Forensics in the Media

ANT3015 / Fall 2016
Dr. Kristina Killgrove
Forensics in the Media
ANT 3015

Dr. Kristina Killgrove
killgrove@uwf.edu
Office: 13-305
Office Hours: W 1-4
Phone: 474-3287

Course Description
This course provides students with relevant learning experiences focusing on the standard methods and techniques of forensic science and how it is inaccurately portrayed in popular media. Weekly assignments will help dispel myths about forensics in popular media, and students will learn primarily about the multidisciplinary science behind forensic anthropology and secondarily about other forensic science fields.

Learning Objectives
By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Understand the basics of forensic analysis and how it is used and misused in the media.
- Describe the techniques employed by forensic scientists.
- Explain the ethical issues with the way forensic techniques are portrayed in diverse media.
- Apply their understanding of forensics to critique media portrayals of the subject using discipline-appropriate writing and communication skills.
- Evaluate and compare the veracity of forensic science presented in works of non-fiction and fiction.
Required Texts

Katherine Ramsland, *The Forensic Science of C.S.I.*

Kathy Reichs, *Bare Bones*

Additional articles and book chapters noted on the Course Outline and Bibliography. All available on eLearning.

Recommended Texts

Steven Byers, *Introduction to Forensic Anthropology*, 4th edition

Assignments and Grading

**Exams** - Midterm (80 points); Final (80 points)

**Quizzes** - 50 short quizzes (150 points)

**Discussion** - 12 weeks (120 points)

**Final Paper** - Media critique essay (70 points)

**TOTAL** - 500 points

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100-93</th>
<th>92-90</th>
<th>89-87</th>
<th>86-83</th>
<th>82-80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79-77</td>
<td>76-73</td>
<td>72-70</td>
<td>69-67</td>
<td>66-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extra Credit

While there are no specific extra credit assignments for this course, there will be bonus points available on both exams. In addition, I will take the 50 (out of 67) highest quizzes and the 12 (out of 14) highest weekly discussion grades.
Schedule

Course context will be posted by Monday of each week. You are expected to contribute your first post to the Discussion for that week by Thursday, then your subsequent post(s) by Sunday. Quizzes are due Sunday by midnight.

Late Work

Late work will be accepted for one week past the course deadline for three-quarters credit, and two weeks past the deadline for half credit. No credit will be given for work later than two weeks. No late exams are allowed. Contact Dr. Killgrove if you have an emergency that will delay your taking either of the exams.

Communication

As with any electronic communication in the business world, email sent to Dr. Killgrove should include a salutation, concise question or issue, and a farewell. Before sending an email to your instructor, please ensure that your question cannot be answered by reviewing this syllabus; any email that can be answered with the syllabus may not garner a response.

You are responsible for calculating your current overall grade based on the grades on your assignments. Due to issues with FERPA, any requests for grade clarification should be made in person during office hours or by phone.

Collaboration

You may discuss course content openly with your classmates and share ideas in the Discussion section. All assignments that need to be turned in, however, should be your own work. Exams are open-book, timed, and non-collaborative. Be sure you understand the academic community’s rules on collaboration and appropriate use of others’ words and ideas before you start any assignment. Simply ask your instructor or TA if you have any questions.

Behavior

This class will sometimes cover controversial topics such as gender, ethnicity, and race. All efforts will be made to present information in a social scientific manner as well as to encourage productive dialogue and discussion. However, I do expect that all students will treat each other and me with respect at all times.

No opinions or speech that discriminate against or are derogatory towards others on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or disability will be tolerated. Students who express such opinions will be asked to leave the classroom.

SDRC

The Student Disability Resource Center supports an inclusive learning environment for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that hinder your participation, please notify the instructor and the SDRC as soon as possible at sdrc@uwf.edu. Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the individual.
**Academic Dishonesty**

The Student Handbook sets forth the rules, regulations, and expected behavior of students enrolled at UWF. It is the student’s responsibility to read the Student Handbook and comply with these expectations. The Academic Misconduct Code defines various forms of academic misconduct. These will not be tolerated in this class and will result in action being taken by the instructor.

Any form of plagiarism in this course will result in, at a minimum, an automatic zero for the assignment. Additional sanctions may be levied as outlined in the Student Handbook.

If you have questions about how the UWF Student Code of Conduct applies to this course or to an individual assignment, consult Dr. Killgrove before the assignment is due.

**Amendment of Syllabus**

This syllabus may need to be amended during the semester due to scheduling or other reasons (e.g., weather-related closing of the university). In the event of a minor change, I will email all students. In the event of a major change, I will amend the syllabus, email it to all students, and post it on eLearning.

**Image Credits**


p. 2 - Fingerprint, pixabay, CC0.

p. 5 - West Midlands Police Forensic Scene Investigators Lab, Flickr, CC-BY SA 2.0.

p. 8 - Nuclear forensics in action, Flickr, Dean Calma/IAEA, CC-BY SA 2.0.
Course Outline

Week 1 (8/22-8/28) - Introduction

- Lectures (3): Intro to Instructor and TA / Intro to Class / What is the CSI Effect?
- Reading (3): Syllabus / Houck 2006 / Rath 2011 (read or listen)
- Assignments (3): Syllabus Quiz / Reading Quiz / Meet Your Classmates Discussion

Week 2 (8/29-9/4) - What Is Forensics?

