

FOR 101: Introduction to Forensic Science

Section 004 (CRN: 48082)

Spring 2026

3 semester credit hours

Instructor Information

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Senior Lecturer

Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology

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See Canvas page for instructor contact information.

Email communication with your instructor: Your instructor will reply within 24 hours when the email is sent during the school week (8am on Monday and 3:59pm on Friday). Emails sent during the weekend (between 4pm on Friday and 7:59am on Monday) will be answered within 72 hours. Please include your course and section in the subject line.

Course Information

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the history, nature and function of forensic science and criminalistics. Special attention is given to each of the key areas of evidence as collected, interpreted, and used in forensic science. Of the various types of evidence analyzed using the tools of forensic science, these forms of evidence can involve any type of criminal investigation where forensic related evidence is collected and potentially used.

Prerequisites

None.

Course Objectives

You will be able to accomplish the following course objectives by the end of the semester:

- Understand the nature and role of forensic science in the criminal justice system.
- Explain the role of physical evidence as it pertains to forensic science.
- Differentiate and describe the various areas of forensic science.
- Identify and understand the different types of forensic analysis of physical evidence patterns and how these are critical for criminalistics.
- Understand the role of digital evidence and computer forensics.
- Recognize the role psychology has in the criminal justice system.
- Describe how psychological evaluation is used in criminal investigations, the criminal court

system, and risk prediction.

Course Modality/Structure

This course meets in its assigned classroom on campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 am – 12:15 pm. In Canvas, the week opens on Monday and closes on the Sunday that follows.

Course Time Commitment

According to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE), it is expected that students will spend approximately 2 hours of study time outside of class for every one hour in class. For more specific course workload calculation, you can use [this resource from Rice University](#). Since this is a 3-credit hour class, you should expect to study an average of 6 hours outside of class each week

Course Materials

Forensic Science: From the Crime Scene to Crime Lab, 4th ed., by Richard Saferstein, Pearson Publishing.

If you have financial/cost concerns with purchasing access for this class, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Course Assignments and Assessments

Course Assignments

- a. **Attendance** (30 points): You will register your attendance each class session using *aPlus+ Attendance* in Canvas. You may use your laptop, smart phone, or tablet. Registration should work in both app and browser versions of Canvas.
- b. **In-class activities** (approximately 80 points total): During the course period, we will engage in activities within the “classroom,” be it asynchronous online or face to face. Some of these activities are spontaneous in nature as they will not be strictly scheduled but assigned during class that week. Others are prescheduled lab experiences. There may be more than one in-class activity on a given week.
- c. **Reading Quizzes** (110 points total): Most weeks, you will have a reading assignment to prepare for the upcoming week of class. Most readings will have a corresponding reading quiz with 10 questions for each chapter of reading assigned. Quizzes are on Canvas and are open book/note. You may only take the quiz once.
- d. **Forensic Science Career paper** (30 points): You will choose one career in a forensic science field that you would like to examine further. For the final product, you will write a 2-page minimum paper highlighting:
 - What career did you choose to research and why did you choose it?
 - Describe the career. What are the typical job duties?

- What are the educational requirements?
- What knowledge, skills, and abilities are required?
- What is the salary range and job outlook?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages of working in this career?
- What are your personality strengths that match this career?
- How does this career match your interests?

The paper and citation must be in APA format. 5 points of the 30 listed are for completion of the APA refresher quiz. The paper is due in Canvas by 11:59pm on Thursday, March 12th.

- e. **Exams (200 points):** There are two module exams and one final exam in this course. The materials for the first two exams are confined to the original module of reference and are worth 50 points each. Exams are a combination of multiple choice and short answer essay questions. The final exam is worth 100 points. Half of the final exam is over the materials from the third module. The other half is course comprehensive and will consist of five short answer essay questions.

Tentative exam dates and times are listed on the course schedule. Make-up exams for the modules are at the discretion of the instructor and may be in a different format than the original. There is no make-up available for the final exam.

The final exam for this course is IN PERSON on TUESDAY, April 28th at 9:45am. Please plan now to be present for the final exam.

