

**FRSC 498: Introduction to Forensic
Document Examination**
Fall 2024
Tuesdays 6:00-9:00pm
Course Syllabus

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that my professional obligation and responsibility is to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu”

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description: Forensic science is the application of science to the law. Forensic document examination is that discipline, within forensic science, which is specifically focused on physical evidence on documents and other applicable media. This course introduces students to the examination of signatures, handwriting, hand printing, machine printing, document fabrication & alteration, ink & paper differentiation and other types of evidence typically found on documents. Current trends in forensic document examination will also be covered, including the development, review and use of standards which will be of interest to students focusing on other areas of forensic science.

Number of Credits: 3

Prerequisites:

Course-Section and Instructor

Course-Section	Instructor
FRSC 201-002	John Paul Osborn
Tuesdays: 6:00pm - 9:00pm	
	Ph: 908-337-0803; email: john.osborn@njit.edu

Required Textbook:

Title	Forensic Document Examination, Fundamentals and Current Trends
Author	Jane A. Lewis
Edition	1
Publisher	Elsevier (Academic Press)
ISBN #	978-0-12416693-6

and additional readings and videos as assigned. You must also have a computer with a reliable internet connection, webcam, and a microphone.

University-wide Withdrawal Date: The last day to withdraw with a **W** is Monday, Nov. 11, 2024. It will be strictly enforced.

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, students will have:

- Learned the history of forensic document examination (questioned document examination)
- Studied the various evidence considered by forensic document examiners in both criminal and civil casework
- Studied the various types and systems of writing in common use today
- Discovered the identifiability of signatures through consideration of elements such as natural variation and stylization
- Been exposed to various types of instrumentation utilized in the study of documents
- Learned to discriminate between generally accepted science and “junk science” in the field
- Learned about the history of standards development in the field, as well as current standard development and application
- Studied the use of forensic document examination in civil and criminal courts, including the development and explanation of visual aids for fact finders
- Discussed bias and its impact on forensic document examination, as well as ethics in the field
- Been exposed to the defense of and mock attack of conclusions (cross examination)
- Discovered the limitations of forensic document examination and the development of written and verbal conclusions which diminish confusion by fact finders

POLICIES

All CES students must familiarize themselves with, and adhere to, all official university-wide student policies. CES takes these policies very seriously and enforces them strictly.

Grading Policy: The final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Assignments	15%
Midterm	20%
Term Paper	20%
Final Exam	35%

Your final letter grade in this course will be based on the following:

A	90-100	C	70-76
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B+	87-89	D	60-69
B	80-86	F	<60
C+	77-79		

Attendance Policy: Each class is a learning experience that cannot be replicated through simply “getting the notes.” After one unexcused absence, each subsequent absence will result in your class participation score being lowered by one percentage point. (All excused absences need to go through the Dean of Students). You are expected to read the relevant chapters and/or reading assignments prior to the lecture. Two late arrivals (of more than 10 minutes) will count as one absence.

Term Paper: The term paper assignment is for you to select a modern civil or criminal case that has been previously adjudicated and discuss how forensic document examination in that case played a critical role in the case outcome. The term paper is designed to evaluate your writing skills and your understanding basic elements of forensic document examination intended to assist the fact finder (judge, jury, arbitrator). The term paper should be 5-6 pages in length (not including title page or bibliography), double spaced, using Times New Roman 12 point font. You must get approval from me for your topic prior to the midterm. No two people may choose the same topic. Please enter your paper topic by replying to the “Term Paper Topics” Announcement. The term paper is due on the last day of class. All papers will be run through Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. (Turnitin.com is a software program that analyzes papers for plagiarism).

1. Analyze a relevant civil or criminal case involving forensic document examination.
2. Develop a topic for the paper.
3. Create an appropriate design.
4. Identify and show how forensic document examination impacted the case.
5. Provide **at least 3** credible peer reviewed sources from scientific journals. The word “forensic” must appear in the title of these scientific journals. Ok to use other (i.e. news articles, media, etc.) sources in addition.
6. Communicate effectively through scholarly writing.

For this paper, you are expected to be able to locate and use library resources effectively and cite them correctly. Googling alone will not suffice. Most of the library materials are available online 24/7 from anywhere. Joseph Mercuri is the NJIT librarian who provides assistance to students in Forensic Science. Contact him at jmercuri@njit.edu and take advantage of his expertise.

Exams: Exams will be taken online through Canvas. Exams will cover the lectures AND reading assignments. You will need to download Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor as the exams will be given through these platforms. You will also need a computer, webcam, and good internet connection when taking the exams. The Final Exam will be comprehensive and will test your knowledge of all the course material taught over the entire course.

Midterm	Oct 15
Final Exam	Final Exam Week (Date TBD)

Makeup Exam Policy: There will normally be **NO MAKE-UP EXAMS** during the semester. In the event that a student has a legitimate reason for missing an exam, the student should contact the Dean of Students office and present written verifiable proof of the reason for missing the exam, e.g., a doctor’s note, police report, court notice, etc. clearly stating the date AND time of the problem. The student must also notify the Instructor that the exam will be missed. A written assignment will be given in place of any missed exam.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Accommodation of Disabilities: Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (*formerly known as Disability Support Services*) offers long-term and temporary accommodations for undergraduate, graduate, and visiting

students at NJIT.

If you are in need of accommodations due to a disability please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services at 973-596-5417 or via email at oars@njit.edu. The office is located in Fenster Hall Room 260. A Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the Office of Accessibility Resources Services office authorizing your accommodations will be required.

For further information regarding self-identification, the submission of medical documentation and additional support services provided please visit the Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS) [website](#).

Important Dates (See: [2024 Academic Calendar](#))

Date	Event
Sept 3	First Day of Classes
Sept 9	Last day to add/drop a class
Nov 26	Thursday classes meet
Nov 28-30	Thanksgiving Recess
Dec 11	Last day of classes
Dec 12-13	Reading Days
Dec 15-21	Final Exams

Course Outline

Lecture	Date	Topic	Reading
1	Sept 3	History of forensic document examination in the US	Lewis, Chapter 2
2	Sept 10	Defining forensic document examination and application to the study of physical evidence	Lewis, Chapter 3
3	Sept 17	Examination of writing	Lewis, Chapters 1 & 4
4	Sept 24	Examination of writing	Lewis, Chapters 1 & 4
5	Oct 1	Instrumentation	Lewis Chapter 6
6	Oct 3	Document fabrication and alteration	Lewis, Chapter 7
7	Oct 8	Ink and paper examination	
8	Oct 15	Midterm	
9	Oct 22	Standards and their development	Lewis, Chapter 5 & 8
10	Oct 29	Reporting conclusions (verbally and in writing)	
10	Nov 5	Case examples	Lewis Chapter 7
11	Nov 12	Forensic document examination in the courts	Lewis, Chapter 9
12	Nov 19	Court preparation and the development of visual aids	Lewis, Chapter 10 & 11
13	Nov 26	Testimony and the defense of conclusions	Lewis, Chapter 10 & 11
14	Dec 3	Questioned document research	Lewis, Chapter 12, Term Papers Due
15	Dec 10	Review for Final	
	TBD	Final Exam	