

Criminal Investigations

Fall 2026 Syllabus

Course: CCJS 310 ESG1

Semester: Fall 2026

Time: Tuesday; 2:00 - 4:30pm

Location: Building III - 2203

INSTRUCTOR

Brandon Patrick

Adjunct Professor

Contact number: 443-553-5026; 240-762-0237

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Office hours: by appointment

COURSE PREREQUISITE

No prior knowledge of criminal investigations is required. This course is suitable for students interested in pursuing careers in law enforcement, forensic science, legal professions, or related fields.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a comprehensive overview of the principles, techniques, and methodologies utilized in criminal investigations. Students will explore the systematic processes involved in investigating crimes, including the initial response, evidence collection, and analysis, interviewing witnesses and suspects, and case preparation. Emphasis is placed on understanding the legal and ethical considerations, the role of forensic science, and the use of technology in modern investigations.

TEXTS – Reading Materials

The required textbook for this class is:

Criminal Investigations. Hess, K., Orthmann, C., Cho, H. 12th edition, copyright 2022, ISBN: 978-0-357-51167-1

COURSE CONTENT and OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, the student will be familiar with the following topics:

- Understand the fundamentals of criminal investigation and the role of law enforcement.
- Learn the procedures for securing and processing crime scenes.
- Develop skills in collecting, preserving, and analyzing physical and digital evidence.

- Explore techniques in interviewing and interrogating witnesses and suspects.
- Explore the use of forensic science in solving crimes.
- Examine legal and ethical issues in criminal investigations.
- Understand the preparation and presentation of cases for prosecution.

Topics covered in this course will include Crime Scene Management, Evidence Collection and Preservation, Interviewing and Interrogation Techniques, Forensic Science Applications, Digital Evidence and Cybercrime, Legal and Ethical Considerations, Case Management and Documentation, Courtroom Testimony and Case Presentation and Special Topics in Criminal Investigations (e.g., homicide, sexual assault, property crimes).

The course will be delivered through a combination of lectures, practical exercises, case studies, and guest speakers from the field of criminal justice. Students will participate in mock crime scene investigations, group discussions, and hands-on activities.

NOTICE: Throughout this class, audio-visual aids will be used. Some of this material will be graphic in nature, representing actual events.

AVERAGE AMOUNT OF INSTRUCTION AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING EXPECTED PER WEEK:

Over the 16-week semester, this 3-credit course will include 2.5 hours per week of direct instruction. In addition, students are expected to spend a minimum of 5 hours per week in independent learning.

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Integrity:

UMD maintains a commitment to the principles of truth and academic honesty. Accordingly, the Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principle of academic honesty is upheld. While all members of the University share this responsibility, the Code of Academic Integrity is designed so that special responsibility for upholding the principle of academic honesty lies with you as a student.

The University Policy on Academic Integrity can be found at:

<https://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

Code of Academic Integrity defines five major types of Academic Dishonesty:

- **CHEATING:** fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in any academic course or exercise in an attempt to gain an unfair advantage and/or using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic course or exercise.
- **FABRICATION:** unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic course or exercise.
- **FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code.
- **PLAGIARISM:** representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic course or exercise.
- **SELF-PLAGIARISM:** the reuse of substantial, identical, or nearly identical portions of one's own work in multiple courses without prior permission from the current instructor or from each of the instructors if the work is being submitted for multiple courses in the same semester.

The Office of Student Conduct will contact you if you have been reported for a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity. Your course instructor may or may not mention the report to you. The instructor may not grade or record the grade of an assignment that is related to the report. Information about the resolution options are outlined in the University of Maryland Code of Academic Integrity. Note that the normal sanction for a violation is the grade of 'XF' for the course.

As this is a course depicting and describing specific aspects of the Criminal Investigation process, we will be holding ourselves to not only the ethical guidelines of The University of Maryland, but also those of the International Association of Identification (IAI). These guidelines are as follows:

1. As an applicant/certified person of the International Association of Identification (IAI) and being actively engaged in the profession of scientific identification and investigation, I dedicate myself to the efficient and scientific administration thereof in the interest of justice and the betterment of the profession.
2. I will strive to cooperate with others in the profession, promote improvement through research, and disseminate such advancement in my effort to make more effective the analysis of the expert.
3. I will attempt to employ my technical knowledge factually, with zeal and determination, to protect the ethical standards of the profession of scientific identification and investigation.
4. I humbly accept my responsibility to public trust and see divine guidance that I may keep inviolate the profession of Scientific Identification and Investigation.

