

SYLLABUS PATTERN & PHYSICAL EVIDENCE (SRSU.202630_CJ_5371-2W1_31485) Start Date: 07/06/2026 End Date: 08/10/2026 Type: Online Class hours: Online	Assistant Professor Esra BALCIOGLU E-mail: esra.balcioглу@sulross.edu Office hours: Appointment by Blackboard Message
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Contacting Me: The best way to reach me is via Blackboard Ultra Message. Do not hesitate to contact me for any reason. I will respond to message inquiries as soon as possible.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following course materials are required:

1. **Textbooks:**
Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science, 13th Edition. Richard Saferstein, Tiffany Roy. Pearson. ISBN: 9780135268407
2. Recommended-American Psychological Association (October 2019). Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition, <https://apastyle.apa.org/products/publication-manual-7th-edition-spiral>

Additional resources, including supplementary readings, videos, and other materials, will be made available on Blackboard throughout the semester.

SRSU Library Services and Support

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library at Sul Ross State University is your go-to hub for academic resources, offering a wealth of materials and services to the entire SRSU community at no cost. You'll find a vast collection of books, articles, and online databases readily accessible at www.library.sulross.edu. If you're accessing resources off campus, simply use your Lobo ID and password to log in. For checking out physical materials, remember to bring a photo ID. Need assistance? Our librarians are here to help! You can reach them via email at srsulibrary@sulross.edu, by phone at 432-837-8123, or by visiting them in person.

Resources for RGC Students

For Rio Grande College (RGC) students, you have the added benefit of access to the Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries located in Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass. These libraries offer additional study spaces, resources, and online materials accessible through library.swtjc.edu. They also serve as convenient pickup locations for InterLibrary Loan (ILL) services from the Alpine campus.

To easily connect with online library resources, simply log into your Sul Ross Blackboard account. This will directly link you to the library webpage, where you can explore online databases and access articles on your reading list.

Important Syllabus Information

Please be aware that the syllabus is subject to updates. It's crucial to regularly check course announcements for any changes. The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as necessary throughout the semester.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate-level course examines the scientific principles, collection, examination, interpretation, and management of physical evidence encountered during forensic investigations. Emphasis is placed on the recognition and documentation of crime scenes, the identification and preservation of pattern evidence, fingerprint examination, firearms and toolmark evidence, impression evidence, trace evidence, and the application of forensic analytical techniques used in modern crime laboratories.

Students will develop an understanding of the scientific basis, evidentiary value, limitations, and proper handling of physical evidence throughout the forensic process. The course also addresses evidence documentation, chain of custody, ethical considerations, cognitive bias, and best practices for maintaining evidence integrity from crime scene investigation through laboratory analysis and legal proceedings.

The course integrates forensic science theory with practical applications, emphasizing critical evaluation of physical evidence, quality assurance, and evidence-based decision-making relevant to contemporary forensic investigations within the United States and the State of Texas.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

1. Explain the scientific principles underlying the recognition, documentation, collection, preservation, and management of physical evidence at crime scenes.
2. Differentiate between class and individual characteristics and evaluate the evidentiary value and limitations of various types of physical and pattern evidence.
3. Apply appropriate methods for the documentation, collection, preservation, packaging, and transportation of fingerprint, impression, firearms, toolmark, biological, and trace evidence.
4. Describe the scientific principles and forensic applications of fingerprint examination, firearms identification, toolmark analysis, impression evidence, and trace evidence analysis.
5. Evaluate the role of microscopic, physical, and comparative analytical techniques used in the examination of hair, fibers, glass, paint, soil, and other trace materials.
6. Assess the importance of evidence integrity, chain of custody, documentation, and quality assurance in maintaining the reliability and admissibility of forensic evidence.
7. Identify ethical responsibilities, cognitive bias, and professional challenges associated with forensic evidence management and laboratory practice.
8. Apply scientific reasoning and evidence-based interpretation to forensic case studies involving pattern and physical evidence while effectively communicating forensic findings in investigative and legal contexts.

COURSE ASSESSMENTS

1-Quizzes (80 points total): There will be five (4) quizzes. You will take a quiz every week to measure the knowledge of the week's required readings.

