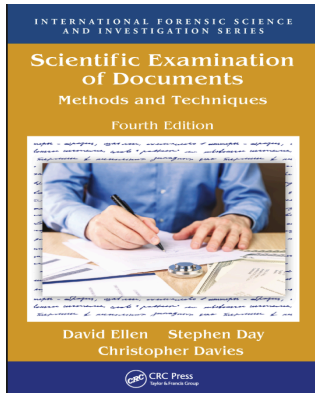


SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
CJ_5373 W01_FORENSIC DOCUMENT EXAMINATION
Spring 2025 Syllabus

Instructor: Ekrem Mus, Ph.D.
E-mail: mus.ekrem@sulross.edu
Class hours/ Classroom: Online



REQUIRED TEXT(S)

Ellen, D., Day, S. & Davies, C. (2018). Scientific Examination of Documents. Methods and Techniques (4th Ed). CRC Press.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

All other recommended readings will be posted via Blackboard.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL RESOURCES

1. **American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (ASQDE)**
A professional organization that provides resources, publications, and conference information for forensic document examiners.
[Visit ASQDE](#)
2. **Scientific Working Group for Forensic Document Examination (SWGDOC)**
Offers standards, guidelines, and best practices for forensic document examination.
[Visit SWGDOC](#)
3. **Association of Forensic Document Examiners (AFDE)**
Provides certification details, resources, and training opportunities for document examiners.
[Visit AFDE](#)
4. **Board of Forensic Document Examiners (BFDE)**
Focuses on certification and ethical standards for forensic document examiners.
[Visit BFDE](#)
5. **International Association of Document Examiners (IADE)**
Dedicated to the education and certification of document examiners worldwide.
[Visit IADE](#)

6. Southeastern Association of Forensic Document Examiners (SAFDE)

A regional organization providing resources and networking opportunities in the southeastern U.S.

[Visit SAFDE](#)

SRSU LIBRARY SERVICES

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu/. Off-campus access requires logging in with your Lobold and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or by phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Once you log in to your Sul Ross Account on Blackboard, you should be automatically connected to the library webpage. Thus, you can browse the University's online databases and reach the articles on the reading list.

The syllabus is subject to updates and changes always look to the course announcements and reminders for updates. The faculty member reserves the right to amend this syllabus as needed.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This course provides an in-depth exploration of the principles, techniques, and applications of forensic document examination within the field of criminology. Students will learn to analyze handwriting, signatures, alterations, typewriting, printing processes, security features of documents (Passports, IDs, banknotes, etc.) other elements of questioned documents. Combining theoretical frameworks with practical training, the course equips students to assess document authenticity and detect forgery. Emphasis is placed on the role of forensic document examiners in legal proceedings, including the presentation of findings in court. The course prepares students for advanced roles in forensic science, legal investigations, and criminal justice by teaching both traditional and emerging technologies in the field.

This course prepares students for careers in forensic science laboratories, law enforcement agencies, legal consultancy, or academic research. It emphasizes a balance of theory, technical skills, and practical applications to meet the demands of the evolving field.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to.

SLO1: Understand the scientific methodologies and tools used in forensic document examination, including handwriting analysis and ink composition testing.

SLO2: Apply theoretical knowledge to identify document alterations, forgeries, and other

anomalies through hands-on practice.

SLO3: Explore the intersection of forensic science, criminology, and legal systems in the context of document authentication and admissibility.

SLO4: Develop professional reporting skills and the ability to present findings effectively as expert witnesses in legal settings.

SLO5: Gain exposure to advanced methods such as multispectral imaging and machine learning for modern forensic challenges

MARKETABLE SKILLS:

This course is designed also to help the students build various marketable skills to use in their careers Criminal Justice related professions. Specifically, in this course, the following marketable skills, which are some of the most important skills for such careers, will be emphasized during this course:

MS 1- Proficiency in examining questioned documents, detecting forgery, and authenticating materials using forensic techniques.

MS 2- Critical Thinking and Observation. Students will develop critical thinking skills to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.

MS 3- Ability to evaluate complex evidence and derive logical conclusions for investigations.

MS 4- Familiarity with courtroom procedures and the ability to serve as an expert witness, including delivering clear, concise testimony.

MS 5- Competence in documenting findings in professional formats and contributing to academic or investigative research in criminology.

CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:

Given that this is a fully online course, you cannot attend class in a traditional sense. However, students are expected to log into the class at their earliest convenience to check the course web page daily for announcements.

GRADING:

There will be five reaction papers, one midterm exam, and one final exam throughout the semester. Questions for exams and quizzes will be drawn from the readings and the supplemental materials posted on Blackboard. The midterm exam and final exam will be worth 200 points each. There will be no makeup exam.

REACTION PAPERS (4 points each, 5*4 = 20)

You will write a reaction paper for five weeks. Each paper must be 1 page and 1.5-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. Reaction papers will be related to the reading of the week. When there is more than one reading assignment, then the students can choose to write a reaction paper on one of them. A reaction paper is not a summary; rather, it should include your perspective, ideas, and critique of the reading. The due dates for the reaction papers will be Sunday at 11:00 pm. each week.

MIDTERM EXAM (30 points)

For your midterm exam, you will have an online exam (multiple choice, True/ False) after the completion of the first 7 weeks. More info will be provided.

FINAL EXAM (30 points)

For your final exam, you will have an exam (multiple choice, True/ False) after the completion of the first 13 weeks. More info will be provided.

Final Project: Handwriting Comparison Analysis(20 points)

The project aims to analyze and compare handwriting samples from five individuals, exploring differences in style, characteristics, and identifiable features. You can finish this project any time after 7 weeks.

Requirements

1. Sample Collection

- Obtain **three distinct handwriting samples** from each of the five individuals.
- Ensure the samples include:
 - A short paragraph (minimum 100 words).
 - A list of numbers from 0 to 9.
 - A sentence containing all alphabet letters (e.g., "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog").
- Each sample should be written on plain, unlined paper using the same type of writing instrument (e.g., pen or pencil).

2. Analysis Criteria

Analyze the samples based on the following features:

- **Letter formation:** Shape, slant, and size of letters.
- **Spacing:** Distance between letters, words, and lines.
- **Baseline alignment:** Consistency of writing along an imaginary horizontal line.
- **Pressure:** Depth and darkness of strokes.
- **Unique characteristics:** Any peculiar traits such as loops, dots, or strokes.

3. Comparative Study

- Compare the handwriting of the five individuals based on the analysis criteria.
- Identify similarities and differences among the samples.
- Discuss how unique handwriting features can be used for individual identification.

4. Documentation

- Present the results in a **detailed report** that includes:
 - **Introduction:** Objective and significance of handwriting analysis.
 - **Methodology:** Process of sample collection and analysis.
 - **Findings:** Observations for each individual's handwriting and the comparative study.

- **Discussion:** Interpretation of findings and implications.
- **Conclusion:** Summary of the analysis.
- Include scanned or photographed images of the handwriting samples in the report.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Sul Ross State University students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the Sul Ross Student Code of Conduct.” Student Code of Conduct, Responsibilities, Procedures, and Rights are found on the University website.

Sul Ross State University and the instructor of this course both place a high priority on the academic integrity of their student scholars. As a result, all institutional guidelines and instructional policies concerning academic integrity will be strictly and uniformly enforced with all students regardless of context.

Academic integrity includes but is not limited to, the following activities: cheating, plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, obtaining an unfair advantage, and falsifying academic records. Besides, academic dishonesty can include both actions and omissions to act in regard to academic exercises and activities. Cheating is defined here as the obtaining of information (electronic or otherwise) during an examination, the unauthorized use of books, notes, or other sources of information before or during an examination, the unauthorized use of books, the removal of faculty examination materials, the alteration of documents or records, or actions identifiable as occurring with the intent to defraud or use under false pretenses. Collusion is defined here as helping other students engage in acts of academic dishonesty, whether the student involved obtains any direct academic advantage from these acts. Plagiarism is defined here as the submission of the ideas, words, or artistic productions of another, without giving due credit or when attempting to falsely represent them as one’s own. See [SRSU Library Teaching and Learning Guides](#) for more information.

POLICY ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS:

In this course, you are not required to use any form of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, etc. However, if you choose to use any AI tools as part of your assignments - other than for brainstorming, proofreading, etc.- you must provide proper citations. We use the APA citation format in all of our CJ courses. For more information about proper APA citation, please visit [SRSU Library Teaching and Learning Guides](#).

Using AI tools to complete any assignment without proper citation violates academic integrity and will be considered a form of plagiarism, which is a violation of the SRSU Academic Honesty Policy under the [Student Handbook](#). If you are unsure whether something is considered an AI tool, please check with your instructor.

You are permitted to use AI tools for spell check, grammar check, and proofreading. Rephrasing sentences or reorganizing paragraphs you have drafted yourself is also allowed. However, remember that the most important part is that all work you submit must be your

own. You should never include anything in your assignment that was not written directly by you without proper citation. DO NOT copy and paste directly from any AI tools.

APA STYLE:

This course will use the American Psychological Association (APA) formatting and style guide for all written assignments. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the use of APA a couple of resources have been provided below. Please note that all external sources must be appropriately cited. See [SRSU Library Teaching and Learning Guides](#) for help with APA.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AND BLACKBOARD HELP DESK

Sul Ross State University has established a variety of programs to help students meet the challenges of college life. Support to students includes advising, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and writing assistance. For a complete list of academic support services, visit the [Student Support Services](#) for more information, students are encouraged to contact SSS at (432) 837-9118 or visit Ferguson Hall Room 105. For Blackboard help, visit <https://www.sulross.edu/bb> or call 432-837-8888 (M-F 08:00 am-05:00 pm).

DISTANCE EDUCATION STATEMENT

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as Smarthinking, library resources, such as online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login information to verify students' identities and protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies about academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU's policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartz@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

LATE ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY:

Students are supposed to finish their coursework on time and assignments must be submitted before the deadlines. Students are expected to show appropriate cause for missing or delaying major assignments or examinations. Late assignments will not be accepted unless there is an excuse that is recognized by the university.

