

FRNSC 541 — Forensic Seminar Series

SYLLABUS — Spring 2021

INSTRUCTOR: Ralph R. Ristenbatt III
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Office: <https://psu.zoom.us/j/9965651512>
Office hours: by appointment

Class location: <https://psu.zoom.us/j/98582907783?pwd=WEVXYk5uOWRVOU5BWHBKcitpUmEwdz09>
Day & time: Wednesday, 0905-0955 HR

Brief course description: Advanced concepts in forensic science through presentation of journal articles, case studies, and research findings.

Prerequisites: None

Course management: CANVAS will be used for communication and posting course material.

Required textbooks: All textbooks used in Penn State Forensic Science program courses including, but not limited to, FRNSC 400, 410, 411, 413, 415, 421, 425, 475, 427, 532, 561, 821, and 831.

Enrollment Requirements:
FRNSC-MPS program

Other Required Materials:
Access/knowledge of CANVAS and Internet

Course Syllabus Modifications:

- Changes to syllabus may be made as deemed appropriate by course instructor. Students will be notified in writing/email if changes occur.
- Changes to syllabus, class schedule, announcements, etc. will be communicated in class and/or via email. Students are required to check their Penn State and CANVAS e-mail daily.

Course Description

Classroom presentations and discussions will focus on different aspects of forensic science as found in current journal articles, casework studies, and current research projects. In this way, the students will be introduced to concepts, technologies, and methodologies that can be applied in forensic crime laboratories today or in the near future. The classroom discussions will include exercises designed to develop critical thinking skills. At the end of the course, students will have gained an understanding or better understanding of a number of different forensic science concepts.

The course is a 500-level forensic science course required for the Master of Professional Studies in Forensic Science degree program.

Course Goals & Objectives

- Provide each student with exposure to current forensic science literature
- Provide each student with additional presentation opportunities
- Provide each student with resources and guidelines to enable competent review and assessment of scientific literature

Information Literacy:

Students will recognize when research is required and will have the ability to access, analyze, integrate, and evaluate information from a variety of sources. These sources include, but are not limited to, Penn State library databases, published and other written materials, and computer sources (Internet, databases, etc.).

Expected Course Behavior:

- Students are expected to be actively involved in their acquisition of knowledge. Every student is responsible for all assigned reading, material presented in class, and computer-assisted and delivered instructional material.
- All students are expected to behave ethically and with honor and integrity (refer to *Academic Integrity Policy*).
- Cell phones and other smart devices **MUST BE SILENCED AT ALL TIMES**.
- Texting during class will result in the student being asked to leave and the student will be counted as absent.
- Behavior deemed as disruptive to the instructor or fellow students (i.e., cell phone use, texting, excessive chatting, etc.) may result in the student being asked to leave. If you are asked to leave, you will be counted as absent for the entire class. If the behavior continues, the instructor has the right to ask that the student be removed from the course.

Attendance Considerations (refer to *Attendance Policy*):

- The instructor reserves the right to require written documentation of any event(s) leading to missed classes (funerals, hospitalization, physician's office visit, etc.).
- If a student is absent, they will be responsible for all content that has been covered on that day. This includes lecture content, announcements, assignments, and any other material distributed to the class. The student is also responsible to be prepared for the next class.

Other Assessment Requirements:

- Students are responsible for keeping a back-up copy of all submitted work.
- All assignments are due on the date and time specified unless otherwise determined by the instructor (refer to *Late Submission of Assignments*).
- Additional requirements/instructions may be given at the time an assessment is assigned

Assessments

Assessment	Weight
Presentation #1 and submission of presentation slides	20.00%
Presentation #2 and submission of presentation slides	40.00%
Paper — manuscript review	20.00%
Peer reviews	10.00%
Attendance and timely submission of journal articles	10.00%
TOTAL	100.00%

Grades and Attendance

Grades

A	$93.000 \leq x \leq 100.00$
A-	$90.000 \leq x < 93.000$
B+	$87.000 \leq x < 90.000$
B	$83.000 \leq x < 87.000$
B-	$80.000 \leq x < 83.000$
C+	$77.000 \leq x < 80.000$
C	$70.000 \leq x < 77.000$
D	$60.000 \leq x < 70.000$
F	$x < 60.000$

Late Submission of Assignments

- Applies to submission of articles, presentation slides, and peer reviews
- 10% deduction/day (0001-2400 HR past due date & time)
- Maximum deduction = 100%
- Extensions may be granted for exigent circumstances (documentation may be requested)

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions (refer to *University Faculty Senate Policy 42-27: Class Attendance* for further information). Recurrent attendance issues will result in deductions from the final course score.