2-Reaction papers (80 points total): There will be four (4). You are required to submit a **Reaction Paper** each week based on the assigned readings. Each paper should meet the following format requirements:

- **Length:** 1 full page
- **Spacing:** 1.5-spaced
- **Font:** 12-point Times New Roman

Each Reaction Paper should focus on the **assigned readings for the week**. If there is more than one assigned reading, you are expected to **read all required materials** but may choose **one reading** on which to base your paper for that week.

Important: A Reaction Paper is **not a summary** of the reading. Instead, it should reflect:

- Your **perspective**
- Your **analysis and critique** of the ideas presented
- Any **connections** you see to course themes or real-world applications

Due Date: Reaction Papers are due **every Sunday by 11:00 PM (CT)** unless otherwise noted.

3-Midterm Exam (100 points):

For your Midterm Exam, you will prepare an **Annotated Bibliography** relevant to your previously chosen research paper topic. **Annotated Bibliography Assignment of 10–12 scholarly sources** that will serve as part of the literature foundation for your **Final Paper**.

You must use **scholarly, scientific, peer-reviewed journal articles**.

- **Government or expert reports** are the only exception to this requirement.
- **Web articles, popular magazines, and newspapers** (e.g., NYT, Time, Newsweek) will **not** receive credit unless the article is a **reprint from a peer-reviewed journal**.
- Your selected articles should reflect **scientific research** and the use of appropriate **research methods**.

For Each Source, Your Annotation Should Address the Following:

1. **Author(s):** Who wrote the article?
2. **Purpose:** What was the author's purpose in writing this piece?
3. **Major Findings:** What are the key assertions or findings of the article?
4. **Evidence:** How does the author support these findings?
5. **Comparison:** How does this source compare or contrast with another source in your bibliography?
6. **Relevance:** How does this source contribute to your understanding of your chosen Final Paper topic?
7. **Research Methods:** What research methods were used in this study?

4- Discussion Board (40 points):

Participation in the discussion board is an important component of this course. Graduate students are expected to demonstrate critical thinking and apply forensic evidence management principles to case-based scenarios using evidence-based reasoning.

The **Week 5 discussion** will focus on Evidence Interpretation and Courtroom Testimony, including topics from Chapter 2 – The Crime Scene (Criminalistics) and Chapter 11 – Evidence Management Documents (Forensic

Evidence Management). Students will discuss the importance of physical evidence collection, packaging, chain of custody, documentation, and legal considerations in maintaining evidence integrity and admissibility.

Students must submit:

One original discussion post

Two responses to classmates' posts

Grading (40 points total):

Initial post: 20 points

Two peer responses: 10 points each

Requirements:

Initial post: minimum 250 words

Responses: minimum 100 words each

Posts must demonstrate critical analysis, use course concepts, and maintain professional communication.

5-Final Paper (200 points):

You will write a final paper on the topic you have chosen, which will be covered in the **Pattern and Physical Evidence** course.

The paper should;

- a) be between 4 to 6 pages,
- b) include these parts: Title page (1 page), Table of Contents (1 page), Abstract (1 page), Body of the paper - The Philosophy of Capital Punishment (4+ pages), References (1 page), Appendices (if any),
- c) be typed, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point Calibri font,
- d) include at least three scholarly citations other than the ones we covered in the class (not website articles, Wikipedia, news agencies, magazines, etc.),
- e) be written according to APA formatting and citation style (Recommended textbook APA Manual)

Plagiarism detection software (SafeAssign) is used in this course. SafeAssign will detect and report all instances of plagiarism including where the student copied and pasted directly from a source. Students will receive a grade of "0" in these instances and possibly fail the course. Your final paper will be submitted through SafeAssign.

Grading

Grading Components

Assessment	Points
Reaction Papers (4 x 20 points)	80
Weekly Quizzes (4 x 20 points)	80
Midterm Exam (Annotated Bibliography)	100
Discussion Board	40
Final Paper	200
Total Possible Points	500

Course Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Points Range
A	500 – 460
B	459 – 420
C	419 – 380
D	379 – 340
F	339 & below

Technology Requirements

This course requires frequent use of **Blackboard**. Students must check it regularly for announcements, assignments, grades, and course materials. Key Blackboard tools include email, course documents, discussion boards, grade center, SafeAssign, and external links.