- Lectures (4): History of Forensics / From Criminal Justice to Anthropology / Scene of the Crime and Finding Bodies / Crime Scene Analysis
- Reading (2): Ramsland Ch. 1 - Scene of the Crime / Byers Ch. 4 - Recovery Scene Methods
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes / CSI Effect Discussion

Week 3 (9/5-9/11) - Forensic Science Techniques I - Anthropology

- Lectures (4): Basic Osteology / Trauma Analysis / Cause of Death / Time Since Death
- Reading (4): Ramsland Ch. 2 - Handling Bodies / Byers Ch. 5 - Estimating Time Since Death / White & Folkens Ch. 4 - Bone Biology and Variation, Ch. 5 - Postmortem Skeletal Modification. For reference: White & Folkens Ch. 6 - Anatomical Terminology.
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes / Forensic Anthropology Discussion

Week 4 (9/12-18) - Forensics on TV I - Bones

- Lectures (4): Intro to Bones / Positive ID / Brennan, Booth & the Squints / Common Problems with the Show
- Reading (4): Ramsland Ch. 3 - ID Unknown, Ch. 6 - Science vs. Intuition / Byers Ch. 18 - ID Using Antemortem Records / Killgrove 2015
- Assignments (6): Reading/Lecture quizzes / Watch Episode / Bones Discussion

Week 5 (9/19-9/25) - Forensic Science Techniques II - DNA, Fingerprints, and Bite Mark Analysis

- Lectures (3): DNA in Forensics / Fingerprints and ID / Bite Mark Analysis and Drawbacks
- Reading (5): Ramsland Ch. 4 - Traces, Ch. 5 - We Have a Match / Saks & Koehler 2005 / Jones 2012 / Balko 2015 (Parts 1-4)
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes, Discussion of Techniques

Week 6 (9/26-10/2) - Forensics on TV II - CSI

- Lectures (3): Intro to CSI / Roles of Characters / Forensics & the Police
- Reading (2): Green 2015 / Forensic Outreach 1 and 2
- Assignments (6): Reading/Lecture quizzes / Watch Episode / CSI Discussion

Week 7 (10/3-9) - Forensic Science Techniques III - Blood Spatter, Ballistics, Toxicology, Entomology, Psychology

- Lectures (5): Blood Spatter / Ballistics / Toxicology / Entomology / Psychology & Profiling
- Reading (4): Ramsland Ch. 7 - Elements of Reconstruction, Ch. 8 - Criminal Logic, Ch. 9 - Varieties of Deception / Bucholtz & Davis 2011
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes / Techniques Discussion

Week 8 (10/10-16) - Forensics on TV III - Criminal Minds and Dexter

- Lectures (4): Intro to Criminal Minds / Intro to Dexter / Roles of the Characters / The Monster Within
- Reading (2): Ramsland 2010 - Intro to the Forensic Psychology of Criminal Minds; Mullins 2010 - The Scientist and the Serial Killer.
- Assignments (6): Reading/Lecture quizzes / Watch Episodes / Show Discussion
Week 9 (10/17-23) - Midterm
- Multiple Choice and Short Answer Essays
- Open all week and due by midnight, 10/23

Week 10 (10/24-10/30) - Forensics of Compromised Scenes
- Lectures (4): Burning / Animal Activity / Bone Modification by Humans / Extraneous Bones
- Reading (3): Ramsland Ch. 10 - Forensic Puzzles, Ch. 11 - Evidence Response / Byers Ch. 16 - Postmortem Changes to Bone / Review White Ch. 5
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes, Compromised Scenes Discussion

Week 11 (10/31-11/6) - Forensic Scientists on the Stand
- Lectures (4): Admissible Evidence / Presenting Evidence / Jury Reactions / Forensic Files
- Reading (3): White & Folkens Ch. 3 - Ethics in Osteology / Byers Ch. 19 - Conclusion / Schweitzer & Saks (2007)
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes, Forensics in the Courtroom Discussion

Week 12 (11/7-11/13) - Skeletons in the Media I - Nonfiction
- Lectures (4): Human Skeletons in Documentaries / Human Skeletons in the News and Blogs / Forensic Cases Close to Home / Body Farms
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes / Nonfiction Bodies Discussion

Week 13 (11/14-20) - Skeletons in the Media II - Fiction
- Lectures (1): Novelizing Forensics
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes, Bare Bones Discussion

Week 14 (11/21-27) - Skeletons in the Media III - Ethics & Activism
- Lectures (4): Collecting Skeletons / The Red Market / Necromancy and Necrophilia / Diggers and Ethics
- Reading (3): Huffer & Chappell (2014) / Thomas (2000) Ch. 6 - The Great American Skull Wars, Ch. 21 - Legislating the Skull Wars
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes / Ethical Uses of Human Skeletons Discussion

Week 15 (11/28-12/4) - Final Discussion
- Lectures (1): Course Wrap-up
- Reading (all): Review for final
- Assignments (5): Reading/Lecture quizzes (cumulative) / Wrap-up Discussion

Week 16 (12/5-11) - Exam Week
- Final Exam (cumulative, multiple choice and short answers) - Open starting 12/4 and due by midnight, 12/7.
- Media Critique Piece — Short essay due by midnight 12/10.
Bibliography


Forensic Outreach. 2016. 6 Reasons why TV crime shows are patently absurd. 4 more reasons why TV crime shows are patently absurd. ForensicOutreach.com.

Green, P. 2015. 10 Things CSI shows get wrong (according to a real CSI tech). Listverse.


