

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for AJ 79

HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION

Effective: Spring 2019

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

AJ 79 — HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION — 3.00 units

Process of analysis of all aspects of the death case in order to arrive at the true cause and manner of death, whether it is murder, suicide, accidental, or natural. Emphasis on the importance of the death scene related to the investigation of cause.

3.00 Units Lecture

Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

Discipline:

- Administration of Justice

	<u>MIN</u>
Lecture Hours:	54.00
Total Hours:	54.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Identify the signs associated with homicide, suicide, accidental death and death from natural causes
- Identify and list the various forms of suicide
- Explain the various forms of accidental death
- Discuss the discrepancies between what witnesses say, and what the death scene and an examination of the body reveal
- List the major factors involved in victim identification
- Describe the differences between various wounds to the body and the weapons that inflict them
- Discuss recent legal and scientific developments in homicide investigation.

V. CONTENT:

- Introduction to homicide investigation
 - Basic problems in death investigation
 - Death recognition
 - Statistics
 - Death's time clocks
- Homicides
 - Criminal
 - Non-criminal
 - Lesser degrees
 - Investigative techniques
 - Coroner investigations
- Suicides
 - Hanging, suffocation and asphyxia
 - Poison, drug overdose, and alcohol-drug interaction
 - Gunshot
- Accidental death
 - Acts of God
 - Non-human culpability
 - Victim initiated
 - Insurance related
 - Law enforcement related
 - Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- Deaths where the cause may be intentionally or accidentally disguised
 - Fire
 - Arson
 - Electricity
 - Drowning
 - Vehicle accident
 - Narcotic overdose

- F. Witness statements
 - 1. Factors affecting reliability
 - 2. Factors affecting accuracy
 - 3. Statements that are contradicted by the crime scene or body
- G. Factors involved in victim identification
 - 1. Fingerprints and DNA
 - 2. Dental records
 - 3. Decomposition of the body
 - 4. Types and locations of wounds
 - 5. Intentional obscuring of victim identity through various kinds of mutilation, including acid and amputation
- H. Recent developments in homicide investigation
 - 1. Court decisions and changes in the Criminal Code
 - 2. New scientific techniques, including DNA

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Discussion** -
- B. **Audio-visual Activity** -
- C. **Lecture** -
- D. **Student Presentations** -
- E. Student group projects
- F. **Guest Lecturers** -

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Complete a research report on new developments in the technology of victim identification and homicide investigation
- B. Answers chapter questions
- C. Brief oral and written reports generated from recent new stories
- D. Written questions to be used to generate discussion with guest lecturer
- E. Complete an investigation report on a simulated homicide scene

VIII. EVALUATION:

Methods/Frequency

- A. Exams/Tests
 - Midterm and Final exams
- B. Quizzes
 - Periodic chapter quizzes
- C. Research Projects
 - Research a classic homicide case and complete a report
- D. Papers
 - A semester long research project and paper.

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

- 1. Steadman, Dawnie. *Hard Evidence: Case Studies in Forensic Anthropology*. 3rd ed., Pearson/Prentice Hall Publishers, 2016.
- 2. Geberth, Bernon. *Practical Homicide Investigation*. 5th ed., CRC Press, 2015.
- 3. Walton, R.. *Cold Case Homicides*. 2nd ed., CRC Press, 2017.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: