

**FIVS 481 Seminar**  
**One Credit Hour (1-0)**  
**One hour per week (day and time to be determined)**  
**Location: Heep Center-West Campus**  
**Instructor: Tomberlin, Jeffery K.**  
[jktomberlin@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:jktomberlin@ag.tamu.edu)  
**845-9718**  
**Office Hours: Tuesday (3:55-5:00)**  
**Room 421 Heep**

**\*\*\*\*\*Disclosure: This course will include presentations and discussions of sensitive materials related to forensic research and investigations.\*\*\*\*\***

**Teaching Assistant: None**

**Course Materials:** No book is required. Hand-outs and other materials will be accessed as appropriate and needed from the internet or other sources both by the student and the instructor. Student competency in computer word-sorting, communicating digitally and internet access/use is required.

**Prerequisites:** Completed lower division FIVL requirements and entry into upper level FIVS; U3, U4 Classification

**Attendance:** Mandatory

**Required Text:** None

**Handouts** will be used throughout course.

**Presentation of the Course:** This course is conducted in conjunction with the Forensic and Investigative Sciences Seminar Series. The invited speakers typically are leaders in the field and they present a synopsis of their work tailored to the forensic sciences community. Students will prepare for each seminar by reading materials (i.e. two referenced research articles on the targeted subject), attend and participate in all seminars, and meet to discuss the articles, seminars, and other relevant matters in class before and after the scheduled seminar.

Each student will provide the instructor a two page summary of the research articles assigned before the scheduled seminars. These summaries will be reviewed by the instructor and edited for grammar and content. The summaries will be returned to the student for additional evaluation. Additionally, students will be assigned to lead discussion of the research articles. This activity will also take place prior to the schedule seminar. During discussion, questions

regarding the quality of the research, its impact on the field, the need for such research, and how it meets the Daubert Standards as outlined by the U.S. Supreme Court. Students will complete all writing assignments independently of one another.

Five guest speakers will give a presentation on their respective forensic discipline. Speakers will be partitioned throughout the semester. Students will read scientific publications on the guest speakers' specialization and be expected to prepare a one page summary to be submitted to the professor for review. Additionally, students will participate in weekly discussions with the professor and the specialists in regards to each topic.

**Synopsis of Writing Activities:**

- There will be five summaries provided by each student.
- Each student will serve as discussion leader once

**Grading:**

- Writing products will be graded taking form and content into consideration.
- Assignments will be reduced 10 points for each day late in submission to the professor
- Spelling, grammar, and organization of information will be given equal weight with the substance presented in each assignment
  - Final writing products submitted from each student (80%)
  - Class participation (10%)
  - Ability to lead discussion (10%)
    - Discussion leader will be based on organization and coverage of material

**TOTAL=100%**

**Grading Scale:**

**Grading:** Five elements each valued at 20% of final grade.

Summary I	100 pts
Summary II	100 pts
Summary III	100 pts
Summary IV	100 pts
Summary V	100 pts
Class participation	50 pts
Leading Discussion	<u>50 pts</u>

Total Points 600

A=90-100%    B=80-89%    C=70-79    D=60-69%    F=<59%

Calendar/List of Assignments. The Forensic and Investigative Sciences Seminar Calendar is typically finalized approximately two months before the beginning of the semester and students should consult that Calendar to identify the subject matter to be reviewed and begin reviewing reading assignments. Materials for class review will be submitted by midnight Monday to allow

the instructor time to review assignments. Writing assignments will be electronically submitted in a recent version of Microsoft Word.

### **Learning Outcomes As Related to Topics Reviewed:**

- Students will be able to describe problem-solving principles and organize typical operational protocols.
- Students will be able to recognize the scientific basis and application of tools and techniques in forensic science and to compare capabilities and limitations.
- Students will be able to summarize and illustrate current scientific, ethical, and legal issues.

### **Instructor and Student Objectives:**

- **Instructor:** The instructor will work towards effective communication with students in regards to what is expected from them for the course. The instructor will also work to effectively communicate subject matter of course to students.
- **Student:** The students should be prepared to devote time outside of class towards reading assignments. Students are expected to exhibit respect in the classroom for other students and instructors. Interacting with students during lecture (i.e. talking, cell phones and other electronic devices) will not be permitted. Students do so could be asked to leave the class. Students are asked to meet with professor to discuss grades or other matters related to the course.

### **Conduct of Course:**

Leaving the room during lectures: In order to leave the class, students are required to ask for permission of the professor or student proctor. If this need is frequent, students are required to provide physician's statement to the professor.

### **Evaluation Procedure:**

*What students must know:* The student will be responsible for all of the assigned reading material addressed during a seminar. The student will also be responsible for any facts or information introduced during a seminar or by handout that the professor states as new material or material relevant to the course and which is not in the course reading assignment. The student will be expected to know basic sciences applied to seminar topics that the professor indicates as essential, and to explain and describe them under the forensic context. Retained knowledge of certain facts is fundamental to computer-assisted learning or other learning approaches and, most importantly, for correlating concepts in their practical use or for problem solving. The student will be expected to use the "language" and "dictionary" of the forensic sciences both **verbal** and **written** formats as defined by the textbook and in class lectures during their discussions in class, on exams and in problems sets.

"On my honor as an Aggie, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work." This means that each student's effort on a problem set will be individual, not a team effort with other members of the class, or based upon consultation with anyone outside of the professor in charge of the course, or someone whom the professor designates to give advice or assistance.

*Criteria for evaluating student writing.* Summarizing scientific writing is a rigorous process that pursues the efficient summary and presentation of novel information. Each student is expected as part of this course to participate in evaluating their own writing as well as that used in the actual publications that they review. Evaluations procedures require students to not only be able to write a summary but be able to critically review published scientific data. Furthermore, students will learn more about the scientific method because it will be critical that students recognize the hypothesis, experimental design, data analysis and interpretation of the data in these published papers.

**MAKE-UP OF GRADED MATERIALS WILL BE GIVEN WHEN VALID EXCUSE IS PROVIDED.** Make-up opportunities will consist of completing assigned work. Students will have two weeks from the date when materials should be submitted to the instructor to submit for grading. If student does not turn in material during that period, the student will receive a zero for that assignment. University accepted excuses are needed in order to take make-up exam. Professor discretion can be implemented in the case of non-University excuses.

The university views class attendance as an individual student responsibility ( <http://student-rules.tamu.edu> ) (*Please note the newly amended student rules will be on line August 15, 2006.*) Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments. Instructors are expected to give adequate notice of the dates on which major tests will be given and assignments will be due. This information should be provided on the course syllabus, which should be distributed at the first class meeting.

**7.1 The student is responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to the instructor to substantiate the reason for absence. Among the reasons absences are considered excused by the university are the following: to view Rule 7, please go to <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm>**

**For this class a Texas A&M University Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class form ( <http://attendance.tamu.edu> ) and a Confirmation of visit to a health care professional affirming date and time of visit will need to be obtained and presented to the Instructor.**

**Utilization of Health Center services does not indicate that a class excuse will be given.** Each patient is given a receipt upon payment for services; however, this is not a class excuse and is solely for insurance purposes should the student choose to file a claim. Students are encouraged to communicate with their instructors if they are going to miss class for any reason. A copy of *Student Rules* may be obtained from Student Activities in the Koldus Building or at the following website: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu>

**7.1.7 Required participation in military duties.**

**7.1.8 Mandatory admission interviews for professional or graduate school which cannot be rescheduled.**

**7.2 If the student is found to be too ill to attend class by a Health Center physician, the director of the Health Center or his/her representative will, on request of the student, confirm this fact.**

**7.3 If an off-campus physician provides evidence of a student's illness, the excuse documentation must contain the date and time of the illness and doctor's opinion that the student was too ill to attend class. If a physician determines that the student is not ill, he or she will not receive an excuse. If no evidence is available, the instructor will decide whether makeup work will be allowed.**

**7.4 The associate dean for undergraduate programs, or the dean's designee, of the student's college may provide a letter for the student to take to the instructor stating that the dean has verified the student's absence as excused.**

**7.5 If the student is seeking an excused absence, the student must notify the instructor as soon as possible after the absence, but no later than the end of the second working day after the last date of absence. If the absence occurs the same day as a scheduled exam or other graded procedure, the student must notify his/her instructor or department by the end of the next working day after the absence in order to ensure full rights. The student is responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to the instructor within one week of his or her absence return to substantiate the reason for absence. If the absence was excused, the instructor must either provide the student an opportunity to make up the exam or other work missed or provide a satisfactory alternative completed within 30 calendar days from the last date of absence.**

**7.6 The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence.**

**7.7 See Part III, Grievance Procedures: 49 <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/part3.htm> Unexcused Absences, for information on appealing an instructor's decision.**

**7.8 If the student is absent for excused reasons for an unreasonable amount of time during the semester, the academic dean of the student's college may consider giving the student a grade of W during the semester enrolled or a NG (no grade) following posting of final grades.**

**7.9 Whenever a student is absent for unknown reasons for an extended period of time, the instructor should initiate a check on the welfare of the student by reporting through the head of the student's major department to the dean of the student's college.**

## **XI. Academic Dishonesty:**

<http://student-rules.tamu.edu>

*From Texas A&M University Student Rules*

### **Scholastic Dishonesty**

**Students in MCB213:200 are expected to carry out course responsibilities in compliance with the Aggie Honor Code: "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do."**

**Honor Council Rules and Procedures on the Web at: <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>**

Misconduct in research or scholarship includes fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data.

Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, is sufficient grounds to initiate an academic dishonesty case.

Academic dishonesty includes the commission of any of the following acts. This listing is not, however, exclusive of any other acts that may reasonably be called academic dishonesty. Clarification is provided for each definition by listing some prohibited behaviors.

**1. Cheating**

Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise.

**2. Fabrication**

Making up data or results, and recording or reporting them; submitting fabricated documents.

**3. Falsification**

Manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.

**4. Multiple Submissions**

Submitting substantial portions of the same work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization from the instructor of the class for which the student submits the work.

**5. Plagiarism**

The appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

**General information pertaining to plagiarism:**

Style Guides:

Instructors are responsible for identifying any specific style/format requirement for the course. Examples include, but are not limited to, American Psychological Association (APA) style and Modern Languages Association (MLA) style.

#### Direct Quotation:

Every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and must be properly acknowledged in the text by citation or in a footnote or endnote.

#### Paraphrase:

Prompt acknowledgment is required when material from another source is paraphrased or summarized, in whole or in part, in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: "To paraphrase Locke's comment..." and then conclude with a footnote or endnote identifying the exact reference.

#### Borrowed facts:

Information gained in reading or research, which is not common knowledge, must be acknowledged.

#### Common Knowledge:

Common knowledge includes generally known facts such as the names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc., basic historical information (e.g., George Washington was the first President of the United States.) Common knowledge does not require citation.

#### Works Consulted:

Materials which add only to a general understanding of a subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography, and need not be footnoted or end-noted. Writers should be certain that they have not used specific information from a general source in preparing their work unless it has been appropriately cited. Writers should not include books, papers, or any other type of source in a bibliography, "works cited" list, or a "works consulted" list unless those materials were actually used in the research. The practice of citing unused works is sometimes referred to as "padding."

#### Footnotes, endnotes, and in-text citations:

One footnote, endnote, or in-text citation is usually enough to acknowledge indebtedness when a number of connected sentences are drawn from one source. When direct quotations are used, however, quotation marks must be inserted and acknowledgment made. Similarly, when a passage is paraphrased, acknowledgment is required.

#### Graphics, design products, and visual aids:

All graphics, design products, and visual aids from another creator used in academic assignments must reference the source of the material. General information pertaining to plagiarism:

### **6. Complicity**

Intentionally or knowingly helping, or attempting to help, another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

For additional information please see: <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/>

### **XII. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning

environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Support Services for Students with Disabilities in Room 118B in the Cane Hall. The phone number is (979) 845-1637 or visit their website at: <http://disability.tamu.edu>

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Week 1	Initial class meeting and provided first reading assignments
Week 2	Students turn in summary of first reading assignment and participate in discussion group
Week 3	Guest speaker and discussion with speaker
Week 4	Provided reading assignment
Week 5	Students turn in summary of first reading assignment and participate in discussion group
Week 6	Guest speaker and discussion with speaker
Week 7	Provided reading assignment
Week 8	Students turn in summary of first reading assignment and participate in discussion group
Week 9	Provided reading assignment
Week 10	Students turn in summary of first reading assignment and participate in discussion group
Week 11	Guest speaker and discussion with speaker
Week 12	Provided reading assignment
Week 13	Students turn in summary of first reading assignment and participate in discussion group
Week 14	Guest speaker and discussion with speaker