SERVICE STATEMENT:

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic class, age, nationality, etc.). I also understand that the crisis of pandemics, economic disparity, health concerns, or even unexpected life events could impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create an inclusive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT:

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state, and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

Summary of Assignments

Assignment	Relative Value	Due Date
1. Reflection Papers (5)	(5*4) 20 points	Week 2, 4, 6, 10, 12
2. Midterm Exam	30 points	Week 8
3. Final Project	20 points	Week 7-14
4. Final Exam	30 points	Week 14
Total	100 points	

Grading Scale:

A	90 - 100	D	60 - 69
B	80 - 89	F	59 - Below
C	70 - 79		

ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Week 1 (January 15 - 19): Introduction of Syllabus and course requirements, Intro to Forensic Sciences

Textbook, Chapter 1- Introduction, Handouts.

Week 2 (January 20 - 26): Intro to Forensic Document Examination (FDE)

Challenges of FDE, History of Document Examination (Blackboard - BB), Handouts, Online resources

[Scientific Working Group for FDE](#)

Assignment: First Reflection Paper Due.

Week 3 (January 27 - February 2): Fundamentals of Handwriting Analysis

Textbook, Chapter 2- Handwriting: The Variations between Normal Writings

Textbook, Chapter 3- Handwriting: Accidental and Deliberate Modification

Factors That Cause Changes in Handwriting (BB), Case Studies, Handouts, Online resources

[Questioned Documents](#)

Week 4 (February 3- 9): The Purpose and Principles of Handwriting Examination

Textbook, Chapter 4- Handwriting: The Purpose and Principles of Scientific Examination

Hand printing and Numerals (BB), Handouts, Case Studies, Online resources

Assignment: Second Reflection Paper Due.

Week 5 (February 10 - 16): Signature Examination and Authentication

Signature Examination and Authentication, Analyzing forged vs. genuine signatures (BB), Handouts, Case Studies, Online resources

Week 6 (February 17 - 23): Printing Processes and Typewriting

Textbook, Chapter 6- Typewriting and Typescripts

Identifying typewriting and printing techniques; characteristics of modern and older devices (BB), Mechanic typewriters, Handouts, Online resources

Assignment: Third Reflection Paper Due.

Week 7 (February 24 - March 2): Printing techniques (Typographic (Typo) Print, Offset Print, Gravure Print, Serigraph Print)

Various Printing Techniques with different documents (BB), Handouts, Online resources

Week 8 (March 3-9): Midterm Exam

We will review concepts introduced in the first half of the course and thus facilitate preparation for the midterm exam. Students should e-mail questions and requests for clarification.

Week 9 (March 10 - 16): Ink and Paper Analysis

Textbook, Chapter 7- The Materials and Handwritten Documents: Substances and Techniques

Ink and Paper Analysis (BB), Handouts, Online resources

Spring Break (March 17-21): No classes.

Week 10 (March 24 - 30): Security Features in Documents-1

Passports, IDs, Analysis of watermarks, holograms, and other security features. Examine security features in passports and IDs.

Analysis of counterfeit documents: Passports, IDs. Case studies.

Additional Reading

Wilson, J. M. (2008). Counterfeit detection: A forensic approach. *Forensic Science International*, 185(1-3), 10-15. [Article link](#)

Week 11 (March 31 - April 6): Security Features in Documents-2

Travel docs, Visas (Schengen and US Visas), Currency, and other documents analysis. Analysis of watermarks, holograms, and other security features. Analysis of counterfeit documents: Travel docs, Visas, cheques, and other documents. Case studies.

Assignment: Fourth Reflection Paper Due.

Week 12 (April 7 - 13): Printed and Photocopied Documents

Textbook, Chapter 8- The Examination of Printed and Photocopied Documents

Bitmap Analysis (BB), Handouts, Online resources

Week 13 (April 14 - 20): Document Examination in Court, Legal Aspects of Document Examination

Textbook, Chapter 11- Document Examination in Court Room

Admissibility of document evidence in court; expert testimony. The Role of the Forensic Document Examiner in the Courtroom, Documentation and reporting best practices; maintaining the chain of custody (BB), and Online resources.

Assignment: Fifth Reflection Paper Due.

Week 14 (April 21 - 27): Applications of Technology in FDE

Computer Generated Documents & Computational analysis of documents (Timothy A Campbell, BB), Case Studies, and Online resources.

Week 15 (April 28 - May 4): Digital Document Examination

Analysis of digitally created documents; identifying electronic forgery.

Forensic Analysis of Handwritten Electronic Signatures (Nicolaidis, K. A. & Detwiler, K. R, BB)

Digital Examination Techniques and Considerations (Goff, M. T. BB)

[Forensic Examination of Digital Evidence: A Guide for Law Enforcement](#)

Week 16 (May 5 - 11): Course Recap and Final Exam

We will review concepts introduced in the second half of the course and thus facilitate preparation for the final exam. Students should e-mail questions and requests for clarification.

END OF COURSE EVALUATIONS:

Student evaluations of faculty are administered online at the end of each term/session for all courses with five or more students. Students will receive an email containing a link to a survey for each course in which they are enrolled. All responses are anonymous.