

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**FORSS 6224 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ETHICS IN FORENSIC SCIENCE**  
**2 CREDIT HOURS**  
**SPRING 2018**



**Professor:** Dr. Sarah Kerrigan  
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**Class Hours:** Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:50 AM  
**Classroom:** CFS 104/231  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 10:00-12:00  
Available other times by appointment  
Email is the preferred method for making appointments  
**Textbook:** Ethics and the Practice of Forensic Science, Robin T Bowen (CRC Press, 2010)  
**Prerequisites:** Students must be enrolled in the Master of Science in Forensic Science.

### **Course Description**

This course will introduce students to the importance of adherence to ethics and quality assurance in forensic science. An overview of forensic laboratory accreditation will be provided with particular emphasis on ISO-based standards. Guidelines and recommendations by scientific working groups and organizations within each of the major disciplines will be discussed, as well as codes of conduct and principles of professional practice within forensic science. Are all expert witnesses and scientific evidence valid and reliable? What should be expected of expert witnesses? How do forensic scientists provide unbiased and impartial testimony while maintaining personal values and beliefs? This course will provide a practical approach to quality assurance, ethical conduct and forensic reform.

### **Course Objectives**

- 1) To understand the meaning and importance of quality assurance and ethical standards in forensic science
- 2) To examine the effects of various pressures on expert witnesses
- 3) To explore the reliability of scientific evidence and to what degree it is used in judicial decisions
- 4) To develop awareness of the need and importance of forensic laboratory accreditation standards
- 5) To understand the significance of quality assurance guidelines and laboratory accreditation standards within the various forensic disciplines

## Course Requirements: Examinations & Assignments

There will be one final examination on Tuesday May 8<sup>th</sup> 2018 at 10 AM (two-hours) in CFS 104 in accordance with university policy.

Students may be required to complete NIJ-sponsored online training on forensic science topics as part of this class. Assignments are turned in on the date set by the instructor and announced in class. All material in class, e.g. lectures, presentations, handouts, discussion material, exercises may be included on the exam. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain any material due to being absent.

Type	Weight
Assignments	30%
Class Presentations/Participation	30%
Final Examination	40%
Total	100%

## 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”. Students should refer to the Graduate Catalog to review Academic Expectations and Guidelines pertaining to the grades in graduate school. Students should not count on a curve of the final grade. The instructor reserves the right to modify the grading scheme to accommodate for a missed test or final examination in extenuating circumstances.

The instructor reserves the right to assign a final exam grade of 0% should she deem the absence was not properly handled or was unjustified. Appeals will be handled in accord with University Policy Statement 900823, Academic Grievance Procedures for Students.

## Attendance Policy

Class attendance requirements will be followed in accordance with Academic Policy Statement 800401.

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.

## Make-Up Exams

No make-ups will be given for the final exam unless arrangements have been made with the instructor prior to the exam date.

### Annotated Outline of Topics

Week #	Topic
1	Introduction
2	Forensic reform initiatives: NAS to NOW
3	Introductory ethics & ethical theory
4	Codes of ethics
5	Ethical issues in the courtroom
6	Bias in forensic science: context, confirmation, cognitive biases
7	Bias in forensic science: context, confirmation, cognitive biases
8	Overview of accreditation and quality assurance in the forensic laboratory & ISO-based standards
9	Overview of accreditation and quality assurance in the forensic laboratory & ISO-based standards
10	Measurement uncertainty and traceability; reporting; terminology
11	Corrective and preventive actions
12	Root cause analysis
13	Quality assurance issues in forensic biology
14	Quality assurance issues in physical and comparison-based disciplines
15	Quality assurance issues in forensic chemistry and toxicology

## **Student Academic Policies**

Student academic 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>

## **Class Rules**

Laptop computers or similar devices are not permitted in the classroom. Students are provided lecture notes and are expected to actively engage in classroom learning and discussion. Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and thus impedes the mission of the university.

## **Visitor Policy**

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student as evidenced by an official and current SHSU identification card, the instructor will decide whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

## **Course Materials**

Course materials may not be reproduced for purposes other than personal use by students registered for this course in the current semester.