



Course Syllabus
Chaminade University Honolulu
3140 Waiialae Avenue - Honolulu, HI 96816
www.chaminade.edu

Course Number: FS 455
Course Title: Medicolegal Death Investigation
Department Name: Forensic Sciences
School Name: Natural Sciences and Mathematics
Term: Spring 2025
Course Credits: 3
Class Meeting Days: Monday, Wednesday, Friday
Class Meeting Hours: 1:30pm – 2:20pm
Class Location: 207 Henry Hall



Instructor Name: David O. Carter
Email: david.carter@chaminade.edu
Phone: (808) 739 – 8352
Office Location: 207A Eiben Hall

Office Hours

Meetings during Office Hours can be scheduled through my Google Calendar. My Office Hours are

Tuesdays 1:30p – 4:00p
Wednesdays 10:00a – 11:00a
Thursdays 9:30a – 10:30a

You can also schedule a meeting outside of Office Hours. To do so, send an email to david.carter@chaminade.edu. Provide the reason for the meeting and a list of multiple dates and times that you are available to meet.

University Course Catalog Description

FS 455 Medicolegal Death Investigation (3)

Covers the operations of medicolegal death investigation including field and morgue duties, relationships with law enforcement, hospitals, emergency services, and health systems. Students will be responsible for learning medical terminology, common medicines, medical procedures (particularly emergency medical intervention), decomposition, and the recognition and documentation of medical paraphernalia related to procedures. Also covered will be scene interview techniques, evidence recovery, photography, and postmortem fingerprinting. *Prerequisites: EN 102, COM 101, FS 233L or FS 333L.*

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) & Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

| | |
|---|--|
| Demonstrate reason and rationale for why medicolegal death investigations are conducted | PLO 2 – Use techniques for recognition, documentation, analysis, and interpretation of physical evidence |
| Use medical and anatomical terminology in written reports and oral communication | PLO 4 – Communicate disciplinary knowledge to diverse audiences |
| Understand how a basic death investigation is conducted | PLO 2 – Use techniques for recognition, documentation, analysis, and interpretation of physical evidence |

FS 455 Medicolegal Death Investigation is a three-credit hour course that requires a minimum of 135 hours of student engagement, per the official Credit Hour Policy. Students enrolled in FS 455 are expected to spend approximately 40 hours in class, 8 hours studying for each exam, 8 hours preparing for the practical exercises, and 5 hours completing a death scene report. There will be an additional 66 hours of work required beyond what is listed here (course readings, homework assignments, glossary review), averaging 4.7 hours per week.

Photography & Confidentiality

As a student in this class you will have the privilege of viewing photographs of decedents, death scenes, etc. None of the photographs used in this course are for distribution or use outside the course. Any sharing, viewing, downloading, distribution, posting, etc. of these highly confidential images will result in a grade of F for the course.

Required Learning Materials

This class requires the use of several learning materials, both electronic and physical. This class will be managed electronically through Canvas and Google.

Textbook

Clark SC, Ernst MF, Haglund W, Jentzen J (1996) Medicolegal Death Investigator: A Systematic Training Program for the Professional Death Investigator. Occupational Research and Assessment, Inc. Big Rapids, MI, USA.

Canvas

Canvas will serve as the primary repository for university documents and your grade, which will be updated each week.

Google Drive

You will receive a link to a shared Google Drive. This drive will be used to house larger files including publications, presentation files, images, and other files related to the class.

