



Course Information

Course Title: Introduction to Forensic Sciences
Course Number: ANTH221
Term: *Summer 2021*
Credits: 3
Course Dates: From July 11, 2021 - July 30, 2021
Course Times: 10-1 M-F (10-11:30 a.m. synchronous)

Professor: Dr. Erin Guthrie
TA: TBD
Office Phone: N/A
Email: eguthri1@umd.edu
Office Hours: 11:30-12:30 M-Th (& by appointment)
Classroom: see ELMS for Zoom classroom link

Instructor Bio

This is my fifth year teaching in the Anthropology department here at UMD. My day job is with the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History Repatriation Osteology Laboratory, though I have spent parts of the pandemic deployed in New York City with a forensic disaster response team to augment the city's overburdened medical examiner system.

I got my Masters of Science from the University of Indianapolis and my Ph.D. from Binghamton University. I have 15 years of experience working as a field archaeologist and forensic anthropologist everywhere from Alaska to Hawaii to Spain to Vietnam, and have worked with the Bureau of Land Management, the Illinois State Police Crime Scene Services Command, the New York Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and the Department of Defense's Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

Course Description

The role of forensic scientists can be broadly defined in terms of skills, technology, experience, research, and contributions to the literature. This course will provide a brief history of forensic sciences, an introduction to some of the techniques used, and a demonstration of some of the applications of forensic sciences. There will be several hands-on activities in the classroom. This course is not a training course, but a survey course designed to give the student some exposure to the kinds of scientific knowledge and techniques applied to the medico-legal investigation of death and other crimes.

Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course you will be able to:

- Possess a basic understanding of the branches of forensic science and their applications in society.
- Understand how to apply the scientific method both broadly, and in the specific medicolegal context.
- Be able to articulate the processes of collecting, categorizing, and examining different types of evidence and data.
- Have enhanced critical thinking and analysis skills.

Required Resources

You will need to purchase or rent the following book for this course (an earlier edition cannot be used):

Saferstein, Richard, 2017. *Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Sciences*. 12th edition, Prentice Hall. ISBN 9780134477596

- Additional course readings will be available on the web, through the University library's journal subscriptions, or posted to the course Website: elms.umd.edu
- Additional required at-home lab materials include: number 2 pencils; plastic eye dropper; plastic caliper (metric); cloth measuring tape (metric); clear tape (the wider the better); white foam core board/large white poster board; corn syrup, red food coloring, corn starch, & cocoa powder. A separate document with links for where these materials can be purchased is provided on Canvas.

Course Structure

This course has daily live-sessions via Zoom that are mandatory. The 2021 TYS summer intensive schedule allocates 1.5 hours of synchronous learning and 1.5 hours of asynchronous learning. If you are unable to attend a session, let the instructor know *as soon as possible* ahead of the class meeting. Expect readings, pre-lab activities, and other assignments to be completed outside of class time. Daily live sessions do not require you to be in a specific location to participate; however, you must have access to a full-screen computer or laptop with keyboard. The online nature of this class will push you to take an active role in the learning process. You will do this by engaging and collaborating with other students and the instructor on a regular basis both, in live sessions, as well as through group work and activities.

Though exact dates are subject to change, we'll do our best to adhere to the following weekly schedule:

Mondays & Wednesdays—Class & small-group discussions; interactive activities

Tuesdays & Thursdays—Lab exercises

Fridays— Learning Assessments

Journal Reflections will be due twice per week (Wednesdays & Fridays).

Lab write-ups will be due 2 days after lab day (Thursdays & Mondays).

Participation

- Given the interactive style of this class, attendance will be crucial to note-taking and thus your performance in this class. Attendance is particularly important also because class discussion will be a critical component for your learning.
- Each student is expected to make substantive contributions to the learning experience, and attendance is expected for every session.
- ***Students are encouraged to be fully present during class meeting times. Have a notebook and pen, close all other browser and chat windows, and set your phone aside for the duration of our synchronous time together.***
- Students with a legitimate reason to miss a live session should communicate in advance with the instructor, except in the case of an emergency.
- Students who miss a live session are responsible for learning what they miss from that session.

