

**Sul Ross State University**  
**Courtroom Presentation and Rule of Evidence**  
**Semester: Fall 2025**  
**CJ 5366 Syllabus**

**Instructor:** Corey Rice  
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**Class hours:** Online  
**Classroom:** Remote  
**Office hours:** Virtual (Schedule for times)

**REQUIRED TEXT(S):**

NONE

*Additional readings (e.g., articles, reports) will be posted on Blackboard.*

**SRSU LIBRARY SERVICES:**

The Sul Ross Library offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [www.library.sulross.edu](http://www.library.sulross.edu) . Off-campus access requires your LoboID and password. Check out materials using your photo ID. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu) ), or phone (432-837-8123).

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

*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:**

In this course, students are provided an overview of the criminal law-forensic science interface. This includes legal concepts of admissibility of evidence and proof, rules of evidence, structure and hierarchy of criminal courts, ethics, and expert testimony.

## **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

This course is designed to provide knowledge about various topics related to American Criminal Justice system. Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

**LO1-** Understand the fundamentals of courtroom testimony.

**LO2-** Examine and discuss the processes and underlying philosophies of the case law and expert testimony.

**LO3-** Able to think critically on different parts of the criminal justice system, their current functions, and their interrelationships with each other.

**LO4-** Develop competencies in analyzing court cases and promoting possible solutions for crime-related social problems.

**LO5-** Discuss the history of Federal Rules of Evidence.

**LO6-** Understand and able to think critically on different court systems around the world.

**LO7-**The student will learn about expert testimony.

**LO8-**The student will discuss professionalism and ethics in court room presentation.

**LO9-**The student will discuss the Federal Rules of evidence.

**LO10-**The student will be able to explain the differences between a lay witness and an expert witness.

**LO11-**The student will describe when a lay witness may give an opinion.

**LO12-**The student will explain the qualifications that must be satisfied for an individual to testify as an expert witness at a trial.

**LO13-**The student will explain why expert witnesses traditionally have not been permitted to testify about an “ultimate issue,” and how the Federal Rules of Evidence approach this issue.

## **MARKETABLE SKILLS:**

This course is designed also to help the students for building various marketable skills to use in their in 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-** Verbal and Written Communication Skills. Students will develop communication skills to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.

**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-** Multicultural Understanding.

**MS 4-** Accessing resources to interrupt case law and case studies.

**MS 5-** Teamwork and working collaboratively.

**MS 6-** Analyzing the factors contributing to expert testimony.

## **GENERAL CLASSROOM POLICIES:**

Students are encouraged to attend the class, ask questions, and express opinions, however, talking among students and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. You may bring beverages to class with you, but not food. Reading outside materials such as newspapers or other course work is not permitted during class time. Students should be prepared to engage in discussion over the assigned readings, and for possible pop quizzes. Electronic devices are never allowed to use in class in a way to distract the instructor and other students. Keep your mobile phone in silent mode, otherwise switch it off. Violation of this crucial principal will be penalized. There will be one general rule in class which applies to all situations. This is also called “golden rule”. TREAT OTHERS AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED.

## **GRADING:**

There will be 2 major assignments throughout the semester. The midterm will be a research paper. The midterm will be 25% of the student’s overall grade. The final exam will be compiled with questions drawn from the readings and the supplemental materials posted on the blackboard. The final will be 25% of the student’s overall grade. There will be weekly assignments composed of discussions, work sheets, or quizzes. Those same assignments will be 50% of the student’s total grade. There will be no makeup exams or assignments

<b>Midterm (Writing Assignment)</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Discussion Questions/Assignments/Quizzes</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **DISCUSSION RUBRIC:**

The student will need to make initial post by the third day of the week the discussion is posted. The initial response should be a minimum of 500 words. Students will need to reply to at least three other students. All references should be cited in APA format. Discussions will be graded based on the rubric below.

Criteria	Excellent (100%)	Satisfactory (75%)	Unsatisfactory (50%)	Poor (25%)
Content 25%	Demonstrated a clear understanding of the weekly material/subject and articulated command of content/subject into well stated post responses.	Displayed an understanding of weekly material/subject but did not fully articulate their understanding.	Displayed very little understanding of the weekly material /subject and did not articulate an understanding.	Failed to display any understanding of the week's materials; and/or incorrectly addressed the weekly material/subject.
Timely Posting 25%	Posts original discussions by day three (3) of the academic week.	Posts original discussions by day four (4) of the academic week.	Posts original discussion by day six (5) of the academic week.	Posts original discussion by day seven (6) of the academic week or after.
Peer Interaction 25%	Engaged in discussion with at least three (3) peers whereby an idea was built upon or refuted and displayed exemplary critical thinking.	Engaged in discussion with at least two (2) peers whereby an idea was built upon or refuted and displayed good critical thinking.	Engaged in discussion with at least one (1) peer whereby an idea was built upon or refuted.	Did not engage in discussion with peers.

