Fall 2021
San José State University
CSS/ Department of Justice Studies
FS 160-01 Forensic Science Special Topics-Death Investigations CRN 46652

Instructor:	Rosa A. Vega
Office Location:	Health Building 207
Email:	Rosa.Vega@sjsu.edu
Canvas Website:	https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1433902
Office Hours:	Before and After Class, Via Email
Class Days/Time:	Thursdays 1800-2030 Hours
Classroom:	Health Building 207
Prerequisites:	FS 11 (FS majors and minors) or JS 10 (JS majors and minors), upper division standing

Course Description

Fundamental theories, principles, and techniques of medicolegal death investigation. Topics include Coroner/Medical Examiner laws of California, recording a death scene, collecting evidence from the scene and the body, autopsy, determining cause and manner of death, working with law enforcement and other government entities, maintaining chain of custody, and preparing written reports. Case studies will be used to illustrate methods of investigation and special problems encountered.

Course Format

Course meets once weekly for lecture, guest speakers, field trips, and practical exercises. Canvas is required for accessing some course materials and submitting assignments.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:
CLO1 Distinguish Coroner and Medical Examiner systems and analyze the roles of each system.
CLO2 Explain legal mandates and medicolegal terminology.
CLO3 Identify and differentiate common wounds, signs of death, decomposition stages, and injury patterns.
CLO4 Utilize best practices for processing death scenes and carrying out related tasks.
CLO5 Explain the professional relationships between medicolegal death investigators, law enforcement, and other government entities.

Required Texts/Readings

- Bucholtz, A. (2015). *Death Investigation: An Introduction to Forensic Pathology for the Nonscientist.* Waltham, MA: Elsevier/Anderson Publishing.
- DiMaio, D. & DiMaio, V. J. (2001). *Forensic Pathology, Second Edition*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Recommended topic-related readings will be posted on the Canvas class website.

Library Liaison

Nyle Monday nyle.monday@sjsu.edu, Forensic Science Lib Guide

Course Assignments

1. Exams (40%): Two midterms, one final exam. Format may include multiple choice, fill-in, short answer, short essay, and diagrams. (all CLO)
2. Practical Exercises (40%): Hands on exercises in recognizing signs of death, decomposition stages, wound patterns, identification methods, report writing and evidence collection. (CLO 3 & 4)
3. Reading Notes (10%): Students will submit details reading notes for all required readings.
4. Group Presentation (5%): Topic to be determined. Details and guidelines will be provided. (all CLO)
5. Final Mock Death Scene Exercise/Narrative Report (5%) (CLO 4)

Final Examination or Evaluation

Students will participate in a mock death scene final project and take a final exam.

Grading Information

A plus	97 to 100
A	94 to 96.9
A minus	90 to 93.9
B plus	87 to 89.9
B	84 to 86.9
B minus	80 to 83.9
C plus	77 to 79.9
C	74 to 76.9
C minus	70 to 73.9
D plus	67 to 69.9
D	64 to 66.9
D minus	60 to 63.9
F	<60

All assignments are graded based on adherence to accuracy, directions, thoroughness, thoughtfulness, clarity, and logic.

Extra Credit

Extra credit opportunities may be available throughout the semester and will be used to augment the final grade up to 4%.

•   Interview a professional in the death investigation field and write a 3-5 page, typed, double-spaced synopsis of their experiences and perspective. Include reflection on your interests in the field, and if/how they have changed.

Professor will provide list of professionals-Criminalists, Autopsy Technician, Homicide Detective, CSI Officer, Medical Examiner and Death Investigator

Class Policies

- No cell phones in class: Turn them off and put them away.
- No photography of casework presented-Failure to abide shall result in disciplinary action.
- Plagiarized work will result in severe disciplinary action.
- Late work may be submitted for half credit within one week of due date.
- Make-ups for exams will generally not be possible unless extraordinary, documented circumstances exist.
- Handle personal business before you begin an exam. A student who leaves the classroom *for any reason* during an exam will be presumed finished with the exam.

Zoom Classroom Etiquette

- Mute Your Microphone: To help keep background noise to a minimum, make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
- Be Mindful of Background Noise and Distractions: Find a quiet place to "attend" class, to the greatest extent possible.

  -Avoid video setups where people may be walking behind you, people talking/making noise, etc.

  -Avoid activities that could create additional noise, such as shuffling papers, listening to music in the background, etc.

