Syllabus for Forensic Laboratory Policies and Procedures (FSC 435)
The University of Southern Mississippi
School of Criminal Justice
Senior Capstone Course Fall 2017

Instructor: Max Bonner, Ph.D.
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Class time: Tuesday 6:30 to 9:15 pm.
Place: AKH 107
Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 8am-5pm at 2703 Oak Grove Road, or by appointment.
Credit hours: 3 hrs.

Course Description: Lecture and discussions covering aspects related to the policies and procedures of a forensic laboratory or agency that encompasses Quality Assurance, Quality Control, Laboratory Safety, Methods, Manuals and Ethics.

Capstone Prerequisite & Requirements:
• Must be in senior year to take the capstone course.
• Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and focus topics in writing assignments and present ideas in an organized, logical and coherent form.
• Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and focus topics in speaking assignments and present ideas in an organized, logical and coherent form.
• Students will demonstrate the ability to use Standard English grammar, punctuation, spelling and usage.

Course Objective: The course is designed to familiarize students with forensic science policies and procedures used to guide forensic scientists in the day-to-day operations of their profession. The course will also give students knowledge and practice in writing manuals used in laboratories for the purpose of ensuring a work product that is defensible in a judicial setting. The methods of research will aid students in the institution of new laboratory methods. Ethics will be a fundamental part of each assignment given its prevalence in society today and the consequences when one fails to follow basic ethics as a forensic scientist.

Learning Outcome: Upon completion of this course, students will understand the difference between Quality Assurance and Quality Control. They will know what each policy covers along with the aspect of their work product these policies control. Students will learn the components of a Standard Operations Manual and how to use the manual for performing forensic analyses. Students will also learn how to write each type of manual for any specific area of the laboratory that conforms to accreditation requirements.

Course Communication: Course communication will primarily be provided during class lecture. Students will be notified via email of any changes to the syllabus or class schedule. Notifications will be sent to each student’s USM email address.

Class Procedures and Policies: Each student is expected to attend all class lectures and participate in a professional manner. Failure to participate will result in a reduction of the 10% weight category. Each student is allowed to miss a maximum of one (1) class to receive 10% credit for attendance.
Missing two (2) classes will forfeit the credit. Subsequent absences will lead to a 10% reduction for each missed class from the final score.

**Required Text:** There is no required text for this course: lecture material will be given to the students as needed and uploaded to Blackboard or emailed to the student’s USM email account.

**Academic Calendar:** Refer to [https://www.usm.edu/registrar/calendars](https://www.usm.edu/registrar/calendars) for important deadline dates.

**Drop dates:**
1. Last day to drop and receive financial credit: August 23rd, 2017
2. Last day to drop without instructor permission: August 23rd, 2017.
3. Last day to withdraw from the University and receive a grade of “W” (after this date students will earn a letter grade): October 27th, 2017.

**Academic Integrity Statement:** All students at The University of Southern Mississippi are expected to demonstrate the highest levels of academic integrity in all that they do. Forms of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Cheating (including copying from others’ work)
- Plagiarism (representing another person’s words or ideas as your own; failure to properly cite the source of your information, argument, or concepts)
- Falsification of documents
- Disclosure of test or other assignment content to another student
- Submission of the same paper or other assignment to more than one class without the explicit approval of all faculty members’ involved
- Unauthorized academic collaboration with others
- Conspiracy to engage in academic misconduct

Engaging in any of these behaviors or supporting others who do so will result in academic penalties and/or other sanctions. If a faculty member determines that a student has violated our Academic Integrity Policy, sanctions ranging from resubmission of work to course failure may occur, including the possibility of receiving a grade of “XF” for the course, which will be on the student’s transcript with the notation “Failure due to academic misconduct.” For more details, please see the University’s Academic Integrity Policy: [https://www.usm.edu/institutional-policies/policy-acaf-pro-012](https://www.usm.edu/institutional-policies/policy-acaf-pro-012) Note that repeated acts of academic misconduct will lead to expulsion from the University.

**Academic Support Resources:** Please see the Student Success Website: [http://www.usm.edu/success](http://www.usm.edu/success) for information on where you can find tutoring and other academic assistance, as well as the location of key resources on campus.

If a student has a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies.

**Address:**
The University of Southern Mississippi
Office for Disability Accommodations
Grading Scale:
A= 90 - 100 %; B= 80 - 89 %; C= 70 – 79 %; D= 60 – 69 %; F= 59 and below

Percentage weight of each category towards final score:
• Exams (2 x 25%) 50%
• Writing assignments (2 x 10%) 20%
• Oral presentations (2 x 10%) 20%
• Class participation & Attendance 10%

A grade of ‘C’ or higher is necessary to successfully complete a capstone course.

Class Schedule:
• Topic for Writing/Presentation #1 – August 29th, 2017 [in class]
• Topic for Writing/Presentation #2 – September 26th, 2017 [hardcopy due in class]
• Exam #1 – October 3rd, 2017 @ 6:30 pm
• Writing and Presentation #1 – October 3rd, 2017 [due by 11pm]
• Presentation #2 – November 14th & 21st, 2017
• Exam #2 – November 28th, 2017 @ 6:30 pm
• Writing Assignment #2 – December 1st, 2017 [due by 5pm]

Class Policy for Writing and Presentation Assignments:
1. Under no circumstances will a student be granted course credit without successfully completing the two oral presentations.

2. Under no circumstances will a student be granted course credit without 1) successfully completing the writing requirements per assignment and 2) successfully completing the writing of at least 5000 words (i.e., Assignment #1 + Assignment #2 = 5000).

3. Failure to present during the random selection process of Presentation #2 will result in an incomplete. Therefore, course credit will not be granted.

4. See Class Schedule for required due dates, failure to meet deadlines will result in an initial 10% reduction per day per assignment.

Writing Assignment #1:
• Topic: Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of the student’s choice.
• Requirements: A general outline of a SOP will be provided in class. Each section of the outline should be addressed.
• Total word count for definition section cannot exceed 200.
Writing Assignment #2:
- Topic: Students will choose a field of forensic science and select a peer-reviewed article published within the last two years.
- Requirements: Introduction of topic and instrumentation used, review of methodology and findings of peer-reviewed article, and discuss policies and procedures (QA/QC, Safety & Ethics) that an agency would implement to conduct the research.

Presentation #1:
- Topic: Writing Assignment #1
- Length: 5-10 minutes. Presentation will be conducted at the library Speaking Center
- Late submission will result in 10% reduction per day of assignment grade.

Presentation #2:
- Topic: Writing Assignment #2
- Length: 10-15 minutes. Presentations will be conducted in class, and students will be randomly selected to determine the order of presentation.
- Note cards are not allowed in the final presentation.