Criteria	Excellent (100%)	Satisfactory (75%)	Unsatisfactory (50%)	Poor (25%)
Grammar 25%	All standards followed as required (i.e. APA format; grammar; citations; references, other standards as required).	1 discussion standard not followed (i.e. APA format; grammar; citations; references, other standards as required).	2-3 discussion standards not followed (i.e. APA format; grammar; citations; references, other standards as required).	4 or more discussion standards not followed (i.e. APA format; grammar; citations; references, other standards as required).

**MIDTERM:**

**Writing Assignment**

**Choose one of the below topics for your midterm paper.**

- 1) If you could add, delete, or modify one or two of the Federal Rules of Evidence, which Rules would you change and why?
- 2) Identify something in either the assigned readings or presentations that you agree or disagree with and explain why you agree or disagree.
- 3) Any topic you choose that has something to do with the law, science, or expert testimony in some way.

**Course Paper:**

A course paper on your selected topic is due by the end of week 8. The body of your paper must be between 1,600–2,000 words, with all components formatted in APA Style. Do not include a running head, author note, or abstract. A title page and reference list are required but do not count toward the word-count requirement. Cite at least five referenced sources in your paper and ensure no more than 20% of your paper includes direct quotes. Use this project as an opportunity to help you paraphrase others’ ideas.

All submissions will be screened using the Turnitin plagiarism and artificial intelligence (AI or Chat GPT) detection tool. Consequently, any paper with plagiarism issues will receive a grade of zero. (Note: I will review the actual Turnitin results to determine plagiarism and will not rely on the reported score.) Submit your paper through the Blackboard assignment Dropbox. See the grading rubric below for specific evaluation criteria. This assignment counts toward 25% of your final grade.

<b>Organization</b>  <b>/20 points</b>	<b>Superior -20</b>	<b>Proficient-18</b>	<b>Satisfactory-15</b>	<b>Limited-10</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory-5</b>
	Well-structured introduction with strong, sharply focused thesis statement	Well-structured introduction with clear thesis	Properly structured introduction with satisfactory thesis	Poorly structured introduction with unclear thesis	Introduction is incomplete, ineffective, or missing. No apparent thesis.
	Sharply focused topic sentences and paragraphs that are closely related to thesis	Topic sentences and paragraphs are clearly related to thesis	Moderately effective topic sentences and paragraphs logically related to thesis	Ineffective topic sentences and paragraphs that are not logically related to thesis	Topic sentences and paragraphs are irrelevant or missing
	Well-constructed and clear conclusion that strongly reaffirms thesis	Sufficiently effective conclusion which reaffirms thesis and ties together main ideas and facts	Somewhat effective conclusion which restates thesis, but does not fully tie together main ideas and facts	Incompletely developed conclusion which fails to effectively tie together main ideas and facts	Absent, incomplete, or unfocused conclusion
<b>Content Idea Development</b>  <b>/60 points</b>	<b>Superior 60</b>	<b>Proficient 50</b>	<b>Satisfactory 40</b>	<b>Limited 30</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory 20</b>
	Interesting and complete explanation of topic, with specific, accurate, and relevant information.	Content is accurate and relevant, with sufficient evidence to adequately explain topic	Explanation of topic is satisfactory, with mostly sufficient evidence, but mostly general. More detail needed. Some factual errors	Partial or incomplete explanation of topic, with insufficient evidence and inaccuracies	Inadequate explanation of topic with inadequate or missing evidence and many factual errors

