 3.**
- Module 4: Mar 22 - Apr 18 (4 weeks); Biological trace analysis: serology & DNA (Ch 15-16); forensic anthropology and death investigation (Ch 5). **Discussion questions; Virtual Labs; Quiz 4.**
- Module 5: Apr 19 - May 9 (2 weeks + 1 week off due to Spring recess): fiber and hair analysis (Ch 11), documents examination (Ch 18), digital evidence (Ch 19, 20). **Discussion questions; Virtual Lab/Review questions; Quiz 5.**
- Module 6: May 10 - May 16 (1 week); Expert testimony, bias, error estimation, miscarriages of justice, emerging technologies. Course summary. Check Canvas for reading materials. **Discussion questions.**

Thursday, May 20 (17:15-19:30): Final assessment – Presentation of the digital media project. Please note this will be an online synchronous activity (instead of the final exam), which requires your online presence in real-time.

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Course Assignments and Grading Policy

Students' progress in the course will be assessed using 4 assessment tasks:

1. Five quizzes, 10% each (50% total): individual task. Addressing CLOs 1-4.

Each quiz will consist of responses to approximately ten – twenty multiple choice, matching, true/false or short answer questions. The questions will cover the content learned in the lectures, required readings and online materials. The marking criteria for the quizzes will be based on the number of correct answers, reflecting an understanding of key concepts, question interpretation and problem-solving.

2. Virtual Labs, Reading and Review Questions (15%): individual task. Addressing CLOs 1-4.

Chapter reading and review questions will be assigned in every module to help mastering and reflecting on the content learned in each section. Alternatively, the students will be assigned with a 'virtual lab' activity for some of the relevant topics (e.g. fingerprint pattern analysis) to facilitate the learning process. Overall, this assignment will assess understanding of the key concepts, problem solving and ability to integrate information from a range of topics discussed during the course.

The weight of each assignment will vary, jointly contributing 15% of the total grade for this course. The students will be graded on the number of correct answers, reflecting an understanding of key concepts, question interpretation and problem-solving.

3. Discussion Questions (10%): individual task. Addressing CLOs 1-4.

There will be discussion questions posted regularly in the discussion board. This would provide an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the material, articulate your thoughts in writing, and interact with your classmates. It is wise to read through threads and to take note of instructor comments (particularly the end-of-discussion summary), as these may reinforce particular ideas or trains of thought. Students must respond substantively to every discussion question, and to at least one classmate's post, per question. A substantive post is one that moves the discussion forward, adds a new idea, poses a thoughtful question, etc. Simply liking or agreeing with a classmate is not substantive and will not receive discussion credit. No late discussion posts are permitted, since the purpose of the discussion is not simply to post, but to discuss questions and ideas with your classmates.

Upon completion of this assignment (which means you have contributed to each of the discussion topics) you will receive a full credit of 10 points. Partial completion of the assignment would be graded accordingly. Please check the grading rubric for specific details.

4. Final digital media presentation (25%): group task. Addressing CLO 5. Overall assessment of this project will be performed jointly by students (20% of the total mark) and course coordinator (80% of the total mark), accounting total to 25% of the final course grade.

4.1. This task would require a coordinated work of 2 to 4 students working together. You will be required to choose a relevant topic (e.g. a criminal case that became a benchmark in forensic science or in which a major error/misjustice occurred) and create a digital media artefact (e.g. video, podcast,

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- animation or blended media) about this topic. The length of the presentation should be between 3 to 5 minutes. This file should be uploaded into one of the free online platforms, such as Youtube or Vimeo and a link to the file must be submitted via Canvas prior to its presentation in the class.
- 4.2. Digital media training will be provided to you with a lecture on digital media principles covering layout design, colour theory, fonts, use of images and basic video techniques. Additional online modules will be available to provide assistance with digital media.
 - 4.3. The digital media project will benefit you in various ways such as learning the subject content and learning digital media principles to communicate effectively, as well as encouraging creativity. The digital media project is an authentic task that resembles real life scenarios, such as communicating the scientific findings to the jury or a police investigator.
 - 4.4. This project is not about using expensive equipment or sophisticated technology. It is about learning to tell a story in a clear, succinct and visually appealing manner, using digital media principles to ensure the message will be conveyed efficiently. The digital “props” are not to be ignored of course, as they could be very helpful to deliver your ideas. Nonetheless, your media project will be primarily judged on its content and how well you communicate it to the audience, and less on how “fancy” or “sophisticated” your animations are.
 - 4.5. Remember, this is a group task that requires proactive engagement and effective teamwork. At the end of your project, each student will be asked to provide quick feedback on groupwork dynamics including assessment of each member contribution. Your peers’ feedback will be incorporated in the final grade (e.g. a team member who hasn’t contributed to the task may receive an appropriate mark for this assignment, such as 0).
 - 4.6. Students will be graded on their ability to synthesize course materials and provide a critical analysis of the chosen topic of research. Specifically, the papers will be graded on the level of competency in the subject (40%), relevance of the discussed material (30%), flow (10%), professional layout (10%) and correct referencing style (10%). The students are expected to proofread their presentations and avoid using any jargon.
 - 4.7. This task will be due in the last week of the course, with potential adjustments based on students’ progress. Further details will be announced on Canvas.