- Additionally, students must complete all readings and assignments in a timely manner in order to fully participate in class.

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Course-Specific Policies

Academic Integrity

For this course, some of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit [Turnitin Originality Checker for Students](#)

Names/Pronouns and Self-Identifications

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more.

Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

Communication with Instructor:

If you need to reach out and communicate with me, please email me at eguthri1@umd.edu. Your Teaching Assistant can be reached at ##### [TBD](#) #####. Please DO NOT email me with questions that are easily found in the syllabus or on ELMS (i.e. When is this assignment due? How much is it worth? etc.)

but please DO reach out about personal, academic, and intellectual concerns/questions. While I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, you will more likely receive email responses from me between 9 am and 5 pm Monday through Friday, and should not expect same-day responses to messages sent after 7 p.m.

ELMS: I will send IMPORTANT announcements via ELMS messaging. You must make sure that your email & announcement notifications (including changes in assignments and/or due dates) are enabled in ELMS so you do not miss any messages. You are responsible for checking your email and Canvas/ELMS inbox with regular frequency.

Communication with Peers:

With a diversity of perspectives and experience, we may find ourselves in disagreement and/or debate with one another. As such, it is important that we agree to conduct ourselves in a professional manner and that we work together to foster and preserve a virtual classroom environment in which we can respectfully discuss and deliberate controversial questions.

I encourage you to confidently exercise your right to free speech—bearing in mind, of course, that you will be expected to craft and defend arguments that support your position. Keep in mind that free speech has its limit and this course is NOT the space for hate speech, harassment, and derogatory language. I will make every reasonable attempt to create an atmosphere in which each student feels comfortable voicing their argument without fear of being personally attacked, mocked, demeaned, or devalued.

Any behavior (including harassment, sexual harassment, and racially and/or culturally derogatory language) that threatens this atmosphere will not be tolerated. Please alert me immediately if you feel threatened, dismissed, or silenced at any point during our semester together and/or if your engagement in discussion has been in some way hindered by the learning environment.

Assessments and Grading

This course will be graded on the basis of 335 points. At any given time, you should be able to calculate your grade in the class by referring to your grades in ELMS to-date.

Lab Exercises

- Five labs will be conducted during the course. Some will require you to complete a pre-lab activity. All require some kind of lab write-up. They are worth 20 points apiece.
- Lab write-ups are due at 5 p.m. TWO DAYS AFTER the day the lab is conducted unless otherwise specified.

Journal Reflections

- Journal prompts will be posted under 'REFLECT' in your unit modules. Multiple prompts may be available; only one journal reflection per module (1/week) must be submitted, so you can choose the one that most piques your interest
- Journals are due by Friday at 5 p.m.

- These journal entries will be an opportunity to reflect on connections between course materials, small group discussions, lecture material, and your own experiences and worldviews.
- Journal entries should be no fewer than 300 words. At the end of the class, you will have them all as a chronicle of how your ideas and understanding of the forensic science field have changed over the course of your time in 221.
- Each journal entry should end with one “keeper” and one “query” from the unit’s work to-date:
 - A “keeper” is a key idea that you will retain—something that you think is profound or significant that you will carry with you as you move through & beyond the course
 - A “query” is a question about the material. This can be something that you did not understand OR a thoughtful prompt for discussion.

Participation & Engagement

- A 5-point syllabus quiz must be completed by the second day of class
- You get 1 point per day for attending live sessions—repeated or excessive tardiness will result in reductions in your attendance points
- Your participation in group discussions/on discussion boards/during lab activities/in breakout rooms will be assessed on a 10 pt. scale weekly

Critical Analysis Assignment

- You will complete a small research project as a means of applying the critical thinking skills you learn in this course to a forensic case or technique.
- There will be two check-ins at the end of weeks 1 & 2 to ensure you are making progress and don’t need additional guidance. The final presentation can take any form you choose that can be uploaded digitally: mock newspaper article; powerpoint presentation; recorded video; fake Facebook profile; poster.