Point Distribution and Grading Scale

Assignment/Exam	Points/Percent
Attendance	30 points
In-class Activities	80 points
Career Paper (+ APA citation exercise)	30 points
Reading Quizzes	110 points
Exams (2 at 50 points; 1 at 100 points)	200 points
TOTAL	450 points

Letter Grade	Percentage Lower Bound
A	94%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	84%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	74%
C-	70%
D+	67%
D	64%
D-	60%
F	< 60%

Course Statements and Policies

Participation Policy

- This course is designed with weekly activities, discussion, and other forms of regular collaboration and communication. It is recommended that you log into your course 3 to 4 times a week and check your official Ball State email account daily to view announcements and prepare for class.
- You are responsible for all material covered in class, in-class assignments/activities, the readings, guest speakers, videos, and any other supplemental material provided by the instructor.
- You are expected to complete all assignments, quizzes, tests, and any other activities by the stated due dates/times.
- We will discuss issues in this class upon which individuals may disagree. Everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion, and disagreements about all issues are to be addressed in a respectful manner. The use of derogatory and/or discriminatory comments is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. At your own comfort level, please contact me if behavior of this nature is occurring in the classroom without my knowledge or if you believe I have not appreciated the gravity of an interaction I have witnessed. You may also utilize “Say Something” reporting located at <https://www.bsue.edu/about/administrativeoffices/dean-of-students/say-something>.

Attendance Policy

- You are expected to attend every class session. As noted above, attendance tracked using **aPlus+ Attendance** in Canvas. If you are absent for reasons specified in the [University's course attendance policies](#), you may be excused for your absence and are eligible to make up work missed. Due to time constraints, there are no make-ups for the final exam.
- In general, you are expected to notify your instructor once you anticipate being absent for any reason (e.g., funeral) or as soon as possible after the absence begins (e.g., unexpected injury or illness). **You may need to provide documentation to your instructor if requested.** Only faculty your faculty member can excuse an absence.
- At Ball State, course attendance policies are up to the individual faculty but must be consistent with [University policies regarding student absences](#), including for funeral and bereavement leave, jury duty, late course addition, military absences, observance of religious holidays, pregnancy leave, and university advisories.

Late Assignment Policy

- Assignments posted after the indicated due dates will be subject to a decreased letter grade for each day late. The first day begins at 8am the day following the due date. For most assignments, which means you have a significant grace period before deduction begins. For example, if an assignment is due at 11:59pm on Friday, it will not be counted as late until 8am the next day (Saturday).
- Internet connectivity and technical issues may occur and impede you from turning in work on time. Turn in work early and often, and set up a back-up plan, such as visiting a local library or borrowing a peer's computer. Bracken Library has laptop computers and other equipment available for loan. See the link for more details: <https://bsu.libguides.com/c.php?g=41374&p=6136829>
- No late assignments will be accepted for grading after 11:59 pm on the final day of class, Monday, Thursday, April 24th.

Exam, Quiz, and Assignment Submission Policy

- All assignments should be submitted as Word documents with extensions of .doc or .docx unless otherwise indicated in the assignment description.
- Assignments, unless otherwise indicated, should be submitted using the assignment link in the module.
- On occasion, technology fails us and results in our Canvas exercises and exams submitting early or without answers. This instructor has discretion as to whether to reset the quiz/exam or allow the grade to stand as-is. This instructor may not reset quizzes or exams in which the malfunction occurs within the last 4 hours of the testing period. For best results, complete exams well before the close of the testing period to ensure time for correction if a malfunction occurs.

Grading Policy

It is my policy that appropriate evaluation of your academic performance is an integral part of your learning experience. In the absence of mistake, fraud, bad faith or incompetence, I will be the key decision-maker on the assignment of grades. For information concerning grade appeals, [consult the Ball State website](#).

Extra Credit

Extra credit is available in this course through extra credit enrichment opportunities. A total of 10 points is possible over the course of the semester. A list of eligible events is posted on the course Canvas page. You may attend an event and then write a 1 page reflection paper about the event. Papers must be submitted within 48 hours of the event ending. You may complete this process three times. The first is worth 2 points of extra credit; the second is worth 3, and the third is worth 5 points. Additional extra credit opportunities may be spontaneously presented by the instructor, but are not to be expected, nor are the subject to make-ups.

Student Support Services

Students can benefit from free tutoring and coaching at the [Learning Center](#), writing practice and feedback at the [Writing Center](#), mental health assistance at the [Counseling Center](#), assistance with basic needs at the [Basic Needs Hub](#), and public speaking assistance at the [Speaking Center](#).

University Policies and Statements

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu. You are responsible for all material.

Freedom of Expression

In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's Statement on Freedom of Expression, the resources on Ball State's Freedom of Expression webpage, and Ball State's Beneficence Pledge.

Title IX

Ball State University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone. The University offers support services and resources. For more information or to report an incident, please visit [bsu.edu/titleix](https://www.bsu.edu/titleix) or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 765-285-1545 or at titleix@bsu.edu.

As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter under the Title IX policy and required to report any information I receive about possible sexual harassment. This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, or private conversations.

What happens after I report? The Title IX Coordinator will email the person who experienced sexual harassment (complainant) and invite them to schedule a meeting. If the complainant chooses to meet with the Title IX Coordinator,

- Title IX Coordinator will offer supportive measures (e.g., counseling, extensions on deadlines, course-related adjustments, changes to work or class schedules, and/or referrals to campus offices), review the policy, and discuss options to move forward.
- If a complaint is filed by the complainant or the University, an investigation will begin following University policy.

Student Academic Ethics Policy

Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the VPAA's academic integrity website (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University Student Academic Ethics Policy.

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with me if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books)
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or

to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).

- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.
- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing)
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you

Please be advised that the course syllabus is a guideline. Your instructor reserves the right to revoke, alter, or amend any portion of the syllabus in order to maintain flexibility and to present relevant instruction.

FOR 101-004 Spring 2026 Course Schedule

Dates on the schedule are tentative and may be subject to change to provide flexibility in the learning environment. Any changes to the exam schedule will be reported in class and posted in a Canvas announcement.

Week	Topics and Activities
Week 1: 1/5 - 1/11/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Syllabus, Introduction to forensic science, FS careers • Complete reading for Chapters 1 & 2
Week 2: 1/12 - 1/18/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete reading quiz for Chapters 1 & 2 by 1/12 at 11:59pm • Class discussion: Securing, searching, and recording the crime scene • Complete reading for Chapters 3 & 4
Week 3: 1/19 - 1/25/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete reading quiz for Chapters 3 & 4 by 1/19 at 11:59pm • Class discussion: Collection of evidence, crime scene reconstruction • Complete reading for Chapters 5 & 7
Week 4: 1/26 - 2/1/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete reading quiz for Chapters 5 & 7 by 1/26 at 11:59pm • Topic: Physical evidence • Crime Scene search lab on Tuesday, 1/29
Week 5: 2/2 - 2/8/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam One in class on Tuesday, 2/3 • Topic: Death investigation • Read Chapters 10 & 15 in your textbook
Week 6: 2/9 - 2/15/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete reading quiz for Chapters 10 & 15 by 2/9 at 11:59pm • Topic: Bloodstain pattern analysis, biological stain (DNA) analysis • Read Chapters 11 & 12 in your textbook
Week 7: 2/16 - 2/22/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APA Citation Quiz results due by 11:59pm on 2/16 • Complete reading quiz for Chapters 11 & 12 by 2/16 at 11:59pm • Topic: Drugs and forensic toxicology • Read Chapters 8, 13 & 14 in your textbook
Week 8: 2/23 - 3/1/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Forensic biometrics, trace analysis • Exam Two in class on Thursday, 2/26
Week 9: 3/2 - 3/8/26	SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS MEETINGS
Week 10: 3/9 - 3/15/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Introduction to forensic psychology and profiling • Forensic Science Career Paper due by 11:59pm on Thursday, March 12th • Complete reading located on Canvas

Week	Topics and Activities
Week 11: 3/16 - 3/22/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Competency, risk assessment, and correctional counseling • Complete reading located on Canvas
Week 12: 3/23 - 3/29/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Behavioral forensics topics • Complete reading in Canvas
Week 13: 3/30 - 4/5/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Behavior Forensics topics • Read Chapter 18 in the textbook
Week 14: 4/6 - 4/12/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Chapter 18 & 19 Reading Quiz by 11:59pm on 4/6 • Topic: Overview of digital forensics • Read Chapter 19 in the textbook
Week 15: 4/13 - 4/19/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Digital and Multimedia Forensics: Cell Phones, Video, and Audio
Week 16: 4/20 - 4/26/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday – Lab make up day • Thursday – Final Exam Review
Finals Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Exam in class on Tuesday, April 28th at 9:45a