

INTRODUCTION TO FORENSIC SCIENCE

Professor: Teri Dewitt

Hi everybody, I'd like to welcome you to Forensic Science. My name is Teri Dewitt and I'm going to be your instructor. Just a little bit about me-- I've been a crime scene investigator since 2002 here in Tampa, Florida. And my educational background, I actually have a bachelor's degree in anthropology and a master's in forensic science. However they are both from the University of Florida, so there may be a little bit of "Go Gators" as well as "Go Bulls" during this semester.

It's going to be a really good class. There's going to be a lot of great information coming to you and you're going to have the opportunity to learn a lot that you'll be able to use and apply to your own cases. So I'm really looking forward to getting started with you guys and we're going to have a good time and learn a lot.

Just to give you a little roadmap about what's going to go on during the class is in the very first part of the class it's going to be very general. It's going to be a little bit of theory about how the crime scene and the science on crime scenes is really what's going to translate into the forensic science that you'd see in the lab side. So what you're going to find is that here's the evidence that you've collected, or here's the evidence that you want to send off to the forensic scientists in the lab and how that's going to help you solve the most crimes possible.

Then later on in the semester we're going to get pretty specific. We're actually going to have some labs you're going to be able to do and some different activities that you actually going to be able to go hands on and see how the science works. That's going to make you all better investigators because you're going to be able to see this is how it works. This is how I can apply it's my cases, and this is, again, how you're going to be able to solve more crimes in the end.

Also as we go through the semester there's going to be a lot of the hands on activities. You're going to be able to share photographs of a shoe impression you took, or be able to exchange videos about processing different types of evidence. These are things that you're going to be able to share with the other students, not just share with me. It's not just here for me to grade you on how you did, but is here for you all as investigators and detectives and students to really learn from each other.

I'm going to learn from you as much as you're going to be able to learn from me, because as anyone in law enforcement will tell you, we learn from each other successes, we learn from each other's failures, we hear each other stories and then when we have similar cases we can say wow that's great, I remember this from this class or I remember hearing it from this student, I remember hearing it from this instructor. So we're going to have the opportunity to do that. When you have the forum posts and interact with each other that learning experience that's going to be all right back on you all to be able to have that great interaction and that great involvement with each other. And hopefully really be able to learn, and like I said, not just for me, but from each other.

So when we talk about some different aspects of forensic science-- just to kind of give you guys a little example. A couple of the specialties that I have in the unit that I work for is forensic entomology and forensic biology. So if you've ever heard the phrase in law enforcement, if it's wet, sticky and not yours, don't touch it. Doesn't really apply to me because I call that "Tuesday."

So these are the kind of things that hopefully I'll be able to share with you and we'll be able to share with each other some things you can learn, some stuff about these different specialties. If you have a specialty in the unit that you work for, tell us about it. Let's share that forensic knowledge. Let's really get to be better and it's going to be greater forensic science knowledge for all of us.

So I do look forward to working with you guys throughout the semester. If you have any questions or any problems, anything comes up-- my email and my phone number are both on the homepage of the class and on the syllabus. Just a little warning, I do work the midnight shift, so if you can't get a hold of me for a couple hours that's probably because I'm sleeping. So I hope that we have a good time during the class. I hope you learn a lot and I'm looking forward to learning from you guys as well.