Assessments

- Weekly assessments worth 50 points will be administered each Friday
- Assessments are timed and administered in ELMS during regular class meeting times. Class notes and your textbook may be used, but all work must be the student’s own. See the Academic Integrity section below for further details.

Grading Structure

Assignment	Points
Lab Exercises (20 pts. x 5)	100
Journal Reflections (5 pts. x 3)	15
Participation / Engagement	50
Critical Analysis Assignment	20
Assessments (50 pts. X 3)	150
Total	335

Academic Integrity

The University's [Code of Academic Integrity](#) is designed to ensure that the principles of academic honesty and integrity are upheld. In accordance with this code, the Smith School does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this code and its implications because all acts of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this code. All students are expected to adhere to this Code. It is your responsibility to read it and know what it says, so you can start your professional life on the right path. **As future professionals, your commitment to high ethical standards and honesty begins with your time at UMD.**

It is important to note that course assistance websites, such as CourseHero, are not permitted sources, unless the instructor explicitly gives permission for you to use one of these sites. Material taken or copied from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might not be accurate and that shortcut the learning process, particularly the critical thinking steps necessary for college-level assignments.

Finally, on each exam or assignment you must write out and sign the following pledge:

"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."

Implicit in this pledge is the commitment to giving all short answer and essay answers in your own words (i.e. direct transcriptions from course materials will be taken as evidence of cheating). Please visit the [Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies](#) and follow up with me if you have questions.

Grades

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet and discuss.

Except in the case of extenuating circumstances, late work is accepted for partial credit on a sliding scale: 2 points off the first day, 3 points off the second, etc. Due to the condensed nature of the courses, work cannot be submitted for credit more than 5 days after the due date. Tech issues will no doubt arise, and I suggest you give yourself ample time to submit work before its deadline. The time to tell myself or a TA that you are having difficulty submitting an assignment is before or AT the time of submission—not after.

I am happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if I have made a mistake I will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within two days of receiving the grade.

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. To be fair to everyone I have to establish clear standards and apply them consistently, so please understand that being close to a cutoff is not the same as making the cut (89.94 \neq 90.00). It would be unethical to make exceptions for some and not others.

Final Grade Cutoffs

A = \geq 94.5%	B = 83-86.9%	C = 73-76.9%	D = 63-66.9%
A- = 90-94.4%	B- = 80-82.9%	C- = 70-72.9%	D- = 60-62.9%
B+ = 87-89.9%	C+ = 77-79.9%	D+ = 67-69.9%	F = < 60%

Course Outline

See ELMS for weekly modules containing all topics, assignments, labs, and due dates.

Resources & Accommodations

Accessibility and Disability Services

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The [Accessibility & Disability Service \(ADS\)](#) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that I have sufficient time to make arrangements.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at adsfrontdesk@umd.edu. Information about [sharing your accommodations with instructors](#), [note taking assistance](#) and more is available from the [Counseling Center](#).

Student Resources and Services

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit [UMD's Student Academic Support Services website](#) to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you.

In particular, everyone can use some help sharpen their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting [UMD's Writing Center](#) and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center.

You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need ([UMD's Student Resources and Services website](#) may help). If you feel it would be helpful to have someone to talk to, visit [UMD's Counseling Center](#) or [one of the many other mental health resources on campus](#).

Technology Policy

Please refrain from using cellphones and other electronic devices during class sessions unless we have designated such use as part of a class exercise. You learn better and I teach better when we're all fully present during course meetings. Repeated distraction on your phone during class meeting times (including small group work and lab activities) will result in a reduction of your participation grade.

Course Evaluation

Please submit a course evaluation through CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to CourseEvalUM is confidential. Campus will notify you when CourseEvalUM is open for you to complete your evaluations for summer courses. Please go directly to the [Course Eval UM website](#) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing through Testudo, the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