Optional Texts

Dimaio V, DiMaio D (2001) Forensic Pathology. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, USA
Eliopoulos LN (2007) Death Investigator's Handbook. Vol 3. Paladin Press.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

| Week | Date | Description | Reading Sections | Notes |
|-------------|---------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | 6 Jan | Introduction + Syllabus Review | 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 37 | |
| 2 | 13 Jan | Communication | 10 – 12, 15 – 19 | <i>Class Cancelled [17 Jan]</i> |
| 3 | 20 Jan | Interactions with Families | 9, 20 – 26 | MLK Day |
| 4 | 27 Jan | Carcass Decomposition Study | | Dress for outside |
| 5 | 3 Feb | Carcass Decomposition Study | | Dress for outside |
| 6 | 10 Feb | Taking the “First Call” | 3, 4, 6 | <i>Class Cancelled [10 Feb]</i> |
| 7 | 17 Feb | Classes Cancelled | | AAFS – Baltimore, MD |
| 8 | 24 Feb | Responding to the Scene | 27 – 30 | |
| 9 | 3 Mar | Responding to the Scene | 27 – 30 | |
| 10 | 10 Mar | Scene Documentation | 31, 33, 38 | Exam 1 |
| 11 | 17 Mar | Classes Cancelled | | Spring Break |
| 12 | 24 Mar | Scientific Knowledge | 32, 35 – 37, 48 – 50 | <i>Prince Kuhio Day [26 Mar]</i> |
| 13 | 31 Mar | Scientific Knowledge | 32, 35 – 37, 48 – 50 | |
| 14 | 7 Apr | Evidence & Property | 39 – 41 | |
| 15 | 14 Apr | Finishing an Investigation | 13, 14, 34, 37 | Exam 2 <i>Good Friday [18 Apr]</i> |
| 16 | 21 Apr | Finals Preparation – Jurisdiction | | |
| 17 | 30 Apr | 11:00am – 1:00pm Hawaii Time Would You Assume Jurisdiction? | | Finals Week |

EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

All grades will be posted in Canvas within one week of assignment/exam submission. Attendance grades will be posted to Canvas on a weekly basis. Your grade will be kept current all semester. You are encouraged to contact me at david.carter@chaminade.edu at any time to discuss your grades. I strongly encourage you to check your grades regularly.

Attendance

On time and prepared attendance is expected as a professional forensic scientist and it is expected here. You are expected to be in your seat by 1:30pm. A total of 74 attendance points are possible – two points per class period. Tardy attendance will be documented and every two tardies will subtract two attendance points. Tardiness also includes leaving class while it is in session. Leaving class to address an emergency is always acceptable but, in those cases, you are expected to schedule a meeting with me to discuss the scenario and why it should be excused.

Quizzes

You will take 8 quizzes in Canvas this semester. Quizzes will be taken during a scheduled class period.

Exams

Each student will complete 2 exams in Canvas. Exams will be taken during a scheduled class period.

Would You Assume Jurisdiction?

This is essentially a 20-question quiz with two answer options: Yes and No. You will be given 20 scenarios and you need to decide if that scenario merits a medicolegal death investigation. This will serve as your final exam and will be completed over Canvas during the scheduled Final Exam time (see Calendar)

Distribution of Points

| Assignment | Points |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Attendance | 74 points – 2 points per class |
| Quizzes | 80 points |
| Exams | 100 points – 50 points per exam |
| Would You Assume Jurisdiction? | 20 points |
| | 274 Total Points |

| Points | % | Letter Grade |
|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| 274 – 246 | 100 – 90 | A |
| 245 – 219 | 89 – 80 | B |
| 218 – 191 | 79 – 70 | C |
| 190 – 164 | 69 – 60 | D |
| 163 – 0 | 59 – 0 | F |

Letter Grade Scale

| | |
|------------|--|
| 100% - 90% | A – Outstanding scholarship and an unusual degree of intellectual initiative |
| 89% - 80% | B – Superior work done in a consistent and intellectual manner |
| 79% - 70% | C – Average grade indicating a competent grasp of subject matter |
| 69% - 60% | D – Inferior work of the lowest passing grade, not satisfactory for fulfillment of prerequisite course work |
| ≤ 59% | F – Failed to grasp the minimum subject matter; no credit earned. |

Late Work Policy

Requests for extensions due to extenuating circumstances (documented medical problems, for example) will be considered but in general work received after the deadline will be graded with a penalty of 10 points per day late.

