

**McLennan**  
C O M M U N I T Y  
**C O L L E G E**

WACO, TEXAS

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**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**AND**  
**INSTRUCTOR PLAN**

**DEATH INVESTIGATION I**  
**CJSA\_1400\_H1**

**DR. SUZANNE BALDON**

**NOTE: This is a 16 Week Blended/Hybrid course.**

**COVID 19 Notice:**

McLennan Community College is committed to providing you with every resource you need to reach your academic goals including your safety. We will continue to monitor the evolving situation with COVID 19 and adjust our safety guidelines to make sure we offer a safe environment for you and our faculty. Please make sure to consult your faculty and the MCC website at <https://www.mclennan.edu/crisis-management/coronavirus-updates/index.html> on any changes to these guidelines.

# DEATH INVESTIGATION I

## CJSA\_1400\_H1

### **Course Description:**

This course is designed for both the student and investigative law enforcement personnel who have responsibility for the investigation of deaths, and who have had limited exposure to the various aspects of death investigation. It involves the process of analyzing all aspects of a death case so as to arrive at the true course and manner of death (homicide, suicide, accidental, natural and unknown.) The importance of scene analysis, physical and psychological evidence, autopsy, etc. is emphasized. Motivations, both physiological and psychological are discussed along with criminal investigative analysis, and investigative psychology. The concepts of the investigative process, scene management, required documentation, case management for incidences of death and the legal jurisdiction of cases will be discussed.

### **Prerequisites and/or Corequisites:**

CRIJ 1301 or permission of program director

### **Course Notes and Instructor Recommendations:**

It is required that before attending lab, students should read each assigned chapter and be familiar with Key Terms located inside each chapter. Prepare assignments and collect pertinent information to be ready to discuss them. While in lab, students may receive permission to use electronic devices to access e-books and information pertinent to the course.

### **Instructor Information:**

Instructor Name: Suzanne Baldon  
MCC E-mail: [sbaldon@mclennan.edu](mailto:sbaldon@mclennan.edu)  
Office Phone Number: 254.299.6505  
Office Location: ESEC 216

Office/Teacher Conf. Hours: Instructor available through Brightspace, telephone, and email.

Other Instruction Information: Please contact instructor to schedule additional conference time. Advising by appointment; call Glenda at 254.299.6502 to make an appointment for advising.

You may use Messages for non-emergency communications. If you need to reach me quickly, please email me at [sbaldon@mclennan.edu](mailto:sbaldon@mclennan.edu), or call or text my cell phone at 254-230-3595.

### **Required Text & Materials:**

Title: *Death Investigation Systems and Procedures*  
Author: Randy Hanzlick  
Edition: 1st  
Publisher: CRC Press  
ISBN: 9781420044751

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**MCC Bookstore Website:** <http://www.mclennan.edu/bookstore/>

### **Methods of Teaching and Learning:**

The hybrid course will be taught through online lectures and online plus face-to-face visual and audio aids, class participation, guest speakers and field trips when available. A lab component will be part of this course. There will be articles, news items from the media and professional publications, films, videos, and slides relating to death investigation. Discussion boards and assignments will be required per unit. There will be a research/presentation project on a cause of death.

### **Course Objectives and/or Competencies:**

The student will develop knowledge of the necessary elements of preparing a medical and psychological history of decedent through physicians, records, and contact with associates (psychological autopsy). Be able to identify various causes of deaths found in manners of death that include suicide, accidental, homicidal, natural, and undetermined deaths. Learn the investigative points involved and the legal aspects of the types of death investigations. Be able to recognize discrepancies between what witnesses tell you and what the body at the scene tells you. Develop and understand the factors involved in arriving at an estimation of time of death, wounds inflicted by sharp force injury, gunshot wounds, internal and external damage, powder residue, size, shape, entry/exit and the deceptive nature of these wounds. To provide an overview of criminal investigative analysis to better understand a murderer psychologically by the signs and physical evidence at the crime scene.

### **Course Outline or Schedule:**

Welcome to our class! This is a hybrid class and I will make announcements, send messages, give instructions for class preparation, and post items of interest for you in the Brightspace format. Please check Brightspace regularly and after absences from our classroom. We will meet for lab in ESEC 219 from 2:30-4:30pm on Tuesdays, unless otherwise notified.

The instructor reserves the right to make necessary changes to this document with appropriate notice given to students, for example, depending on events and guest speakers available. If there is any change to the schedule, the student will be notified via announcement in class and posting to our Brightspace page. Please get to know study buddies in the class whom you can contact in order to find out what you may need to know in case you are absent for any reason and to form study groups for assignments. It is the student's responsibility to stay aware of class activities.

Lab will meet on T, 2:30 – 4:30pm in ESEC 219. Lecture and class preparation will be on Brightspace. Schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

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JANUARY 9	<b>FIRST DAY TO MEET FOR CLASS is Jan 10</b> – Introductions, syllabus, class overview and basic class outline. Class begins on Brightspace on January 9.
JAN 17 & 24	Part I “General Aspects of Death Investigation”
JAN 31 & 7	Part II “More on the People Who Investigate”
FEB 14 & 21	Part III “Goals of Death Investigation”
FEB 28	<b>MIDTERM EXAM over Part I-II-III (F2F portion in Lab)</b>
MAR 6-10	<b>SPRING BREAK WEEK, ENJOY!</b>
MAR 14 & 21	Part IV “Examples of Death Investigation by Type”
MAR 28 & APR 4	Part V “Specific Features of Medicolegal Death Investigation”
APRIL 11	Part VI “Special Circumstance in Death Investigation”
APR 18	Part VII “Other Death Investigation Topics”
APR 25	<b>FINAL EXAM over Part IV-V-VI-VII Available Online</b>
	<b>Project Presentations Due in Class</b>
MAY 2	<b>FINAL EXAM DUE Project Presentations Due in Class</b>

### **Course Grading Information:**

1. Two (2) exams consisting of multiple choice, true / false questions, matching, and a laboratory component with brief answers and essays. Parts of the exams will be taken online and parts will be taken in the classroom. The exam average will count 40% toward the student’s final grade.

Exams will cover the materials presented in class, including the Forensic Death Investigation Training Program, videos and websites looked at in class and/or posted on Brightspace, and from your reading of the textbook and supplemental materials.

2. Research and presentation project will count as 40% toward the student’s final grade.
3. Participation and attendance at Lab and on Brightspace will count 20% toward the student’s final grade. Participation includes your assignment preparations and discussions.

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### Discussion Boards

After reviewing each week's material, you will be asked to respond to a prompt that the instructor will provide in the weekly discussion board. The initial response should be well thought out and substantial enough to indicate that you have a firm grasp on the week's materials. You must then respond to at least two (2) classmates with substantial posts. Responses like "I agree" or "good point" will not be counted. Tell us why and give examples.

### Discussion Board Grading

The following rubric illustrates how each discussion session will be graded. The number of posts represented in your posting history will be calculated. The quality of your posts is a subjective assessment by me of how much your posts add to the discussion.

Metrics	Original Post 1 Entered	Responses 1 & 2 Entered	Quality of the Original Post	Quality of Your Responses 1 & 2
Points earned	1/4 credit	1/4 credit	1/4 credit	1/4 credit

### Assignment Grading Rubric

Metrics	Content and Substance, quantitative	Content and Substance, qualitative	Understanding of the Issues	Proper Grammar and Attributions
Points earned	25 points	25 points	25 points	25 points

**Plagiarism** the unacknowledged borrowing of information, wording, organization, or ideas. Whether the original source is public (e.g., a newspaper, book, journal article, the Web) or private (e.g., a classmate's paper), you need to indicate your indebtedness to it. Where you repeat the exact language of your source, you must treat the borrowed material as a quotation and place it within quotation marks. However, by *merely changing a few words or the word order or by paraphrasing, you do not avoid plagiarism*. In the case of plagiarism, the instructor has the right to give the student a "zero" for the assignment. In the case of cheating during the course of a test or unauthorized collaboration on a writing project, the instructor reserves the right to give

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the student a “zero” for the test or assignment. Citation style guides are available at the Purdue Online Writing Lab: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html).

### **Course Lab Information:**

- I. Students will be required to conduct research on a selected cause of death, including case(s) used as examples, and present the information in a class presentation.
- II. The research and presentation project will count 40% toward the student’s final grade.
- III. Instructor will discuss the requirements for the research and presentation on the first day of class.
- IV. Participation grade will include lab assignments, preparation assignments, field trips, attention to guest speakers, and Brightspace discussions.

### **Grade Scale:**

90 – 100 = A 80 – 89 = B 70 – 79 = C 60 – 69 = D 59 – 0 = F

If I decide it is necessary to curve the grade distribution, this will be done at the end of the course, after all the exams have been taken. Your grade will never be lowered by curving; you will always receive your "straight-scale" grade or better.

### **Late Work, Attendance, and Make Up Work Policies:**

Welcome to our class! This is a hybrid class and I will make announcements, send messages, give instructions for lab preparation, and post items of interest for you in the Brightspace format. Please check Brightspace regularly and after absences from our classroom.

