

FRSC 201-001: Intro to Forensic Science

Fall 2025

T/R 10:00-11:20am

CKB Rm 120

Course Syllabus

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description: Forensic Science is the application of science to the law. This course introduces students to the many disciplines of forensic science and how they are used in our criminal justice system. Students will be introduced to the science behind these disciplines and how forensic science techniques are used in crime laboratories throughout the United States and abroad. Guest lecturers and practitioners will offer insights into their day-to-day investigative work and how they face technological challenges and successes. The scientific method will be emphasized throughout the course. Finally, a large portion of the course will include interactive learning during class, including mock crime scenes searches, in-class discussions, student presentations, virtual labs, and more.

Number of Credits: 3 **Prerequisites:** none

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 code of Academic Integrity policy that is found at: [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](#).

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Office of the Dean of Students. 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 Office of the Dean of Students at dos@njit.edu.

STATEMENT ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Student use of artificial intelligence (AI) is **permitted** in this course for **certain** assignments and activities. It is not permitted to be used in the following assignments, as doing so would undermine student learning and achievement of course learning outcomes: Ethics Presentation, Response Paper(s), and Exams. Additionally, if and when students use AI in this course, the AI must be cited as shown on the [NJIT Library AI citation page](#) for AI. If you have any questions or concerns about AI technology use in this class, please reach out to me prior to submitting any assignments.

Course-Section and Instructor

Course-Section	Instructor
FRSC 201-001	Prof. David Fisher
T/R 10:00-11:20am	Office: Tiernan Hall 323A
	Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am - 12:30 pm & by appt.
	Ph: 973-596-5295; email: dfisher@njit.edu

Required Textbook:

Title	Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13 th ed.)
Author	Richard Saferstein and Tiffany Roy
Edition	13
Publisher	Pearson
ISBN #	978-0-13-521831-0

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 Nov 10. It will be strictly enforced.

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

- Identify forensic science procedures and technologies used to examine and analyze physical evidence
- Evaluate the significance of physical evidence in a criminal investigation
- Identify applications of the scientific method when examining forensic evidence
- Communicate appropriate conclusions based on scientific data
- Apply critical thinking skills using methods of scientific inquiry by discussing recent high-profile cases
- Discriminate between generally accepted science and “junk science”
- Describe how science is used in the criminal justice system
- Understand how data influences legal decisions and shapes scientific reporting requirements
- Be able to identify cognitive bias and its impact on the forensic sciences
- Understand forensic science failures and ethical violations

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:

Attendance/Class Participation	5%
Assignments	15%
Exams (15% per exam)	45%
Final Exam	35%

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

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

Attendance Policy: Class attendance will be recorded and is **mandatory**. 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.

Student Absences for Religious Observations: NJIT is committed to supporting students observing religious holidays. Students must notify their instructors in writing of any conflicts between course requirements and religious observances, ideally by the end of the second week of classes and no later than two weeks before the anticipated absence.

Exams/Quizzes: Exams and quizzes will be taken online through Canvas. Exams will cover the readings and lectures. 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 in the entire course.

Exams	Oct 7, Oct 30, and Nov 25
Final Exam	Final Exam Week (Date TBD)

Makeup Quiz/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 a quiz or 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 IN ADVANCE that the exam will be missed. Subsequent exams will then count double for the 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 at:

- <https://www.njit.edu/studentsuccess/accessibility>

Important Dates (See: [2025 Academic Calendar](#))

Date	Event
Sept 2	First Day of Classes
Sept 8	Last day to add/drop a class
Oct 2	Wellness Day
Nov 25	Thursday classes meet
Nov 27-30	Thanksgiving Recess
Dec 11	Last day of classes
Dec 12	Reading Day
Dec 14-30	Final Exams
Dec 22	Final Grades Due

Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	Sept 2	Introduction; Professional Practice	Read Ch1
	Sept 4	A Brief History of Forensics (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fF2wXgYd8o)	Read Ch2
2	Sept 9	The Crime Scene	Read Ch3; Federal Rules of Evidence
	Sept 11	Physical Evidence, Identification, Collection & Processing	Read Ch4
3	Sept 16	Crime Scene Reconstruction; Bloodstain Pattern Analysis (BPA) [National Forensic Science Week]	Read ABC Code of Ethics
	Sept 18	Quality Assurance; Ethics [National Forensic Science Week]	Watch Netflix " How to Fix a Drug Scandal " series
4	Sept 23	Prep for Ethics Presentations (class will not meet)	
	Sept 25	Ethics Presentations	
5	Sept 30	Ethics Presentations	
	Oct 2	Wellness Day (Class does not meet)	
6	Oct 7	Exam 1 (online via Respondus and Lockdown Browser; class will not meet)	Read Ch5
	Oct 9	Death Investigation & The Autopsy	
7	Oct 14	Netflix Documentary	Response Paper; Read Ch18
	Oct 16	Document Examination	Read Ch6
8	Oct 21	Fingerprints	Read Ch17
	Oct 23	Fire Investigation: Arson or Accidental?	Read Ch9
9	Oct 28	Firearms and Toolmarks	
	Oct 30	Exam 2 (in class)	
10	Nov 4	Guest Speaker	Read Ch12
	Nov 6	Drugs	Read Ch15
11	Nov 11	Serology	Read Ch16
	Nov 13	DNA	
12	Nov 18	Forensic Genetic Genealogy	
	Nov 20	NAS Report	
13	Nov 25	Exam 3 (in class)	
	Nov 27	Thanksgiving (No class – University Closed)	Read Ch19-20
14	Dec 2	Digital Forensics	
	Dec 4	Introduction to Law; Courtroom Testimony	
15	Dec 9	Bias: Are we guilty of it?	
	Dec 11	Last Day of class	Study for Final