Instructor and Student Communication

Questions for this course can be emailed to the instructor at david.carter@chaminade.edu. Online, in-person and phone conferences can also be arranged.

Forensic Sciences Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon completion of the degree program in Forensic Sciences, students will be able to:

1. Apply the scientific method in an adaptive and mindful manner
2. Use techniques for recognition, documentation, analysis, and interpretation of physical evidence
3. Implement quality assurance programs, incorporating ethics and professional practice, to act as stewards of justice and peace throughout the broader community
4. Communicate disciplinary knowledge to diverse audiences

Marianist Characteristics & Native Hawaiian Values

Education is an integral value in both Marianist and Native Hawaiian culture and this class represents one component of your education at Chaminade University of Honolulu. Both recognize the transformative effect of a well-rounded, value-centered education on society, particularly in seeking justice for the marginalized, the forgotten, and the oppressed, always with an eye toward God (Ke Akua). This is reflected in the ‘Olelo No’eau (Hawaiian proverbs) and Marianist core beliefs:

1. Educate for Formation in Faith (Mana) E ola au i ke akua (‘Olelo No’eau 364) May I live by God
2. Provide an Integral, Quality Education (Na’auao) Lawe i ka ma’alea a kū’ono’ono (‘Olelo No’eau 1957) Acquire skill and make it deep
3. Educate in Family Spirit (‘Ohana) ‘Ike aku, ‘ike mai, kōkua aku kōkua mai; pela iho la ka nohana ‘ohana (‘Olelo No’eau 1200) Recognize others, be recognized, help others, be helped; such is a family relationship
4. Educate for Service, Justice and Peace (Aloha) Ka lama kū o ka no’eau (‘Olelo No’eau 1430) Education is the standing torch of wisdom
5. Educate for Adaptation and Change (Aina) ‘A’ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho’okahi (‘Olelo No’eau 203) All knowledge is not taught in the same school

This class will focus on an education in the forensic sciences as an education in service, justice, and peace. This characteristic will be obvious to you very early in the class when we discuss all of the challenges associated with the investigation of death. You will learn that most forensic scientists are public servants that conduct science for the benefit of society. Death Investigators respond to death scenes, gather information, guide the community in their grief, and recover evidence so that justice can be served and peaceful society can flourish.

University Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend regularly all courses for which they are registered. Students should notify their instructors when illness or other extenuating circumstances prevents them from attending class and make arrangements to complete missed assignments. Notification may be done by emailing the instructor's Chaminade email address, calling the instructor's campus extension, or by leaving a message with the instructor's main office. It is the instructor's prerogative to modify deadlines of course requirements accordingly. Any student who stops attending a course without officially withdrawing may receive a failing grade. Unexcused absences equivalent to more than a week of classes may lead to a grade reduction for the course. **Unexcused absences may include (but are not limited to): work issues, travel, or illness without a doctor's note.** Any unexcused absence of two consecutive weeks or more may result in being withdrawn from the course by the instructor, although the instructor is not required to withdraw students in that scenario. Repeated absences put students at risk of failing grades.

Students with disabilities who have obtained accommodations from the Chaminade University of Honolulu ADA Coordinator may be considered for an exception when the accommodation does not materially alter the attainment of the learning outcomes. Federal regulations require continued attendance for continuing payment of financial aid. When illness or personal reasons necessitate continued absence, the student should communicate first with the instructor to review the options. Anyone who stops attending a course without official withdrawal may receive a failing grade or be withdrawn by the instructor at the instructor's discretion.

Academic Conduct Policy

Any community must have a set of rules and standards of conduct by which it operates. At Chaminade, these standards are outlined so as to reflect both the Catholic, Marianist values of the institution and to honor and respect students as responsible adults. All alleged violations of the community standards are handled through an established student conduct process, outlined in the Student Handbook, and operated within the guidelines set to honor both students' rights and campus values.

Students should conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the ideals of the University. This includes knowing and respecting the intent of rules, regulations, and/or policies presented in the Student Handbook, and realizing that students are subject to the University's jurisdiction from the time of their admission until their enrollment has been formally terminated. Please refer to the Student Handbook for more details. A copy of the Student Handbook is available on the Chaminade website.

Tutoring and Writing Services

Chaminade is proud to offer free, one-on-one tutoring and writing assistance to all students. Tutoring and writing help is available on campus at Kōkua `Ike: Center for Student Learning in a variety of subjects (including, but are not limited to: biology, chemistry, math, nursing, English, etc.) from trained Peer and Professional Tutors. Please check Kōkua `Ike's website (<https://chaminade.edu/advising/kokua-ike/>) for the latest times, list of drop-in hours, and information on scheduling an appointment. Free online tutoring is also available via Smarthinking. Smarthinking can be

accessed 24/7 from your Canvas account. Simply click Account – Notifications – Smarthinking. For more information, please contact Kōkua `Ike at tutoring@chaminade.edu or 808-739-8305.

Mobile Devices

Out of consideration for your classmates, please set your cell phone to silent mode during class. Students are encouraged to bring laptops or tablets to class as the instructor will assign online activities and readings that will require the use of a laptop or tablet. Laptops and tablets should not be misused, such as checking distracting websites. Use your best judgment and respect your classmates and instructor.

Disability Access

Chaminade University of Honolulu is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Any student who believes that they may need accommodations must first register with the Counseling Center. Registration with the Counseling Center begins the process of determining whether the student meets the requirements for a documented disability in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), even if accommodations may not be needed for this particular class. The contact information for the Counseling Center is (808) 735-4845, 739-4603, or by email at counselingcenter@chaminade.edu. It is important for students to contact the Counseling Center as soon as possible so that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion and to allow your instructor(s) to plan accordingly. Students will be required to provide written documentation to the Counseling Center in order for a determination to be made as to whether the requirements for a documented disability under the ADA are met.

Failure to provide written documentation through the Counseling Center will prevent your instructor from making the necessary accommodations, instructors cannot provide accommodations unless they have been prescribed by the Counseling Center. Once you have received an official notice of accommodations from the Counseling Center, it is also very important to discuss these accommodations directly with your instructor so that they can better support your needs. If you have specific questions regarding your individualized accommodations, you may speak directly with your instructor and/or you may contact the Counseling Center.

Title IX Compliance

Chaminade University of Honolulu recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. Sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse will NOT be tolerated at CUH. If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse, we encourage you to report this matter promptly. As a faculty member, I am interested in promoting a safe and healthy environment, and should I learn of any sexual misconduct, physical and/or psychological abuse, I must report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources by visiting Campus Ministry, the Dean of Students Office, the Counseling Center, or the Office for Compliance and Personnel Services.

Technical Assistance for Canvas Users

- Get started and find help on specific topics at the [Canvas Community](#)
- Contact the Chaminade IT Helpdesk for technical issues: helpdesk@chaminade.edu, or call (808) 735-4855

Credit Hour Policy

The unit of semester credit is defined as university-level credit that is awarded for the completion of coursework. One credit hour reflects the amount of work represented in the intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement for those learning outcomes. Each credit hour earned at

Chaminade University should result in 45 hours of engagement. This equates to one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester, 10-week term, or equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time. Direct instructor engagement and out-of-class work result in total student engagement time of 45 hours for one credit.

The minimum 45 hours of engagement per credit hour can be satisfied in fully online, internship, or other specialized courses through several means, including (a) regular online instruction or interaction with the faculty member and fellow students and (b) academic engagement through extensive reading, research, online discussion, online quizzes or exams; instruction, collaborative group work, internships, laboratory work, practica, studio work, and preparation of papers, presentations, or other forms of assessment. This policy is in accordance with federal regulations and regional accrediting agencies.

The instructor may modify elements of this syllabus according to the operational needs of the class.