

FRSC 604 – Crime Scene Processing and Impression Evidence

Fall 2025

SC 3323

Monday, 6:00pm – 8:40pm

Megan Descalzi

mdescalzi@towson.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Overview

This course is designed to teach students advanced methods of crime scene analysis. This will be accomplished by completing practical lab exercises throughout the semester on various crime scene techniques and aspects, which will include, but are not limited to, evidence packaging and handling, documentation of crime scenes, pattern evidence analysis and processing crime scenes with various types of evidence present. The interdisciplinary aspects of the forensic sciences are demonstrated through a variety of lecture topics as well as a guide to processing crime scenes.

Learning Outcomes

Among other things, by the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Thoroughly and accurately document a crime scene, including photography, sketching, note taking, and report writing
- Demonstrate an understanding of the duties of a Crime Scene Investigator
- Articulate the basic packaging techniques for different types of evidence
- Identify basic fingerprint patterns and the minutiae that constitute their individuality
- Evaluate items of evidence and select appropriate latent print processing techniques
- Correctly perform the selected latent print processing techniques on evidentiary items
- Properly collect impression evidence such as tool marks, tire marks, and footwear impressions

Special Considerations

You will be required to use chemicals and products that could potentially be harmful if not used with caution. You will be expected to observe Universal Precautions and wear Personal Protective Equipment when doing so. There is to be no eating or drinking in the laboratory and proper attire is mandatory.

Grading

Assignments	10%
Quizzes	15%
Presentation	15%
Mock Crime Scenes	20%
Mid-Term Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Graduate Grading Scale

93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
80-86	B
70-79	C
<70	F

Assignments

Assignments, both in class and on Blackboard, will be completed throughout the semester. The instructor will specify what is to be turned in and graded for each assignment. If you miss an in-class assignment for a valid reason, as determined by the instructor, a make-up date or assignment will be given.

Presentation

With instructor approval, students will choose a topic to present via PowerPoint. Additional materials may be used as determined by the student. The presentation will be at least 10 minutes in length, followed by a Q&A session. Students will be graded on comprehension of the topic, effectiveness of delivery, ability to answer probing questions, as well as the style and quality of the presentation. Further guidelines for the presentation will be posted on Blackboard. Questions from presentation material may be present on the Final Exam.

Mock Crime Scenes

There will be at least two mock crime scenes throughout the semester, which you will be responsible for processing. This includes all documentation (notes, photographs, and sketch), evidence collection/packaging, latent print processing, and report writing.

Final Exam

The final exam is comprehensive and will test your knowledge and understanding of all materials covered throughout the semester. This includes lecture materials, student presentations, reading assignments, and knowledge gained from practical exercises.

Attendance

Class attendance is not mandatory; however, you are responsible for obtaining all information that you miss. If it is determined by the instructor that an absence is not valid, you will receive a grade of zero for any assignments due that day.

Course Policies

You will work in a group/team environment. You must work together due to the limitations of materials and space. Students will work at varying paces, as individuals are not identical, and each has their own strengths and weaknesses. Please be aware and considerate to what your own are as well as what someone else's might be. This is a learning environment for everyone.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this will vary throughout the semester to maintain appropriate guidelines.

Cheating will not be tolerated. An act of cheating will result in the immediate failure of the work, notation of such action in the respective student's official college record and imposition of additional sanctions as deemed appropriate according to the rules of Towson University and the Chemistry Department.

Plagiarism is also unacceptable. If you use a source, you must cite it in the body of your text and on a reference page using a proper format (to include pages on which the quote was taken from).

Consider this class to be a workplace environment. Your professors and peers, many of whom are active in the field of forensic science, may be called upon for employment references in a formal or informal manner. You should conduct yourself accordingly.

Examination Make-Up Policy

If you are ill and cannot make an exam, no make-up will be given *without* a note from your doctor. Your make-up exam will be different from that administered to your classmates. Scheduled appointments, tests, or procedures do not exempt you from an exam. If other situations apply (i.e., mandatory participation in a university-sponsored event such as an athletic contest, religious observance, etc.), students must provide advanced written notification that they will be absent. Failure to provide notification will result in a grade of zero. If a student fails to appear for a scheduled make-up exam, it will result in a grade of zero.

Assignment Make-Up Policy

No assignments will be accepted late, unless agreed upon by the instructor prior to the due date. Failure to submit an assignment on the specified due date, at the specified time will result in a grade of zero. If you choose to submit your assignment to the department in anticipation of missing a class, the assignment *must be* dated, and time stamped by the department staff receiving it. Please inform the instructor if you submit an assignment via the Chemistry Office.

Cell Phones, Cameras, and Other Technology

Phones must be kept on vibrate or silent – if you are waiting for an important call, please notify me at the beginning of class. Cameras will be provided for use in class.

No photographs are allowed to be taken of lecture material, due to the presence of crime scene photographs. PowerPoints will be uploaded to Blackboard (without sensitive material) for your viewing.

Laptop Computers/Recording Devices

Laptops are permitted for use in class. Lectures may not be recorded in any form or using any type of media. Exceptions may apply for those with documented disabilities.