A detailed grading rubric will be provided in Canvas for each of the assessment tasks.

All written assignments will be submitted via Canvas, and must be in Microsoft Word (*.doc or *.docx). If you do not currently own Microsoft Word, the software (both PC and Mac) is available for free to students: <http://www.sjsu.edu/it/services/collaboration/software/instructions.php>

Extra Credit Opportunities

Extra credit opportunities may be available throughout the semester and may be used to augment your final grade up to 5%. These opportunities will also be announced on the Canvas course site and required documentation will need to be uploaded and/or submitted online.

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Examples include the following:

1. Complete a short professional development course in forensic science (in any forensic discipline) offered by the National Institute of Justice marked “extra credit” in the Forensic Science module and submit your certificate of completion by the deadline (check Canvas). Successful completion of this assessment task will add 1% to the final grade.
2. Students can write a research paper about their future career that is of interest to the student or about a forensic science controversy. The paper should be either in CSE or APA format and contain an introduction, a body of research, and a conclusion. The length of a paper should be between 2 and 3 standard pages in 1.5 font and contain in-text citations from at least three sources (preferably peer-reviewed papers). Successful completion of this assessment task will add 1% to the final grade.
3. During the course, there will be multiple opportunities to improve your grade by answering bonus questions or performing additional assignments related to material discussed in class. The questions will be provided as either an option in the compulsory quizzes or as a separate bonus quiz.

Late Work and Make Ups

Real life has deadlines and so do college classes. With this in mind, manage your time responsibly with the knowledge that late work will generally not be accepted. If you know ahead of time that you will be offline when an assignment is due, complete it early. Make-ups will generally not be given unless extraordinary, documented circumstances exist.

Certainly, if you have a genuine problem, please contact me at the earliest convenience and I will gladly do my best to help you. If you are in any doubt about the requirements of an assignment, or due dates/times, please re-read the assignment and/or schedule. If your question is still unanswered, contact me for clarification.

Grading scale for all assignments

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A plus	97 to 100	C plus	77 to 79.9	F	<60
A	94 to 96.9	C	74 to 76.9		
<u>A minus</u>	<u>90 to 93.9</u>	<u>C minus</u>	<u>70 to 73.9</u>		
B plus	87 to 89.9	D plus	67 to 69.9		
B	84 to 86.9	D	64 to 66.9		
<u>B minus</u>	<u>80 to 83.9</u>	<u>D minus</u>	<u>60 to 63.9</u>		

Note: A grade of C or better is required for all Justice Studies major and minor coursework, and desirable for students enrolled in the Forensic Science majors and/or minor.

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University Policies

Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. You may find all syllabus related University Policies and resources information listed on GUP's Syllabus Information web page at

<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

Department of Justice Studies Reading and Writing Philosophy

The Department of Justice Studies is committed to scholarly excellence. Therefore, the Department promotes academic, critical, and creative engagement with language (i.e., reading and writing) throughout its curriculum. A sustained and intensive exploration of language prepares students to think critically and to act meaningfully in interrelated areas of their lives—personal, professional, economic, social, political, ethical, and cultural. Graduates of the Department of Justice Studies leave San José State University prepared to enter a range of careers and for advanced study in a variety of fields; they are prepared to more effectively identify and ameliorate injustice in their personal, professional and civic lives. Indeed, the impact of literacy is evident not only within the span of a specific course, semester, or academic program but also over the span of a lifetime.

Academic Integrity

San Jose State University encourage students to undertake their academic studies with the highest integrity and take seriously any instances of student misconduct. Student misconduct can include cheating (examples of which may be in formal or informal examinations, copying work from another student for individual reports or assignments, altering data, submitting work which has been written by another person as your own, resubmitting work that has been submitted previously for academic credit) or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit). Plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin or other methods to detect plagiarism will be used to check your work. Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University.

The University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The Student Conduct and Ethical Development website is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Student Resources

Forensic Science Student Group (FSS)

[SJSU Forensic Science Students](#) is a campus group open to all students interested in forensic science. The group meets biweekly during the semester and offers friendship, forensic science-related activities, networking opportunities, and mentorship. Members of the FSS participate and assist at conferences, CSI camps, guest speaking events, and other extracurricular activities. FSS Peer Mentors assist forensic science students in

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navigating the major, understanding requirements and prerequisites, and making wise choices in their college careers. Mentors may also offer limited tutoring, and facilitate educational and professional opportunities. Contact sjsu.fss@gmail.com for more information, or to get an application for membership.

Student Technology Resources

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student loaning from Media Services located in IRC 112. Please check [online](#) for additional information.

ACCESS Success Center

The Academic Counseling Center for Excellence in the Social Sciences (ACCESS) provides General Education advising for undergraduate students majoring or intending to major in any of the departments in the College of Social Sciences (CoSS). ACCESS Academic Advisors are committed to helping you develop a clear path to graduation and supporting your academic success. You can schedule an appointment and find more information at sjsu.edu/access.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center located in Room 126 in Clark Hall offers a variety of resources to help students become better writers, including one-on-one tutoring sessions and numerous writing workshops. All services are free for SJSU students. <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>