	Fully developed body paragraphs that clearly and effectively support thesis with three arguments	Well-developed body paragraphs sufficiently support thesis with three arguments	Body paragraphs that satisfactorily support thesis but could be more developed; only two arguments	Body paragraphs that provide limited and inadequate support of thesis; only one argument	Body paragraphs that do not support thesis
<b>Mechanics</b> <b>/10 points</b>	<b>Superior-10</b>	<b>Proficient-8</b>	<b>Satisfactory-6</b>	<b>Limited-4</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory-2</b>
	Very clear and easily understood, with few, if any, grammatical errors	Sufficiently clear and understandable, with few grammatical errors	Mostly clear and understandable, with some grammatical errors	Somewhat clear and difficult to understand, with many errors	Unclear and difficult to understand, with multiple errors
	Paragraphs flow smoothly, and transitions between sentences and/or paragraphs are seamless and effective	Sentences are sufficiently complete, with only a few structural errors. Transitions are mostly effective	Sentences are mostly complete, with some structural errors. Transitions are satisfactory.	Sentences are sometimes incomplete, with more than a few structural errors. Transitions are ineffective.	Sentences are often incomplete, with many structural errors. Transitions are missing.
<b>Bibliography</b> <b>/10 points</b>	<b>Superior-10</b>	<b>Proficient-8</b>	<b>Satisfactory-6</b>	<b>Limited-4</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory-2</b>
	Correct APA Format	Mostly Correct Format	Slightly Format	Completely Incorrect Format	Not Present
<b>/100</b>					

### **CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM:**

Students are expected to do their own work on all tests and papers. Cheating on tests and plagiarism on assignments will result in a grade of “F” on that part of the course, a possible grade of “F” for the entire course, and possible recommendation for suspension from the university.

Plagiarism consists of presenting the work of another as one’s own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source) and submitting examinations or other work in whole or in part as one’s own when such work has been prepared by another person or copied from another person (see the Student Handbook).

### **IN-CLASS and ON-LINE ATTENDANCE:**

The Department of Criminal Justice feels very strongly that class attendance is a direct predictor of student classroom success. Therefore, the faculty of the CJ department as a group will enforce the following student attendance policy. This policy does not supersede the SRSU policy on student attendance; it simply reinforces those stated goals. Criminal justice faculty will take class attendance. In accordance with current SRSU policy, when a student misses a total of 9 hours of class, the presumption is that the student will be dropped from that class with an “F”.

Students who violate the SRSU attendance policy may also find that they are ineligible for any extra credit, or any discretionary grading curve applied to any or all exams for that course/semester. It should also be noted that it is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor prior to any University event that would cause an absence. Failure of the student to inform the instructor will result in that absence being recorded as unexcused. Attendance is important! Attendance demonstrates maturity, responsibility, and a serious attitude toward education. Additionally, instructors seldom teach only from the book. Missing a class (even an excused absence) will put you at a disadvantage for all the materials covered when you were absent such as films, presentations, and guest lectures which cannot be made up. Attendance will be taken daily, and absences cannot be made up. Students should be in class on time and should be prepared to stay for the entire class period. Students who are late will not be counted as attending if attendance has already been taken.

### **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 COVID, economic disparity, and 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 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 <https://www.sulross.edu/section/311/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 432-837-8523 (M-F 09:00 am-06:00 pm). You can get The Distance Education Handbook at <https://tvpb.sulross.edu/start/index.html>

### **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 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 Schwartz Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director at 432-837-8203 or email [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto: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.

## ACADEMIC CALENDAR FALL 2025

W	DATES	TOPICS	READINGS
1	08/25 - 08/31	Class Introductions	Course Orientation
2	09/01-09/07	Federal Rules of Evidence	Federal Rules of Evidence
3	09/08-09/14	Overview of Evidence	Law and Evidence Chapter 1
4	09/15-09/21	Real Evidence	Law and Evidence Chapter 2
5	09/22-09/28	Demonstrative Evidence	Law and Evidence Chapter 3
6	09/29-10/05	Documentary Evidence	Law and Evidence Chapter 4
7	10/06-10/12	Lay Witness	Law and Evidence Chapter 5
8	<b>10/13-10/19</b>	<b>MIDTERM</b>	
9	10/20-10/26	Expert Evidence	Law and Evidence Chapter 6
10	10/28-11/03	Admissions and Stipulations	Law and Evidence Chapter 7
11	11/03-11/09	Motion Practice and Evidence	Law and Evidence Chapter 8
12	11/10-11/16	Trial Evidence	Law and Evidence Chapter 9
13	11/17-11/23	Forensic Report	Forensic Science in Criminal Courts
14	11/24-11/30	Final Review	Course Material
<b>15/ 16</b>	<b>12/01-12/07 12/08-12/10</b>	<b>FINAL</b>	

### **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.