- Two (2) unexcused absences: 10% deduction
- Three (3) unexcused absences: 25% deduction
- Four (4) unexcused absences: 40% deduction
- NOTE: Two (2) late arrivals equal one (1) unexcused absence

Course Calendar

Date	Presentations*
JAN 20	Course introduction; establishment of presentation schedule; LECTURE & CLASS DISCUSSION- <i>Literature Assessment and Peer Review</i>
JAN 27	NO CLASS — Presentation preparation week
FEB 03	NO CLASS — Presentation preparation week
FEB 10	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (students 1, 2, and 3)
FEB 17	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (students 4, 5, and 6)
FEB 24	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (students 7, 8, and 9)
MAR 03	STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (student A)
MAR 10	STUDENT PRESENTATION (student B)
MAR 17	STUDENT PRESENTATION (student C)
MAR 24	STUDENT PRESENTATION (student D)
MAR 31	STUDENT PRESENTATION (student E) PAPER - manuscript review due[†]
APR 07	NO CLASS — University-designated wellness day
APR 14	STUDENT PRESENTATION (student F)
APR 21	STUDENT PRESENTATION (student G)
APR 28	STUDENT PRESENTATION (student H)
MAY 03 - 07	STUDENT PRESENTATION (student I) - DATE/TIME TO BE ANNOUNCED

* PRESENTATION NOTES:

- Presentation slides must be submitted to instructor **NO LATER THAN 2359 HR of Monday immediately preceding** scheduled presentation.
- Slides must be submitted as single PDF file, one slide per page.
- Files must be submitted via e-mail or file-sharing site; e.g., MS OneDrive, Google Drive, etc.

† PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN 1700 HR, MAR 31.

Assessments & Assignments

Student presentation #1 (20% of course score)

- Students will select, read, assess, critique, and present a **research article, technical note, or case report** relevant to their research (FRNSC 894); additional guidelines will be provided
- Article must have been published **within preceding 24 months** in a refereed, scientific journal
 - Articles must be approved by instructor
- ASSESSMENT: Presentation (15%); presentation slides (5%)
- Presentation must be 13-15 minutes, not including questions/discussion (deductions below)

TIME MANAGEMENT DEDUCTIONS (no deduction if $13 \leq \ell \leq 15$ min)			
LENGTH (ℓ)	DEDUCTION	LENGTH (ℓ)	DEDUCTION
$11 \leq \ell < 13$ min $15 < \ell \leq 17$ min	10%	$5 \leq \ell < 7$ min $21 < \ell \leq 23$ min	40%
$9 \leq \ell < 11$ min $17 < \ell \leq 19$ min	20%	$3 \leq \ell < 5$ min $23 < \ell \leq 25$ min	50%
$7 \leq \ell < 9$ min $19 < \ell \leq 21$ min	30%	$\ell < 3$ min $\ell > 25$ min	60%

Student presentation #2 (40% of course score)

- Students will select, read, assess, critique, and present a **research article** with **NO** relevance or similarity to their graduate (FRNSC 894); additional guidelines will be provided
- Article must have been published **within preceding 6 months** in a refereed, scientific journal
 - Research article must be approved by instructor
- ASSESSMENT: Presentation (30%); presentation slides (10%)
- Presentation must be 40-45 minutes, not including questions/discussion (deductions below)

TIME MANAGEMENT DEDUCTIONS (no deduction if $40 \leq \ell \leq 45$ min)			
LENGTH (ℓ)	DEDUCTION	LENGTH (ℓ)	DEDUCTION
$38 \leq \ell < 40$ min $45 < \ell \leq 47$ min	10%	$32 \leq \ell < 34$ min $51 < \ell \leq 53$ min	40%
$36 \leq \ell < 38$ min $47 < \ell \leq 49$ min	20%	$30 \leq \ell < 32$ min $53 < \ell \leq 55$ min	50%
$34 \leq \ell < 36$ min $49 < \ell \leq 51$ min	30%	$\ell < 30$ min $\ell > 55$ min	60%

Paper — manuscript review (20% of course score)

Students will submit a written review of a manuscript submitted for publication to a refereed, scientific journal. Additional guidelines will be provided.

