

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for AJ 79

HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION

Effective: Fall 2004

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:

Discipline:

	<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:

1. identify the signs associated with homicide, suicide, accidental death and death from natural causes;
2. identify and list the various forms of suicide;
3. explain the many forms of accidental death;
4. discuss discrepancies between what the witnesses say, and what the death scene and an examination of the body reveal;
5. list the major factors involved in victim identification;
6. describe the differences between various wounds to the body;
7. discuss recent legal and scientific developments in homicide investigation.

V. CONTENT:

- A. Introduction to homicide investigation
 1. Basic problems in death investigation
 2. Death recognition
 3. Statistics
 4. Death's time clocks
- B. Homicides
 1. Criminal
 2. Non-criminal
 3. Lesser degrees
 4. Investigative techniques
 5. Coroner investigations
- C. Suicides
 1. Hanging, suffocation and asphyxia
 2. Poison, drug overdose, and alcohol-drug interaction
 3. Gunshot
- D. Accidental death
 1. Acts of God
 2. Non-human culpability
 3. Victim initiated
 4. Insurance related
 5. Law enforcement related
 6. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- E. Deaths where the cause may be intentionally or accidentally disguised
 1. Fire
 2. Arson
 3. Electricity
 4. Drowning
 5. Vehicle accident
 6. 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. Research report on new developments in the technology of victim identification and homicide investigation
- B. Written responses to chapter questions
- C. Brief oral and written reports generated from recent new stories
- D. Written questions to be used to generate discussion at a guest lecturer

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. **Methods**

- 1. Exams/Tests
- 2. Quizzes
- 3. Research Projects

B. **Frequency**

- 1. Frequency of Evaluation
 - a. Attendance and participation will be evaluated daily.
 - b. Quizzes and other short exercises will be graded as they occur throughout the semester.
 - c. Group research project will be the final class activity.
 - d. Midterm and final will occur at the appropriate times.

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

- 1. Geberth, Bernon J *Practical Homicide Investigation.*, Elsevier Science Publishers, 0.
- 2. Sweetman and Sweetman *Investigating a Homicide.*, Atomic Dog Publishing., 0.
- 3. Steadman, Dawnie *Hard Evidence: Case Studies in Forensic Anthropology.*, Pearson/Prentice Hall Publishers, 0.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: