

INSTRUCTOR

David O. Carter, PhD
Associate Professor of Forensic Sciences

Office: 5 Henry Hall
Mailbox: 115 Wesselkamper Science Center
Telephone: (808) 739 8352
Email: david.carter@chaminade.edu

Office Hours: Monday 2:30PM – 4:30PM, Wednesday
11:00AM – 12:30PM, or by appointment



COURSE DESCRIPTION

FS 700 Graduate Prospectus (1)

Introduction to graduate research in the forensic sciences to include project selection, experimental design, committee formation, and peer review. Development and defense of research proposal. *Prerequisite: Acceptance into MSFS Degree Program. Offered Fall only.*

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The ability to design and conduct an experiment is a valuable tool for every forensic scientist. This skill can help when interpreting physical evidence, developing new protocols, and troubleshooting existing forensic tools. As a graduate student your research project is the hallmark of your MSFS. Your project should reflect the area in which you are building a career and provide you with an opportunity to develop a set of valuable skills. This class is designed to guide you through the process of selecting a research topic, forming a research committee, and preparing a research proposal, and defending a research proposal. As a result each student will finish this class with the ability to:

- Review relevant literature to identify areas suitable for research,
- Communicate with experienced research scientists to form a research committee and acquire advice,
- Develop a written research proposal, and
- Defend a research proposal in a public forum.

REQUIRED TEXTS

None. All materials will be provided by the instructor. However, the following texts are recommended for all students:

Salkind NJ (2012) 100 Questions (and Answers) About Research Methods. Sage, Los Angeles, CA.

Walliman N (2011) Research Methods: The Basics. Routledge, New York, NY.

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Although the majority of your assignments will be graded, this class is offered on a Credit/No Credit basis. This evaluation will be based on three assignments:

1. Formation of a research committee,
2. Research proposal, and
3. Research defense

Formation of Research Committee

You are required to schedule a meeting with all five full-time resident faculty in the Forensic Sciences Unit. The purpose of these meetings is to identify the areas of research in which these faculty can provide advice and to form a research committee. Each MSFS student is required to have a research committee of at least three individuals who are responsible for mentoring and advising the project. One member of your research committee must be a full-time faculty member in the Forensic Sciences Unit. The other two members can include full or part-time faculty, forensic practitioners, and others with specialized knowledge. At least one member of the committee must be external to the Forensic Sciences Unit.

The purpose of your research committee is to guide you through the development and delivery of your research proposal and defense. *You are required to form your committee and complete the attached form by the end of the 5th week of classes.*

Research Proposal

Your research proposal must be submitted for committee review *by the end of the 12th week of classes.* Proposal guidelines are described at the end of this syllabus. The proposal will be graded using a rubric provided to you in class.

Proposal Defense

Your proposal defense must be scheduled and completed *by the end of Finals Week.* You will work with your committee to develop a defense that is appropriate to your research project. The defense will be graded using a rubric provided to you in class.

Assignment	Points	Due Date
Committee Formation	100 points	By end of 5 th week
Research Proposal	100 points	By end of 12 week
Proposal Defense	100 points	By end of Finals Week

REMINDERS OF IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES

The following policies are summarized from the Student Handbook. Please be sure that you have reviewed these and the other policies that your Handbook contains.

Attendance

You will be treated as a forensic science professional employed at a forensic science agency. This means that you are expected to attend and participate in every class period. Like a professional, you must contact the instructor if you know that you will miss a future class. Absences can be excused for medical treatment and legal issues. Some personal issues can be excused, but that decision is completely at the discretion of the instructor. Please contact the instructor as soon as possible if you have missed class and were unable to communicate before the absence.

Academic Dishonesty

All confirmed academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the class.

ADA ACCOMMODATIONS

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act (2008), Chaminade University of Honolulu offers accommodations for individuals with disabilities. If you would like to determine if you qualify for ADA accommodations, please contact the Counseling Center at (808) 735-4845. Once your documentation is submitted, the assessments will be reviewed and the student will be notified.

If one qualifies for ADA accommodations an ADA contract will be signed by the student. Please remember that once you have signed an ADA agreement, you need to contact the ADA coordinator each semester (including summer sessions) to identify which instructors you want notified of your accommodations. This is to ensure your privacy. Faculty will be informed of the accommodations you are to receive but not the nature of your disability.

From the time that appropriate documentation is received by the ADA Coordinator, please allow 2 to 3 weeks to process your paperwork. Processing time may vary pending the volume of requests received. You can find more information at

http://www.chaminade.edu/student_life/sss/counseling_services.php

RESEARCH PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

All thesis proposals should contain the following sections. Note that methodology components will vary depending on the method chosen. Students using multiple methods should incorporate all the necessary components to fully explain the methodology chosen.

- An **Introduction**, which introduces the topic and identifies the problem or issue to be addressed in the thesis. This should also introduce the theoretical framework or orientation of the thesis.
- A **Literature Review**, which examines the previous research that is directly relevant to the proposed study (NB the literature review in the final thesis will be more comprehensive than is necessary at the proposal stage).
- A section/paragraph that discusses the **Conceptual Approach**. For quantitative studies this outlines and explains the precise research questions and hypotheses and the ways in which they will be investigated. For qualitative studies this section addresses several issues. It elaborates research questions that will be answered; outlines theories relevant to the investigation; provides a rationale for why the specific group, location or event should be studied.
- A **Materials and Methods** section. The research method should be described in enough detail that the committee fully understands exactly what it is that student proposes to do in the research. This section should include a detailed discussion of each of the following components:
 - Description of materials
 - Independent and dependent variables
 - Description of instrumentation and/or methods
 - Proposed Statistical Analyses
- A **Conclusion** that discusses how the study will make a contribution to the forensic sciences.
- A **Timeline** that outlines the major milestones leading up to thesis defense and submission
- A **Budget** including a description and cost of necessary materials
 - Include all materials, even if they are already in your possession. Part of this section serves to provide you with experience with shopping for experimental science
- **References** should list the details for all works cited within the proposal. Reference and citation format must conform to the MSFS Guide for Authors, which is provided to you by the instructor.
- **Appendices**, if applicable, including:
 - Raw data
 - Copies of all necessary ethical paperwork, such as Institutional Review Board Approval.
 - Confirmation of access from agency or organization where data is being collected, if outside of Chaminade University of Honolulu.

The length of the thesis prospectus will vary based on a number of factors (most notably the type and complexity of the methodology). A long prospectus is not necessarily better than a shorter one. Proposals should not exceed 50 double-spaced pages in length.

THE PROPOSAL DEFENSE

The student must present the research method chosen to study the research question and the proposed system of data analysis. In the thesis proposal, the student must identify a specific method for studying the research question and demonstrate competence in that method. One or more members of the thesis committee must have expertise in the method/topic selected.

The proposal defense is an open examination, attended by the student, the committee chair, the committee members, and members of the public. Students should discuss the format of exam with their chair prior to the defense. The entire defense should take approximately one hour. The student should prepare a brief presentation of the proposed research (15-20 minutes) using PowerPoint or handouts.

Upon completion of the presentation and question period, the general public must leave the room while the committee members discuss the student's work with the student. After this time the student must leave the room while the committee members discuss the student's proposal. There must be a discussion about the overall research design and scope of the research. After this time the student comes back into the room and is informed of the defense result.

There are four possible results of the proposal defense:

1. Pass with no revisions,
2. Pass with minor revisions,
3. Pass with major revisions, or
4. Fail.

If a student receives a result of pass with minor revisions, then the student's committee chair must review the revisions and sign that the revisions are sufficient. If a student must make major revisions, all the committee members must review the revisions and agree that they are sufficient to pass the examination. Students who fail must make the suggested revisions and retake the oral defense.

Checklist for the Proposal Defense

- Written prospectus of no more than 50 pages (excluding Appendices)
- Raw data and supplementary documents, if necessary.
- Feedback from committee chair and all committee members
- Agency/organizational approval for data collection
- 4 weeks notice to the Examination Committee

Checklist after the Proposal Defense

- Make any required revisions to proposals, submit final proposal to your Research Committee Chair and the Director of Forensic Sciences.