- I. The lab portions of the exams must be taken on the scheduled day.
- II. No make-up exam will be given unless the student contacts the instructor, gives a valid excuse, and makes arrangements to take the exam. The lab portions require advance preparation on the part of the instructor.
- III. If a student with a valid excuse is given the opportunity to take the make-up exam, it will be given by agreement with the instructor.
- IV. Type of make-up exam and number of questions will be at the discretion of the instructor.
- V. A student who is unable to do the scheduled work on the scheduled date must contact the instructor as soon as possible. The type, format, and schedule of any make-up assessment will be at the discretion of the instructor. Failure to take the make-up assessment or complete assignment criteria will result in an automatic "F" for that particular assessment.
- VI. If you wish to drop the course, please contact your instructor and do not assume that you have been dropped as a result of absences.

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### **Student Behavioral Expectations or Conduct Policy:**

Behavior guidelines are outlined in the “Conduct Policy” portion of the Highlander Student Guide. Any behavior which disrupts the learning process will be grounds for dismissal from the class. Cell phones and laptops are permitted if the student is using those resources for the purposes of our class. If child care is a problem, please confer with Student Services for alternatives to avoid bringing children to class. Students are expected to follow the General Conduct Policy in the Highlander Student Guide.

### **\* [Click Here for the MCC Academic Integrity Statement](#)**

**([www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity](http://www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity))**

The link above will provide you with information about academic integrity, dishonesty, and cheating.

### **\* [Click Here for the MCC Attendance/Absences Policy](#)**

**(<https://www.mclennan.edu/highlander-guide/policies.html>)**

Click on the link above for the college policies on attendance and absences. Your instructor may have additional guidelines specific to this course.

*\* You will need to access each link separately through your Web browser (for example: Mozilla Firefox, Chrome, Microsoft Edge or Safari) to print each link's information.*

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Updated 11/04/2022

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## **ACADEMIC RESOURCES/POLICIES**

### **Accommodations/ADA Statement:**

Any student who is a qualified individual with a disability may request reasonable accommodations to assist with providing equal access to educational opportunities. Students should contact the Accommodations Coordinator as soon as possible to provide documentation and make necessary arrangements. Once that process is completed, appropriate verification will be provided to the student and instructor. Please note that instructors are not required to provide classroom accommodations to students until appropriate verification has been provided by the Accommodations Coordinator. For additional information, please visit [www.mclennan.edu/disability](http://www.mclennan.edu/disability).

Students with questions or who require assistance with disabilities involving physical, classroom, or testing accommodations should contact:

[disabilities@mclennan.edu](mailto:disabilities@mclennan.edu) 254-299-  
8122  
Room 319, Student Services Center

### **Title IX:**

We care about your safety, and value an environment where students and instructors can successfully teach and learn together. If you or someone you know experiences unwelcomed behavior, we are here to help. Individuals who would like to report an incident of sexual misconduct are encouraged to immediately contact the acting Title IX Coordinator at [titleix@mclennan.edu](mailto:titleix@mclennan.edu) or by calling, Dr. Claudette Jackson, (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion/Title IX) at (254) 299-8465. MCC employees are mandatory reporters and must report incidents immediately to the Title IX Coordinator. Individuals may also contact the MCC Police Department at (254) 299-8911 or the MCC Student Counseling Center at (254) 299-8210. The MCC Student Counseling Center is a confidential resource for students. Any student or employee may report sexual harassment anonymously by visiting <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/mclennan/>.

Go to McLennan's Title IX webpage at [www.mclennan.edu/titleix/](http://www.mclennan.edu/titleix/). It contains more information about definitions, reporting, confidentiality, resources, and what to do if you or someone you know is a victim of sexual misconduct, gender-based violence or the



crimes of rape, acquaintance rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence, or domestic violence.

**Student Support/Resources:**

MCC provides a variety of services to support student success in the classroom and in your academic pursuits to include counseling, tutors, technology help desk, advising, financial aid, etc. A listing of these and the many other services available to our students is available at <http://www.mclennan.edu/campus-resource-guide/>

Academic Support and Tutoring is here to help students with all their course-related needs. Specializing in one-on-one tutoring, developing study skills, and effectively writing essays. Academic Support and Tutoring can be found in the Library and main floor of the Learning Commons. This service is available to students in person or through Zoom from 7:30 am - 6:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 7:30 am - 5:00 pm on Friday. You can contact the Academic Support and Tutoring team via Zoom (<https://mclennan.zoom.us/j/2542998500>) or email ([ast@mclennan.edu](mailto:ast@mclennan.edu)) during the above mentioned times.

College personnel recognize that food, housing, and transportation are essential for student success. If you are having trouble securing these resources or want to explore strategies for balancing life and school, we encourage you to contact either MCC CREW – