



Sam Houston State University

A Member of The Texas State University System

COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

FORS 5118
Questioned Documents
Fall Semester 2017

Professor: Patrick Buzzini, PhD

Telephone: 936-294-3633

Class hours: Thursdays 1:00-1:50

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00 pm-2:00 pm

Office: 221G

e-mail: patrick.buzzini@shsu.edu

Classroom: CFS 104

Textbook

Seaman Kelly J, Lindblom B (eds.) Scientific Examination of Questioned Documents (2nd Ed). CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL (2006).

Course description

This course aims to educate you with the methodology of questioned document examinations. The most utilized techniques by questioned document examiners are discussed in this class. This course covers the study of handwriting and signatures, the problem of recognizing their possible non-genuineness, the detection of forgeries, and the analysis of inks and printed documents.

Course objectives

After successful completion of this course you will:

1. Successfully acquire theoretical knowledge about the techniques and approach used in questioned document examinations;
2. Clearly understand the methodology for the examination of handwriting and signatures;
3. Appreciate the difficulties related to the subjective decision making process for handwriting examination.
4. Be strongly familiarized with the techniques for ink analysis currently used in forensic laboratories.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Activity
1	Thu Aug 24	Syllabus review Introduction to Questioned Documents	Lecture
2	Thu Aug 31	Handwriting examination methodology	Lecture Reading assignments: Line quality (Osborn, 1910) and Ch. 8 (Purdy, 2006)
3	Thu Sep 7	Collection of handwriting exemplars	Exercise
4	Thu Sep 14	Handwriting examination methodology "York" group exercise	Lecture Exercise Ex1 – Handwriting Examination distr.
5	Thu Sep 21	ESDA	Lecture Demo Ex2 - ESDA distr.
6	Thu Sep 28	Written test 1	
7	Thu Oct 5	Signatures and forgeries	Ex2 - ESDA due
8	Thu Oct 12	Alterations of questioned documents	Lectures
9	Thu Oct 19	Visual Spectral Comparisons	Demo Ex3 - VSC distr.
10	Thu Oct 26	Ex1 – Handwriting Ex Oral Presentations	
11	Thu Nov 2	Ink type recognition Thin layer chromatography (TLC)	Lectures
12	Thu Nov 9	TLC	Demo Ex3 – VSC due Ex4 - TLC distr.
13	Thu Nov 16	Instrumental analysis methods	Lecture
14	Thu Nov 23	<i>Thanksgiving Recess</i>	
15	Thu Nov 30	Typewritten documents	Lecture Ex4 - TLC due
16	Thu Dec 7	Finals week – Final Written Examination	

L: lecture; E: exercise

Schedule may be subject to modification

Attendance policy

Attendance will be recorded in keeping with University policy. Students are expected to attend class. Class attendance requirements will be followed in accordance with Academic Policy Statement 800401. In accordance with university policy, students will not be penalized for absences of up to three hours as long as assigned work has not been missed. If a student is absent it is their responsibility to obtain the class material and remain current with information distributed during class. Occasionally changes in schedule may be announced in class. *These changes apply to all students, even those who were absent from class.* One letter grade may, at the discretion of the instructor, be deducted from students' final grade if they miss more than

four classes. There will be no distinctions between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Students are expected to be on time to class. After the beginning of the class, late students may be counted as absent.

Grading Policy

Final grades will be based upon the following scale: 90 plus average an “A”; 80 to 89 a “B”; 70 to 79 a “C”. Appeals will be handled in accordance with University Policy Statement 900823, Academic Grievance Procedures for Students.

Assessment

There are four exercise assignments. Exercise assignments 1 to 3 are made in groups of three or four. Exercise assignment 4 is individual. Exercise assignments are practical and these are:

	%	Due date
Ex1 – Handwriting Examination Exercise	20	Thu Oct 26 (Oral presentation)
Ex2 – Electrostatic Detection Apparatus (ESDA):	10	Thu Oct 5
Ex3 – Visual Spectral Comparisons (VSC)	10	Thu Nov 9
Ex4 – Thin layer chromatography (TLC)	20	Thu Nov 30

Assignments must be turned in to your instructor via email or in printed form by the end of business (5:00 pm) on the due date indicated above. Missing a deadline is awarded a grade of zero for that particular exercise.

There will be two written tests. The written tests are scheduled on **Thu September 28 during regular class time** (20% of the final grade) and on **Thu December 7** (20% of the final grade).

Make-up exams

There will be only one opportunity for make-up written exams. Such opportunity will be offered within a week of the date of the missed test. This opportunity will be given only in the event of a documented university-sponsored activity, or other unforeseen and unavoidable event. A written justification is required for such consideration. Missing this opportunity results in a grade of zero.

Student academic policies

Policies concerning Attendance, Academic Honesty, Disabled Student and Services for Disabled Students, and Absences on Religious Holy days may be found at: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/aps/aps-students.html>

Use of Cell & Smart Phones, PDA's & Similar Devices

Engaging in voice communication using a cell phone or similar communication device during class is prohibited. Leaving the classroom to receive a phone call is prohibited, except with prior approval of the instructor for urgent communications. Device sound alerts should be turned off during class. Engaging in text communication during class is discouraged, although non-disruptive occasional use is permitted. Persistent or extended texting is, however, not allowed. Per University policy communication using any electronic device during an in-class examination is prohibited.

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