Attendance and Participation

Class starts on time with the taking of attendance. The expectation is that students attend ALL classes and be on time. Attendance will be taken for each class and will factor into your grade. Late work and make-up exams will only be permitted under extreme circumstances and after discussion with the instructor. It is the student's responsibility to make up the work and assignments missed. Participation in class discussions is encouraged and expected. You cannot participate if you are not here, and simply being here is not conducive to participating. There will be material covered in the lecture which is not presented in the text.

It is the student's responsibility to withdraw officially from any class which he/she ceases to attend. Failure to do so may result in the recording of an "F" grade.

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is conducive to learning, as directed by the instructor. Any student who negatively impacts the opportunity for other students to learn will receive a verbal warning. If the disruptive behavior continues, the student will be asked to leave or be removed from the classroom/laboratory. All cell phones and mobile devices must be placed on vibrate or silent mode and put away (out of view) at the commencement of class. "Texting" is not allowed during class. In case of an emergency requiring telephone contact, please excuse yourself from the room.

The classroom is a tobacco free environment. This includes smoking, chewing and snuff. This will be strictly enforced due to the need to maintain the classroom space in an acceptable condition for the next class. The instructor has the right to control what, if any, food/drink items may be brought into the classroom.

Grading Rubric:

YOUR final grade will be based on a weighted average for all grading components of the course. Evidence of academic dishonesty (i.e. cheating) will automatically result in zero points being awarded for the exam/activity. It is the student's responsibility to familiarize themselves with the University of Maryland Honor Code regarding academic dishonesty and the resulting consequences.

Missed examinations or assignments may not be rescheduled unless approved in advance by the instructor. Rescheduling examinations is unfair to other students. The student is responsible for reading the assigned textbook chapters. All assignments are due at the start of class.

Tests/Quizzes	80%
Attendance/Participation	20%
TOTAL	100%

The following grading scale will be used:

A	90 – 100
B	80 - 89
C	70 - 79
D	60 - 69
F	Below 60

COURSE OUTLINE/OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS: The course outline may be changed at any time at the discretion of the instructor.

Week 1 Aug 31 – Sept 6	Introductions Review of syllabus, Class/room Expectations Chapter 1 – Criminal Investigations – An Overview
Week 2 Sept 7 - 13	Chapter 2 – Documenting the Crime Scene Chapter 3 – Writing Effective Reports
Week 3 Sept 14 - 20	Chapter 4 - Searches
Week 4 Sept 21 - 27	Chapter 5 – Forensics and Physical Evidence
Week 5 Sept 28 – Oct 4	EXAM ONE
Week 6 Oct 5 – Oct 11	Chapter 6 – Obtaining Information and Intelligence Chapter 7 – Identifying and Arresting Suspects
Week 7 Oct 12 - 18	Fall Break – No scheduled class
Week 8 Oct 19 - 25	Chapter 8 – Death Investigations
Week 9 Oct 26 – Nov 1	Chapter 9 – Assault, Domestic Violence, Stalking and Elder Abuse Chapter 10 – Sex Offenses
Week 10 Nov 2 – Nov 8	Chapter 12 - Robbery
Week 11 Nov 9 – Nov 15	EXAM TWO
Week 12 Nov 16 - 22	Chapter 13 –Burglary Chapter 14 – Larceny/Theft
Week 13 Nov 23 - 29	Chapter 15 – Motor Vehicle Theft Chapter 16 – Arson, Bombs and Explosives
Week 14	Chapter 17 – Computer Crime and Digital Evidence

Nov 30 – Dec 6	
Week 15 Dec 7 – Dec 13	Chapter 21 – Preparing & Presenting Cases in Court
Week 16 Dec 14 – Dec 20	FINAL EXAM