



Course Syllabus: CFJS 5400

Professional Issues in Forensic Science

Fall 2023

1.0 Course Information

Location: DSC 307

Time: TR; 12:50 – 2:20 pm

Credit Hours: 4 Credits

Course Prerequisite(s): CJFS 3400


1.1 Required Texts/Items

There is no required text for the course. Selected literature will be provided to students via Canvas. The student is required to conduct additional literature research using Bush library resources to complement the material covered in class.

2.0 Instructor and Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Jamie Spaulding

Contact:  jspaulding02@hamline.edu

 (651) 523–2237

Office: GLC 219W

Office Hours: M, 12–2pm; R, 2:30–4pm

Note: I also maintain an open door policy, feel free to stop by my office.

3.0 Course Description

This course will explore the professional responsibilities of forensic scientists and the current challenges that the forensic science community faces. The content will explore and investigate issues that affect the practice of forensic science in the US beyond the examination of physical evidence, and including challenges to the scientific and legal interpretation of physical evidence. Furthermore, students will demonstrate their professional competency by addressing all of the topics discussed in testimony of a mock criminal case.

3.1 Course Learning Objectives

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

1. Explain challenges to the scientific basis and reliability of forensic science disciplines and techniques.
2. Identify key legal rulings on the admissibility of scientific evidence and expert testimony.
3. Describe and assess the standards of practice by forensic practitioners.
4. Recognize laboratory accreditation and quality management programs.
5. Understand the codes of ethics and their application to the daily work of forensic practitioners.
6. Appraise the qualifications of forensic scientists, including education, training, professional certification, and competency and proficiency testing.

3.2 Hamline Plan Learning Objectives (D & O)

This course fulfills the disciplinary Diversity and Oral Communication requirements of the Hamline Plan and therefore will help you reach the following learning objectives:

3.2.1 Diversity (D)

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of diverse perspectives and experiences (cultures, traditions, identities, practices and histories).
2. Students will critically reflect on their own and others' social identities and differences (gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, dis/ability, class, etc.), and the factors that shape them.
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of systemic inequalities, power differences, and interdependencies of people in a diverse world by engaging in intellectual discourse and reflection about and across differences.

3.2.2 Oral Communication (O)

4. Create and deliver effective oral messages that appropriately address the needs of demands of a particular communication context (e.g. listening, oral presentations, large or small group discussions, small task-oriented groups, interpersonal interactions).
5. Reflect upon their own performance, identifying possible alternative approaches and examining the ethical implications of the approaches or strategies chosen.

3.3 Assessment of Learning Objectives

Throughout the course, coursework has been intentionally designed to measure the learning objectives of both the course (C) and the Hamline Plan (H). The following table outlines the specific assignments which evaluate student achievement of each learning objective throughout the course.

Learning Outcomes	Specific Relevant Assessments
C1	Final Paper; Presentation II & III; Reflection I
C2	Final Paper
C3	Assignment II; Final Paper; Presentation II & III
C4	Final Paper; Presentation II; Reflection I
C5	Assignment II; Final Paper
C6	Final Paper; Mock Testimony; Reflection II
D1	Assignment I
D2	Assignment I
D3	Assignment I
O1	Assignment II; Mock Testimony; Presentations I–III
O2	Reflection I & II

4.0 Course Assessment

Assignment	Points Possible
Active Engagement	50
Assignments (2 x 50 pts)	100
Peer Evaluation (3 x 50 pts)	150
Reflections (2 x 50 pts)	100
Presentations (3 x 100 pts)	300
Mock Testimony	100
Final Paper	200
Total Points	1000

Letter Grade Distribution:

			A	93-100%	≥930	A-	90-92%	900-929
B+	87-89%	870-899	B	83-86%	630-669	B-	80-82%	800-829
C+	77-79%	770-799	C	73-76%	630-669	C-	70-72%	700-729
D	67-69%	670-699	D	63-66%	630-669	D-	60-62%	600-629
F	<60%	≤599						

5.0 Course Policies

5.1 Grading

All work is due at the start of class on the date indicated in the schedule listed below. Work submitted after the due date will be docked 15% initially and an additional 10% every day thereafter, weekends included. Late work will not be accepted five (5) days after the deadline. Grades will be maintained in Canvas. Students are responsible for tracking their progress throughout the semester and notifying the instructor of any errors.

If at any point you feel that your work has not been properly graded, you may request a re-grade within one week of receiving the grade.

5.2 Attendance and Make-Up Policy

Consistent with Hamline University guidelines, students absent from regularly scheduled examinations because of authorized university activities or extenuating circumstances (major family situation, hospitalization or other serious issues, religious observance, *etc.*) will have the opportunity to take them at an alternate time. Please inform the instructor as soon as possible in such an event to arrange extensions prior to absence.

5.3 Active Engagement and Participation

Students will be assessed on their ability to respond orally in real time to in-class questions and discussions. Students are expected to make informed and constructive contributions to the in-class discussions, and to maintain an environment that is respectful and inclusive. Differences of opinion are expected and welcome, but should be expressed in a courteous manner. Cell phones are not to be used unless instructed to do so. Talking during lectures will also reduce participation grades.

5.4 Presentations

Students will develop presentations as a team (unless otherwise directed) in the course to illustrate their understanding and evaluation of the course topics. The presentation should be professional, polished, and adhere to the guidelines provided in the prompt. At least 5 additional minutes will be allowed for a question and answer (Q/A) session. All students must come prepared to discuss the topic, ask questions to the presenting speaker, and provide informed opinions. The instructor will keep a record of the student's participation.

Students should adhere to recommended practices for professional presentations:

- Arrive early and ensure all AV equipment is working properly
- Adhere to the assigned time for presentation and Q/A
- Dress appropriately (business casual is acceptable)
- Be seen; do not hide behind the podium
- Be heard; speak clearly and audibly
- Produce uncluttered slides with minimal use of words
- Do not read to the audience; the audience members can read for themselves
- Use large fonts with high contrast relative to the background. If fonts are on top of a busy image/background, use a text box or bar under the text
- Relevant scholarly resources should be cited to support or rebut the methods, results, or conclusions presented
- Acknowledge (through citations on each slide) all original sources of images and information

Please refer to the Grading Rubric for Oral Presentations for a comprehensive breakdown of expectations related to presentations.

5.5 Technology/E-Mail Policy

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that their computer is functioning and have backed up important documents. A problem with technology is not an acceptable reason for missed or late work. Important notices and corrections of errors will be sent to the Hamline email distribution list for the class to provide the fastest dissemination of the information. The instructor will make every effort to respond within one day to emailed questions or concerns.

6.0 Academic Honesty

Students in the Department of Criminal Justice and Forensic Science are held to the most stringent professional code of ethics; violations can seriously jeopardize future employment prospects. The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. While I do not expect to encounter cheating or plagiarism this semester, it is important that you know the consequences. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. *Failing to cite a source correctly in writing is plagiarism!* Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The Academic Honor Code Statement of Purpose reads as follows:

6.1 Academic Honor Code Statement of Purpose

Every member of the Hamline University community – students, faculty, administrators, and staff – is responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity at all times. The assumption that academic work is an honest reflection of one's knowledge and skills is fundamental to the integrity of Hamline University and to the value of a Hamline diploma. If students at an institution of higher education develop a reputation for receiving grades based on honest work, GPAs and academic degrees held by all students from that institution are valued more highly. The faculty subscribe to standards of academic honesty in their research and teaching. Every person in the University is responsible for adhering to the principles of the Academic Honor Code.