Communications

I will try to respond to all email communications within 24 hours. All e-mails will be sent to your Towson e-mail address, unless a different e-mail is requested to be used – If so, please let me know what your preferred e-mail address is.

Blackboard

Most course material is posted on the Blackboard site. You are responsible for checking the Blackboard site and your Towson e-mail account regularly for course announcements. I will send out e-mail updates regarding materials and other items uploaded to Blackboard. I will be updating your grades on Blackboard throughout the semester – if you notice a discrepancy between what I have posted and what you were given, please notify me ASAP and bring the assignment/exam in with you to the next class so it can be rectified.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any class. It includes, but is not limited to, any form of cheating or unapproved help on an exam or academic exercise, copying someone else's written work without citation, presenting fabricated information as legitimate, any unauthorized collaboration among students, or assisting someone to cheat in any way. All students have the ethical responsibility for doing their own work. A student who is uncertain about whether or not something constitutes academic dishonesty in a particular class has the obligation to see their instructor for clarification. Consistent with university policy, the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty in any form is determined by the individual faculty member in each class, and may consist of "a reduced grade (including "F" or zero) for the assignment; a reduced grade (including "F") for the entire course," or other options as stipulated in the TU Student Academic Integrity Policy. Students who are charged with academic dishonesty must remain enrolled in the course and cannot withdraw. Instructors who make the determination that academic dishonesty has occurred will notify the student in writing of the finding, the penalty, and the process for appeal. *Academic Dishonesty* undermines the legitimate efforts of students and involves serious repercussions. The faculty of the department urge all our students to act with integrity with regard to work submitted. *Failing to cite sources or cite them appropriately constitutes a violation.*

Emergency Statement

In the event of a University-wide emergency, course requirements deadlines and grading schemes are subject to changes that may include alternative delivery methods, alternative methods of interaction with the instructor, class materials, and/or classmates, a revised attendance policy, and a revised semester calendar and/or grading scheme. For general information about any emergency situation, please refer to www.towson.edu, call 410-704-2000, or utilize the TU Text Alert System: This is a service designed to alert the Towson University community via text messages to cell phones when situations arise on campus that affect the ability of the campus to function normally. Sign up: www.towson.edu/adminfinance/facilities/police/campusemergency/

Disability and Support Services

Students who have, or suspect that they might have, a disability should seek services through Disability Support Services. Students must be registered with DSS and receive written authorization to obtain disability-related accommodations. The office is located at 7720 York Road, 410-704-2638. Please note that if you take your exam at DSS, you will not have the opportunity to ask questions during the exam.

Inclement Weather/Canceled Classes

It is possible that classes could be canceled at the last minute due to bad weather, court obligations, illness, etc. If class is cancelled, homework assignments, quizzes, and exams will be proctored or scheduled for the next class meeting. In the event class is cancelled, notification will be posted on Blackboard and sent via e-mail.

Fall 2025 Schedule
*****SUBJECT TO CHANGE*****

8/25	NO CLASS
9/1	NO CLASS (Labor Day)
9/8	<p>Introductions Lecture: Intro to Crime Scene Investigation, Documentation, and Report Writing</p> <p><i>Blackboard Assignments: Complete Briefing Scenarios and Surveillance Footage Observations Assignment; Read A Simplified Guide to Crime Scene Photography</i></p>
9/15	<p>Lecture: Crime Scene Photography Practical: Interior Mock Crime Scene – Note taking and Basic Crime Scene Photography</p> <p><i>Blackboard Assignment: Complete Case Notes, Narrative and Photography Log from practical; Complete Photography Exercise – Suspect/Vehicle</i></p>
9/22	<p>Lecture and Practical: Crime Scene Sketching Case Study Topic Due</p> <p><i>Blackboard Assignment: Complete Rough Sketch from practical; Group Research Project</i></p>
9/29	<p>Lecture and Practical: Evidence Collection and Packaging Lecture: Biological and Trace Evidence Quiz #1</p> <p><i>Blackboard Assignment: Complete Evidence Log from practical; Start How Would You Process assignment (due in two weeks); Read A Simplified Guide to Fingerprint Analysis</i></p>
10/6	<p>Lecture and Practical: Latent Print Processing</p> <p><i>Blackboard assignment: Complete How Would You Process assignment; Complete latent lifts, processing log and inventory from practical</i></p>
10/13	Midterm Practical – Mock Crime Scene 1

10/20	MIDTERM Process Evidence from Midterm Practical
10/27	<u>Online Lecture</u> : Advanced Crime Scene Documentation Technology (Drones and 3D scanners) Technical/Administrative Review of Mock Crime Scene 1 Report
11/3	Lecture and Practical: Footwear, Tire marks and Tool marks Mock Crime Scene 1 Report Due
11/10	Lecture and Practical: Firearm Documentation Review Casework Photographs
11/17	Final Practical – Mock Crime Scene 2 Quiz#2
11/24	Lecture: Bloodstain Pattern Analysis Process Evidence from Final Practical
12/1	Case Study Presentations Technical/Administrative Review of Mock Crime Scene 2 Report
12/8	Ethical Decision Making as a Crime Scene Technician Case Study Presentations Mock Crime Scene 2 Report Due
12/15	FINAL