Basic Computer Skills Needed:

- Sending/receiving email with attachments
- Browsing the internet and downloading files
- Using word processing software (e.g., MS Word)

Required Technology:

- A reliable computer with stable internet access
- A current web browser capable of streaming content and downloading materials
- Access to Blackboard using your **Lobo ID and password**

For assistance, tutorials are available on the Blackboard support page.

Participation Policy

This is a fully online course with no class meetings scheduled. However, active participation is expected. To start, please complete the non-graded **“Introduction” post** to introduce yourself to your classmates and your professor. Students are expected to:

- **Log into Blackboard regularly** to check announcements, assignments, and deadlines
- **Complete all assignments and exams online** by their posted due dates
- **Contact the instructor via Blackboard Ultra Message** with any questions about course materials, assignments, or exams.

Consistent engagement is key to success in this course.

Attendance Policy

Although this is a fully online course, student engagement and participation are still mandatory. The University’s attendance policy applies to all distance learning courses. A student may be dropped with an "F" grade for excessive non-participation—defined as **more than 3 weeks of inactivity** in a long semester, **1 week in a summer session, or 3 days in a midwinter session**.

Inactivity includes:

- Not logging into Blackboard
- Not submitting assignments
- Not participating in required activities

- Not communicating with the instructor
- Not following the participation guidelines in the syllabus

Students must respect academic integrity and copyright laws. All submitted work must be their own unless group work is specifically assigned. Additionally, students accessing the course from a remote site are expected to treat the host campus, its facilities, and staff with professionalism and care.

Students are required to check their **SRSU Blackboard accounts regularly**, as all official communications—including those sent via Blackboard—will be directed there.

Late Assignment Submission Policy

All coursework and assignments must be submitted **by the stated deadlines**. Late work is generally **not accepted**, as students are informed of all due dates at the beginning of the term and are expected to plan accordingly.

Exceptions will only be made in cases of **documented and university-recognized excuses**. If a student misses an assignment or exam, they must promptly provide a valid explanation and supporting documentation.

Students are strongly encouraged to review the syllabus regularly and stay informed of all deadlines throughout the semester.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty as outlined in the **Sul Ross Student Code of Conduct**. Any form of academic dishonesty—including **cheating, plagiarism, collusion, fabrication, or falsification of records**—will not be tolerated and will be addressed in accordance with university policies.

Definitions:

- **Cheating:** Using unauthorized materials or assistance during exams, altering academic records, or obtaining answers through dishonest means.
- **Plagiarism:** Submitting another's work, ideas, or words as your own without proper citation.
- **Collusion:** Assisting or being complicit in another student's academic dishonesty.

Using tools like **ChatGPT or other AI generators** is prohibited unless explicitly permitted for a specific assignment. Violations may result in penalties ranging from a failing grade on an assignment to failure of the course and may lead to further disciplinary action.

Maintaining academic integrity protects both the value of your education and the credibility of the university.

APA Style

This course will use the American Psychological Association (APA) Seventh Edition formatting and style guide for all written assignments. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the use of APA, a few resources have been provided below. Please note that all external sources must be appropriately cited. A failure to do so constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of the course academic honesty standards. Beside numerous online sources you can also visit the following link for help with APA

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html.

Student Support Services

Sul Ross State University offers various programs to help students succeed, including advising, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and writing assistance. For a complete list of services, visit Student Support Services at <https://www.sulross.edu/section/311/student-support-services>. For more information, contact SSS at (432) 837-9118 or visit Ferguson Hall, Room 105.

Counseling Services: Sul Ross students have access to nine free counseling sessions through TimelyCare. For 24/7 support, visit TimelyCare/SRSU. In-person counseling is also available in Ferguson Hall, Room 112 (Alpine campus), and via telehealth for remote and RGC students.

Students with Special Needs - Americans with Disabilities Act as Amended (ADAAA)

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with 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. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartze Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203, or email mschwartz@sulross.edu. The office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall # 112, and the mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, SRSU, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Departmental Undergraduate Program Marketable Skills

(Aligned with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board – 60x30TX Plan)

The 60x30TX initiative aims for 60% of Texans aged 25–34 to hold a degree or credential by 2030. One key component of this goal is that all graduates from public institutions in Texas will complete academic programs with clearly defined marketable skills—competencies valued by employers that support career readiness and lifelong employability.