Peer Review (10% of course score)

Students will submit an evaluation (peer review) of each presenter and their presentation. Each peer review will use an instructor-provided evaluation form. Written comments for each presentation are required. **Peer reviews must be submitted within 24 hours after presentation.**

Assigned Reading and Internet Websites

Journal Articles

Allen TW. Peer review guidance: how do you write a good review? *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*. 2013 Dec;113(12):916-920.

Brown LM, David EA, Karamlou T, Nason KS. Reviewing scientific manuscripts: a comprehensive guide for peer reviewers. *The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*. 2017 Jun;153(6):1609-1614.

Falavigna A, Blauth M, Kates SL. Critical review of a scientific manuscript: a practical guide for reviewers. *Journal of Neurosurgery*. 2018 Jan;128(1):312-321.

Grainger DW. Peer review as professional responsibility: a quality control system only as good as the participants. *Biomaterials*. 2007 Dec;28(34):5199-5203.

Lippi G. How do I peer-review a scientific article?—a personal perspective. *Annals of Translational Medicine*. 2018 Feb;6(3):68.

Miller B, Pevehouse J, Rogowski R, Tingley D, Wilson R. How to be a peer reviewer: a guide for recent and soon-to-be PhDs. *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 2013 Jan;46(1):120-123.

Seals DR, Tanaka H. Manuscript peer review: a helpful checklist for students and novice referees. *Advances in Physiology Education*. 2000 Jun;23(1):52-58.

Internet Websites

ELSEVIER Guidelines for Reviewers

<https://www.journals.elsevier.com/healthcare-the-journal-of-delivery-science-and-innovation/policies/guidelines-for-reviewers>

NATURE Guide to Referees

<https://www.nature.com/srep/journal-policies/referees>

SCIENCE Peer review at Science publications

<https://www.sciencemag.org/authors/peer-review-science-publications>

WILEY How to perform a peer review

<https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/how-to-perform-a-peer-review/index.html>

Academic Integrity

All Penn State policies regarding ethics and honorable behavior apply to this course (refer to links below for policy statements). Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. All University policies regarding academic integrity apply to this course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. For any material or ideas obtained from other sources, such as the text or things you see on the web, in the library, etc., a source reference must be given. Direct quotes from any source must be identified as such. All examination answers must be your own, and you must not provide any assistance to other students during examinations. Any instances of academic dishonesty WILL be pursued under the University and Eberly College of Science regulations concerning academic integrity.

Discussion of course concepts and cooperative study are encouraged; however, collaboration, discussion, assistance, cheating, plagiarism, etc., are NOT permitted during examinations or other assignments as specified by the instructor. Integrity and ethics are considered exceptionally important by the instructor.

Code of Mutual Respect

The Code of Mutual Respect and Cooperation was developed to embody the values that we hope our faculty, staff, and students possess, consistent with the aspirational goals expressed in the Penn State Principles. The University is strongly committed to freedom of expression, and consequently, the Code does not constitute University or College policy, and is not intended to interfere in any way with an individual's academic or personal freedoms. We hope, however, that individuals will voluntarily endorse the 12 principles set forth in the Code, thereby helping us make the Eberly College of Science a place where every individual feels respected and valued, as well as challenged and rewarded.

Disability Accommodations

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) Web site provides contact information for every Penn State campus: <http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator>. For further information, please visit Student Disability Resources Web site: <http://equity.psu.edu/sdr>.

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park (CAPS): +1-814-863-0395
<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>

Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): +1-877-229-6400

Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

Educational Equity and Bias Reporting

Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the Report Bias webpage (<http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>).

Mandated Reporting (Title IX)

Penn State's policies require faculty to share information about incidents of sex-based discrimination and harassment (discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation) with Penn State's Title IX coordinator or deputy coordinators, regardless of whether the incidents are stated in person or shared by students as part of their coursework. For more information regarding the University's policies and procedures for responding to reports of sexual or gender-based harassment or misconduct, please visit <http://titleix.psu.edu>. Additionally, faculty members are required to report on any reasonable suspicion of child abuse in accordance with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law.