- Position Your Camera Properly: Be sure your webcam is in a stable position and focused at eye level.
- Limit Your Distractions/Avoid Multitasking: You can make it easier to focus on the meeting by turning off notifications, closing or minimizing running apps, and putting your smartphone away (unless you are using it to access Zoom).
- Use Appropriate Virtual Backgrounds: If using a virtual background, it should be appropriate and professional and should NOT suggest or include content that is objectively offensive or demeaning.

Technology Requirements

- Students are required to have an electronic device (laptop, desktop or tablet) with a camera and built-in microphone. SJSU has a free equipment loan program available for students.
- Students are responsible for ensuring that they have access to reliable Wi-Fi during class and tests. If students are unable to have reliable Wi-Fi, they must inform the instructor, as soon as possible or at the latest one week before the test date to determine an alternative. See Learn Anywhere website for current Wi-Fi options on campus.

Test Format

- TBD

Academic Dishonesty

Students who are suspected of cheating during an exam will be referred to the Student Conduct and Ethical Development office and depending on the severity of the conduct, will receive a zero on the assignment or a grade of F in the course. Grade Forgiveness does not apply to courses for which the original grade was the result of a finding of academic dishonesty.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) *(http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf)*, relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) (http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo), which is hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Important Dates this Semester

8/31/2021: Last Day to Drop Without a W
9/8/2021: Last Day to Add a Course, Last Day to Request CR/NC
11/12/2021: Last Day to Submit Late Drop/Withdrawal Request http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/forms/
12/6/2021: Last day of Instruction
Please Verify Dates with Registrar Office

Justice Studies Reading and Writing Philosophy

The Department of Justice Studies is committed to scholarly excellence. Therefore, the Department promotes academic, critical, and creative engagement with language (i.e., reading and writing) throughout its curriculum. A sustained and intensive exploration of language prepares students to think critically and to act meaningfully in interrelated areas of their lives–personal, professional, economic, social, political, ethical, and cultural. Graduates of the Department of Justice Studies leave San José State University prepared to enter a range of careers and for advanced study in a variety of fields; they are prepared to more effectively identify and ameliorate injustice in their personal, professional and civic lives. Indeed, the impact of literacy is evident not only within the span of a specific course, semester, or academic program but also over the span of a lifetime.

Instructor

Rosa Vega earned her MS degree in Criminal Justice Administration with a concentration in Forensic Science Administration from Loyola University New Orleans, and her BS in Administration of Justice with a minor in Physical Anthropology from San Jose State University. Rosa is the Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner Investigator for Santa Clara County where she has worked for 16 years. She currently supervises 11 investigators. Her SJSU office is Health Building Room 207.

FS 160-01 Death Investigations, Fall 2021 Course Schedule

Schedule is Subject to Change

Week	Date	In-Class Topics	Due	Readings, Assignments
1	8/19	Introduction and Class Overview TV vs Real Life-The Death Investigator		Body of Proof- Assignment DiMaio Ch 1 Bucholtz Ch 1
2	8/26	Coroner vs. Medical Examiner-Origins	Body of Proof Report Reading Notes	Canvas Reading
3	9/2	Reportable Deaths-CA 27491 Legal Mandates **Class Exercise**		Canvas Reading Bucholtz Ch 2 Bucholtz Ch 3
4	9/9	Death Scene Investigations Cause, Mechanism & Manner of Death **Class Exercise**	Reading Notes	Study for Midterm 1
5	9/16	**Midterm**	Reading Notes	DiMaio Ch 2, 4, 7 Bucholtz Ch 4, 7 (pg. 121-131)
6	9/23	Signs of Death & Injury Patterns **Class Exercise**	Reading Notes	**Prepare for Class Presentation Canvas Reading**
7	9/30	**Project: ME vs. Coroner Presentations**		Canvas Reading Bucholtz Ch 5
8	10/7	The Autopsy-**Guest Speaker**	Reading Notes	Canvas Reading Bucholtz Ch 6
9	10/14	Positive Identification **Class Exercise**	Reading Notes	
10	10/21	**CSI- Guest Speakers**		Study for Midterm 2
11	10/28	**Midterm 2** Introduction to Report Writing **Class Discussion/Exercise**		DiMaio Ch 9 Bucholtz Ch 7 (pg. 132-144)
12	11/4	Traffic Fatalities- **Guest Speaker**	Reading Notes	DiMaio Ch 23 Canvas Reading
13	11/11	**Veteran's Day- No Class**		
14	11/18	Drug Fatalities	Reading Notes	
15	11/25	**Thanksgiving-No Class**		**Study for Final**
16	12/2	Homicidal Violence-**Guest Speaker**		**Study for Final**
17	12/9	**Final Project/Final**		