Marketable skills include both technical and soft skills—often referred to as “employability” or “transferable” skills—developed through coursework, research, internships, and co-curricular activities. Graduates of the Homeland Security and Criminal Justice Undergraduate Programs at Sul Ross State University will demonstrate the following marketable skills:

1. Effective Verbal and Written Communication
2. Data Literacy and Quantitative Analysis Skills
3. Critical Thinking and Observational Abilities
4. Teamwork and Collaborative Work Practices
5. Cultural Competency and Multicultural Understanding
6. Analytical Skills in Crime Causation and Prevention
7. Knowledge of Legal Codes, Procedures, and Public Safety Protocols

These skills prepare students for diverse roles in law enforcement, homeland security, public service, and justice related professions.

Other Course Expectations

- This is an upper-level college course, and students are expected to produce work that reflects that level of academic rigor. This includes the use of proper APA formatting, correct grammar, clear sentence structure, and organized presentation of ideas.
- Students are responsible for carefully reviewing the syllabus to stay informed about assignment requirements and due dates. Please contact the instructor promptly if clarification is needed.

Course Schedule

This course schedule is subject to change as needed to meet the needs of the course. Students will be notified of adjustments when they are made. Also, any additional reading materials, resources and other information will be posted on Blackboard. Students will be notified of how to access this information by the instructor. ***All times are in central time***

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings
1	Week 1 July 6 – July 12	Course Introduction & Requirements - Introduction: History and Development of Forensic Science - Crime Scene - Physical Evidence (Role of Forensic Science, Crime Laboratory functions, Crime Scene processing, Evidence Recognition, Physical evidence Types, Evidence collection, Evidence significance)	Syllabus & Semester Project Guidelines (Introduction to Physical Evidence & Crime Scene Processing) Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13th ed.)-Pearson Chapter 1-2-3 Forensic Evidence Management-PPTs- Routledge Chapter 1,2 Reaction Paper 1
2	Week 2 July 13 – 19	- Fingerprints - Matter, Light, and Glass Examination - Hairs and Fibers (Fingerprint evidence, Latent prints, footwear impressions, glass comparison, hair analysis, fiber analysis) INTRODUCTION RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC	(Impression Evidence & Trace Evidence) Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13th ed.)-Pearson Chapter 6, 10, 11 Forensic Evidence Management-PPTs- Routledge Chapter 3,7 Reaction Paper 2
3	Week 3 June 10-16	- Crime-Scene Reconstruction: Bloodstain Pattern Analysis - Forensic Serology - DNA: The Indispensable Forensic Science Tool (Bloodstain patterns, Passive stains, transfer patterns, impact patterns, biological evidence, DNA profiling, interpretation)	(Pattern Evidence: Bloodstain Pattern Analysis & Biological Pattern Analysis) Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13th ed.)-Pearson Chapter 4, 15, 16. Forensic Evidence Management-PPTs- Routledge Chapter 4, 5 Reaction Paper 3

4	Week 4 July 27 –Aug 2	- Firearms, Tool Marks and other impressions - Metals, Paint and Soil (Firearm identification, bullet evidence, cartridge cases, tool marks, paint evidence, soil evidence, comparison methods) MIDTERM EXAM: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	(Firearms, Reconstruction & Specialized Physical Evidence) Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13th ed.)-Pearson Chapter 9, 14. Forensic Evidence Management-PPTs- Routledge Chapter 8,6 Reaction Paper 4
5	Week 5 Aug 3 – Aug 10	Discussion Board: (Evidence Interpretation and Courtroom Testimony) Chapter 2 – The Crime Scene (Criminalistics) • Collecting Physical Evidence • Packaging • Chain of Custody • Legal Considerations Chapter 11-PPT – Evidence Management Documents (Forensic Evidence Management) • Evidence submission forms • Property logs • Chain of custody forms • Documentation • Laboratory submission Chapter 15-PPT – Ethical Issues, Bias, and Other Challenges to Forensic Evidence Management (Forensic Evidence Management) • Cognitive bias • Confirmation bias • Professional ethics • Scientific integrity • Human error • Quality assurance	(Evidence Interpretation and Courtroom Testimony) Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13th ed.)-Pearson Chapter 2 Forensic Evidence Management-PPTs- Routledge Chapter 11, 15
	!!! End of Term!!! Aug 10	FINAL PAPER SUBMISSION (Due Date 8/10/26)	

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.