

SYLLABUS CRIMINALISTICS-I (SRSU.202710_CRIM_4369_W02_12443) Start Date: 08/24/2026 End Date: 12/09/2026 Type: Online Class hours: Online	 Instructor: Esra BALCIOGLU E-mail: esra.balcioглу@sulross.edu Office hours: Appointment by Blackboard Message Office Phone: 432 8378614 Campus Office: MAB 112/A
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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, 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 course provides an introduction to the fundamental principles and applications of criminalistics and forensic science. Students will examine the recognition, collection, preservation, examination, and interpretation of physical evidence encountered in criminal investigations. Topics include crime-scene investigation, physical evidence, bloodstain pattern analysis, death investigation, fingerprints and forensic biometrics, microscopy, firearms and tool marks, glass, hairs and fibers, and forensic drug analysis. Emphasis is placed on the scientific methods used to analyze physical evidence and their role in criminal investigations and the justice system.

Catalog Description

Introduction to the principles and practices of criminalistics, with emphasis on crime-scene investigation and the examination and interpretation of physical evidence. Topics include crime-scene reconstruction, bloodstain patterns, death investigation, fingerprints, forensic biometrics, microscopy, firearms and tool marks, glass, hairs and fibers, and forensic drugs.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- Develop a foundational understanding of the principles and practices of criminalistics and forensic science.
- Understand the role of physical evidence in criminal investigations and the criminal justice system.
- Examine the principles and methods used in the collection, preservation, and examination of physical evidence.
- Develop an understanding of crime-scene investigation, reconstruction, and bloodstain pattern analysis.
- Examine the scientific principles underlying the analysis of fingerprints, biometrics, firearms, tool marks, glass, hairs, fibers, and drugs.
- Develop basic skills in interpreting forensic evidence and evaluating its significance in criminal investigations

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify the fundamental principles and major disciplines of criminalistics and forensic science.
- Describe appropriate procedures for the recognition, collection, preservation, documentation, and handling of physical evidence.
- Explain the scientific principles underlying crime-scene reconstruction and bloodstain pattern analysis.
- Differentiate among major types of forensic evidence, including fingerprints, biometric evidence, firearms and tool marks, glass, hairs, fibers, and drugs.
- Apply basic scientific principles to the examination and interpretation of forensic evidence.
- Interpret basic forensic observations and analytical findings within the context of a criminal investigation.
- Evaluate the reliability, limitations, and evidentiary significance of forensic evidence.
- Communicate forensic findings using appropriate scientific and forensic terminology.
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COURSE EVALUATION :

1-Reaction Papers (120 Points Total):

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.

2-Weekly Quizzes (120 Points Total):

You will complete a **weekly quiz** to assess your understanding of the week's required readings.

Quiz Availability:

- Quizzes will be **posted every Tuesday at 1:00 PM (CT)** on Blackboard.

Due Date:

- Quizzes must be submitted by **Sunday at 11:00 PM (CT)** each week.

Each quiz is worth **10 points** and will cover key concepts and material from the assigned readings for that week.

3-Midterm Exam (120 Points)

Annotated Bibliography Assignment

For your **Midterm Exam**, you will prepare an **Annotated Bibliography** 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?
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Introductory Paragraph:

Before listing your annotations, include a brief **introductory paragraph** explaining:

- The topic you are researching
 - Why you believe this topic is **important** or significant
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Formatting and Length Requirements:

- Use **APA citation format** for all entries.
 - For APA guidance, see: [APA Style Guide](#)
Purdue OWL APA Guide
 - Each annotation should be approximately **300–400 words per article** (excluding the citation line).
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Important Notes:

- This assignment will count as your **Midterm Exam grade (120 points)**.
- Selecting high-quality, relevant sources is critical for both this assignment and your success on the Final Paper.
- Be sure to plan-ahead — preparing a strong annotated bibliography now will help streamline your Final Paper writing process.

4-Final / Research Paper Forensic Anthropology (140 Points):

Your **Final Paper** will focus on a topic related to **Criminalistics**, in keeping with the overall focus of this course. You may select any element of **Criminalistics** to explore in depth, including but not limited to:

- Physical Principles and Applications of Bloodstain Pattern Analysis (BPA) in Crime Scene Reconstruction (Ch. 4)
- Comparative Analysis of Latent Fingerprint Development Methods and Automated Biometric Identification Systems (AFIS) (Ch. 6 & Ch. 7)
- Estimating the Postmortem Interval (PMI): Early Postmortem Changes vs. Forensic Entomology (Ch. 5)
- Firearm and Tool Mark Identification: Microscopic Striation Analysis and NIBIN (Ch. 9)
- Forensic Examination of Hair and Fiber Evidence: Microscopic Features and Evidentiary Value (Ch. 8 & Ch. 11)
- Forensic Drug Analysis: Presumptive Field Color Tests vs. Confirmatory Instrumental Methods (Ch. 12)
- Physical Evidence Management: Collection, Packaging, and Maintaining the Chain of Custody (Ch. 2 & Ch. 3)

Interpretation

A **sample paper** will be posted on **Blackboard** to provide guidance on proper formatting and structure.

Requirements:

- Your paper must include **at least 10 scholarly citations**.
 - **Websites, Wikipedia, news media, or popular magazines** (e.g., NYT, Newsweek) are **not acceptable sources**.
 - Use **peer-reviewed journal articles, books, or government/expert reports**.
- Length: **10 to 15 pages** (not including **cover page** or **reference list**)
- Format:
 - **Double-spaced**
 - **12-point Times New Roman font**
 - **APA style** for formatting and citations
 - [APA Style Guide](#)
 - Purdue OWL APA Guide

Submission Process – 3 Steps:

Your Final Paper will be submitted in the following **three stages** to guide your progress and ensure proper feedback:

- **Topic Proposal / Introduction of Topic**
- **Annotated Bibliography** (Midterm Exam Assignment)
- **Final Paper Submission**

Important: Refer to the **course calendar** and **academic calendar** posted on Blackboard for all important **due dates** and **submission deadlines**.

This **Final Paper** will be worth **140 points** — it is the largest single component of your course grade. Please begin planning and researching your topic early in the term.

Grading

Grading Components

Assessment	Points
Reaction Papers (12 x 10 points)	120
Weekly Quizzes (12 x 10 points)	120
Midterm Exam: Annotated Bibliography	120
Final Paper	140
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.

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 Schwartz 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	Assignments
1	August 24-30	Course Introduction & Requirements ✓ History and Development of Forensic Science ✓ Crime Laboratories ✓ Organization of a Crime Laboratory ✓ Functions of the Forensic Scientist ✓ Other Forensic Science Services	Syllabus & Semester Project Guidelines Chapter 1: Introduction Quiz # 1 REACTION PAPER 1
2	August 31-September 6	✓ Processing the Crime Scene ✓ Recording the Crime Scene ✓ Searching the Crime Scene ✓ Collecting and Preserving Physical Evidence ✓ Chain of Custody ✓ Crime Scene Safety ✓ Legal Considerations	Chapter 2: The Crime Scene Quiz # 2 REACTION PAPER 2
3	September 7-13	✓ Types of Physical Evidence ✓ Significance of Physical Evidence ✓ Identification and Comparison ✓ Individual vs. Class Characteristics ✓ Databases in Criminalistics ✓ Limitations of Physical Evidence	Chapter 3: Physical Evidence Quiz # 3 REACTION PAPER 3
4	September 14-20	✓ Crime Scene Reconstruction ✓ Principles of Bloodstain Pattern Analysis ✓ Bloodstain Classification ✓ Area of Origin Determination ✓ Scene Interpretation SUBMISSION of RESEARCH TOPIC	Chapter 4: Crime-Scene Reconstruction: Bloodstain Pattern Analysis Quiz # 4 REACTION PAPER 4
5	September 21-27	✓ Medicolegal Investigation Systems ✓ Cause, Mechanism, and Manner of Death ✓ Estimation of Time Since Death ✓ Autopsy Procedures ✓ Forensic Pathology	Chapter 5: Death Investigation Quiz # 5 REACTION PAPER 5
6	September 28-October 4	✓ History of Fingerprint Identification ✓ Friction Ridge Skin ✓ Fingerprint Patterns ✓ Minutiae Characteristics ✓ Fingerprint Development Methods ✓ AFIS	Chapter 6: Fingerprints Quiz # 6 REACTION PAPER 6
7	October 5-11	✓ Principles of Biometrics ✓ Facial Recognition ✓ Iris Recognition	Chapter 7: Forensic Biometrics

		✓ Voice Recognition ✓ Automated Identification Systems ✓ Reliability and Legal Issues	Quiz # 7 REACTION PAPER 7
8	October 12-18	✓ Midterm Exam ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	
9	October 19-25	✓ Parts and Functions of the Microscope ✓ Compound Microscope ✓ Comparison Microscope ✓ Stereoscopic Microscope ✓ Polarized Light Microscopy ✓ Forensic Applications of Microscopy	Chapter 8: The Microscope Quiz # 8 REACTION PAPER 8
10	October 26- Nov 1	✓ Firearm Identification ✓ Rifling Characteristics ✓ Cartridge Cases and Bullets ✓ Tool Mark Evidence ✓ Footwear Impressions ✓ Tire Track Evidence	Chapter 9: Firearms, Tool Marks, and Other Impressions Quiz # 9 REACTION PAPER 9
11	November 2-8	✓ Properties of Matter ✓ Interaction of Light with Matter ✓ Glass Characteristics ✓ Refractive Index ✓ Fracture Analysis ✓ Significance of Glass Evidence	Chapter 10: Matter, Light, and Glass Examination Quiz # 10 REACTION PAPER 10
12	November 9-15	✓ Hair Structure and Growth ✓ Human and Animal Hair Comparison ✓ Natural Fibers ✓ Synthetic Fibers ✓ Fiber Transfer and Persistence ✓ Evidentiary Value of Trace Evidence	Chapter 11: Hairs and Fibers Quiz # 11 REACTION PAPER 11
13	November 16-22	✓ Drug Classifications ✓ Controlled Substances Act ✓ Drug Identification Methods ✓ Presumptive and Confirmatory Testing ✓ Drug Evidence in Criminal Investigations	Chapter 12: Drugs Quiz # 12 REACTION PAPER 12
14	November 23-Nov 29 Thanksgiving Day Holiday (11 / 25-27)	November 25th, the last day before Thanksgiving.	
15	Nov 30-December 6 December 1 December 3 is Dead Day December 4	✓ FINAL PAPER SUBMISSION	

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.