

**COURSE SYLLABUS  
CJ 694 SPECIAL TOPICS – CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
FORENSIC SCIENCE CAPSTONE COURSE  
3 CREDIT HOURS  
SPRING 2008**

**Time:** Arranged  
**Room:** N/A  
**Instructor:** Dr. Sarah Kerrigan  
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**Office:** CSF Building 221A  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 9:30 – 11:00  
Wednesdays 9:30 – 2:30  
Thursdays 9:30 – 11:00  
Other times by appointment.  
Email is the preferred method for making appointments.

### **Course Introduction**

A Capstone experience during formal education affords students the opportunity to study an area of the forensic sciences in depth subsequent to an intensive internship in an active forensic science or basic science related to forensic science. This educational event will provide students with an opportunity to explore an area of particular interest or employment objective. Students may study scientific principles underpinning a forensic science technique or conversely, may study possible techniques applicable to crime detection or crime-solving that has emerged from a basic scientific discovery.

Students in the Masters of Forensic Science Program at Sam Houston State University have performed internships related to the forensic sciences, usually during the summer between the first and second year, in a forensic science or basic science laboratory. That experience will be enhanced by the requirement that students conduct further research relative to that experience and produce a scholarly writing evidencing a substantial knowledge of the selected subject under a Capstone or thesis environment. Students will have the opportunity and will indeed be encouraged to submit this work for publication and presentation of this material at regional and national scientific meetings.

Students must take the Capstone course during the second year of the Master of Science in Forensic Science (MSFS). The capstone course should be taken after the completion of the forensic science internship. The course will constitute three hours of credit. A faculty member of the College of Criminal Justice will serve as a facilitator, meeting with students at intervals as arranged by the students and the faculty member. The faculty member will assist the students in obtaining consultation with other faculty members knowledgeable in the pertinent area in the either the College of Criminal Justice or the College of Arts and Sciences or from an outside expert willing to participate in the students' educational experience. That faculty member providing consultation will meet with the student as necessary to provide guidance and assistance to the students in the production of the writing. The students will complete the paper within the fall or spring semester following the summer internship. Grading of the paper will be the responsibility of the facilitator, who may ask that a faculty member with particular knowledge of the subject matter from the College of Criminal Justice or the College of Arts and Sciences or a person not affiliated with the University with special knowledge of the subject matter of the writing read the paper and provide insight as to the content and quality of the paper. Students will present the work orally in an open public forum in compliance with the guidelines of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

This independent study allows students to obtain credit for research. All project proposals must be approved by the instructor and the Forensic Science Program Director prior to engaging in the research and all rules regarding institutional review boards must be followed. Students may be permitted to use data obtained during the internship. If the facilitator of the course deems appropriate, students may elect to pursue an in depth study of a particular forensic modality not based upon students' data, but upon another approved topic.

### **Prerequisites**

Students must be currently enrolled in the Master of Science in Forensic Science.

## Course Objectives

The purpose of the Capstone course is to require students to conduct research and produce a scholarly work regarding a subject within the forensic sciences. The course may require a consolidation of basic sciences, statistics, historical considerations, and experiential understanding of the selected topic, and test the students' writing and communication ability.

## Course Text

Not applicable.

## Assignments

**Students must submit a tentative title of their proposed capstone report by noon on Wednesday January 30, 2008. A two-page research proposal is due by noon on Wednesday February 6, 2008 and an interim report (progress report) by noon on Wednesday March 19, 2008.** Students will write a paper during the designated semester while enrolled in the Capstone course of no more than forty double-spaced pages, including all footnotes, endnotes, citations, figures, appendices and the like. Students may select the report format of their choice, but should generally adhere to the common conventions of peer reviewed scientific journals (for example the Journal of Forensic Sciences). The paper will incorporate both an explanation of the science involved in the subject and the applicability of the subject to forensic science. Background information in the report will comprise a part of the paper to the extent necessary to properly demonstrate the evolution of the subject and explain the events leading to the utility of a methodology. **Final written reports are due before noon on Wednesday May 7, 2008. An electronic copy and two paper copies of the final report must be submitted. One paper copy will be returned to the student. Late reports will not be accepted.**

**Students will present their research orally in an open public forum during the week of May 5, 2008.**

Presentations will be 20 minutes and will allow time for questions. Oral presentations will conform to the platform presentation guidelines of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. These guidelines are available to students on the AAFS website at [www.AAFS.org](http://www.AAFS.org). **Students must also submit an abstract (conforming to the American Academy of Forensic Sciences guidelines) no later than noon on Monday April 28, 2008** (approximately one week prior to the oral presentation). Specific dates and times of the presentations TBA.

There will be no examination. This is a research-based independent study. The entire grade is based upon the final report (55%), abstract (10%) and the oral presentation (35%).

## Timeline

Tentative titles due by noon on **Wednesday January 30, 2008**

Proposals due by noon on **Wednesday February 6, 2008**

Interim reports due by noon on **Wednesday March 19, 2008**

Abstracts due by noon on **Monday April 28, 2008**

Oral presentations scheduled the week of **May 5, 2008**

Final reports due by noon on **Wednesday May 7, 2008**

## Grading Policy

Final grades will be based upon the following scale: 90 plus average an "A"; 80 to 89 a "B"; 70 to 79 a "C"; 60 to 69 a "D"; and below 60 an "F". Students should not count on a curve of the final grade. The instructor reserves the right to modify the grading scheme to accommodate for a missed test or final examination in extenuating circumstances.

Appeals will be handled in accord with University Policy Statement 900823, Academic Grievance Procedures for Students.

## Attendance Policy

Students are expected to meet with the facilitator when directed to do so.

**Student Absences on Religious Holy Days:** Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. See *Student Syllabus Guidelines*.

### **Laboratory Rules**

Students will refrain from behavior in the laboratory that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and thus impedes the mission of the university. Inappropriate behavior in the laboratory shall result in a directive to leave. Students will not be permitted in the laboratory wearing attire containing messages or symbols that are offensive, abusive, or derogatory in nature. Students will follow all faculty and staff directives concerning laboratory safety and appropriate use of scientific equipment.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Students are expected to conduct their academic work with integrity and honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in the failure of a course and dismissal from the University. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion, or the abuse of resource materials. The University's policy on academic honesty and appeal procedures can be found in the manual entitled Student Guidelines, distributed by the Division of Student Services. (Reference Section 5.3 of the SHSU Student Guidelines.)

If it is obvious that an assignment is a copy of another student's work, both copies will receive a grade of 0%, and both students will be on notice that they will be reported for scholastic dishonesty should they be involved in any questionable work in the future. The instructor reserves the right to ask for an oral explanation of work submitted to determine if the student actually performed the work. This should not be construed as an accusation of academic dishonesty. It is merely a tool to ensure that student's are able to explain their work. Only in cases where the student cannot demonstrate the most basic explanation of what they submitted as their original work will there be suggestion of dishonesty.

### **Visitor Policy**

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student as evidenced by an official and current SHSU identification card, the instructor will decide whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

### **Instructor Evaluation**

The students are asked to evaluate all courses and instructors at the end of each semester. These evaluations are an important tool for improving the faculty, courses, and student experiences at Sam Houston State University. Sarcastic, derisive, and inappropriate language should not be used. Both positive and negative thoughtful comments are taken to heart by the faculty and administration.

### **Students with Disabilities**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

### **Services for Disabled Students**

The University's information on services available for disabled students may be found at the following address: <http://www.shsu.edu/~counsel/sswd.html>

### **Course Material Copyright ©2008**

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