

## FRSC 201-003: Intro to Forensic Science

*Fall 2025*

*M/W 10:00-11:20am*

*TIER Rm 105*

*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 success. 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](mailto: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 201-003      | Prof. David Fisher  |
| M/W 10:00-11:20am | Office: Tiernan Hall 323A   |
|                   | Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am - 12:30 pm & by appt.                           |
|                   | Ph: 973-596-5295; email: <a href="mailto:dfisher@njit.edu">dfisher@njit.edu</a> |

## Required Textbook:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Title</b>     | Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science (13 <sup>th</sup> ed.) |
| <b>Author</b>    | Richard Saferstein and Tiffany Roy   |
| <b>Edition</b>   | 13   |
| <b>Publisher</b> | Pearson  |
| <b>ISBN #</b>    | 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:

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Attendance/Class Participation</b> | 5%  |
| <b>Assignments</b>                    | 15% |
| <b>Exams (15% per exam)</b>           | 45% |
| <b>Final Exam</b>                     | 35% |

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

|           |        |          |       |
|-----------|--------|----------|-------|
| <b>A</b>  | 90-100 | <b>C</b> | 70-76 |
| <b>B+</b> | 87-89  | <b>D</b> | 60-69 |
| <b>B</b>  | 80-86  | <b>F</b> | <60   |
| <b>C+</b> | 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 6, Nov 3, and Nov 24   |
| 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 3  | Introduction; Professional Practice   | Read Ch1   |
|      | Sept 8  | A Brief History of Forensics<br>( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fF2wXgYd8o">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fF2wXgYd8o</a> ) | Read Ch2   |
| 2    | Sept 10 | The Crime Scene   | Read Ch3; <a href="#">Federal Rules of Evidence</a>                |
|      | Sept 15 | Physical Evidence, Identification, Collection & Processing<br>[National Forensic Science Week]  | Read Ch4   |
| 3    | Sept 17 | Crime Scene Reconstruction; Bloodstain Pattern Analysis<br>(BPA) [National Forensic Science Week]   | Read <a href="#">ABC Code of Ethics</a>                            |
|      | Sept 22 | Quality Assurance; Ethics   | Watch Netflix " <a href="#">How to Fix a Drug Scandal</a> " series |
| 4    | Sept 24 | Prep for Ethics Presentations (class will not meet)   |  |
|      | Sept 29 | Ethics Presentations  |  |
| 5    | Oct 1   | Ethics Presentations  |  |
|      | Oct 6   | <b>Exam 1 (online via Respondus and Lockdown Browser;<br/>class will not meet)</b>  |  |
| 6    | Oct 8   | Guest Speaker   | Read Ch5   |
|      | Oct 13  | Death Investigation & The Autopsy   |  |
| 7    | Oct 15  | Netflix Documentary   | Response Paper; Read Ch18  |
|      | Oct 20  | Document Examination  | Read Ch6   |
| 8    | Oct 22  | Fingerprints  | Read Ch17  |
|      | Oct 27  | Fire Investigation: Arson or Accidental?  | Read Ch9   |
| 9    | Oct 29  | Firearms and Toolmarks  |  |
|      | Nov 3   | <b>Exam 2 (in class)</b>  | Read Ch12  |
| 10   | Nov 5   | Drugs   | Read Ch15  |
|      | Nov 10  | Serology  | Read Ch16  |
| 11   | Nov 12  | DNA   |  |
|      | Nov 17  | Forensic Genetic Genealogy  |  |
| 12   | Nov 19  | NAS Report  |  |
|      | Nov 24  | <b>Exam 3 (in class)</b>  |  |
| 13   | Nov 26  | <b>Friday classes meet</b>  |  |
|      | Dec 1   | Digital Forensics   | Read Ch19-20   |
| 14   | Dec 3   | Introduction to Law; Courtroom Testimony  |  |
|      | Dec 8   | Bias: Are we guilty of it?  |  |
| 15   | Dec 10  | Last Day of class – Review for Final  |  |