6.2 Violations and Sanctions

Violations of the Academic Honor Code will be dealt with seriously. If a student is accused of engaging in academic dishonesty in a class, the faculty member may decide on a sanction for the student (e.g., assign a failing grade for an exam or the course). The student will be informed of the alleged violation, the evidence upon which the allegation is based, and the sanction to be imposed. The faculty member will file a violation form with the Office of the Dean where the course is housed, which will maintain a permanent record of reported student violations. Students may appeal to the Chair of the Department in which the class is housed. Should a student be dissatisfied with the decision of the Department Chair, the student may appeal to the appropriate academic Dean. The decision from that office will be final. Sanctions for students found to have engaged in academic dishonesty may include:

- Failing or receiving a lower grade on an exam, paper, or assignment
- Failing or receiving a lower grade for a course
- Academic suspension or expulsion

Please refer to the [Academic Honor Code](#) and [Student Conduct Code](#) online for the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions and further details.

7.0 Social Justice Statement

Hamline University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran's status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration. See the [Wesley Center website](#) for further details.

8.0 Special Accommodations

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with [Steve Anderson](#); Director of Disability Resources (651-523-2740, West Hall 108) as soon as possible to discuss accommodations. Please see the [Disability Resources website](#) for further details. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disability Resources, please ensure submission of your accommodation letter within the first two weeks of class. Accommodations will only be provided after the letter is submitted to me and with sufficient lead-time for me to arrange testing or other accommodations. Although I will receive the letter electronically, I expect you to initiate a conversation with me about the accommodations.

9.0 Adverse Weather Statement

In the event of inclement or threatening weather, everyone should use his or her best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Safety should be the main concern. If you cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions, you should contact me as soon as possible. Similarly, if I am unable to reach our class location, I will notify you of any cancellation or change as soon as possible (1 hour before class starts) via email to prevent you from embarking on any unnecessary travel. If you cannot get to class because of weather conditions, I may make allowances relative to required attendance policies, as well as any scheduled activities.

10.0 Tentative Course Outline

Please note that this schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Week	Date	Content/Material	Assigned Readings
1	8/29	Course Intro; Professional Success Presentation #1: Elevator Speech	
	8/31	Professional Development Workshop	Harvard Resumes and Cover Letters Guide
2	9/5	NAS & PCAST Reports	NAS Exec. Summary PCAST Exec. Summary
	9/7		
3	9/12	Landmark Court Cases	Mnookin <i>et al.</i> 2011
	9/14		Case Summaries/Dissents Harvard Law Review 2010
4	9/19		
	9/21	FRE & Admissibility	Giannelli 2017
5	9/26	Presentation #2: Research Advances in FS	
	9/28		
6	10/3	Diversity in Forensic Science Assignment #1: DEI in Forensic Science	Tallman 2020 Wagstaff & LaPorte 2018
	10/5	Cognitive Factors in FS Peer Evaluation I Due	Dror 2020; Dror <i>et al.</i> 2006
7	10/10	Quality Assurance and Accreditation	
	10/12	Statistical Applications in FS	Handbook of Forensic Statistics - Ch 1,4
8	10/17	Features; Sequential Unmasking	Langenburg 2017; Krane <i>et al.</i>
	10/19	Presentation 3: Developments and Needs in FS Reflection I Due	
9	10/24		
	10/26	Source Attribution; Hierarchy of Prop.	Cook <i>et al.</i> 1998
10	10/31	Evidence Interpretation Peer Evaluation II Due	Thornton & Peterson 2008 Kaye 2008
	11/2		
11	11/7	<i>No Class: Work on Assignment 3</i>	Yadav 2017
	11/9	Assignment #2: Ethics in Practice	

Week	Date	Content/Material	Assigned Readings
12	11/14	NIST OSAC Groups/ Casework Intro	ASTM Standards OSAC Recommendations SWG Recommendations
	11/16	Case Evidence Examination	
13	11/21		
	11/23	Courtroom Testimony/ Trial Prep	Matson <i>et al.</i> 2004
14	11/28	Mock Testimony	
	11/30		
15	12/5	Mock Testimony	
	12/7		
Finals		Final Paper – Due 12/13; 2359 hrs Reflection II Due Peer Evaluation III Due	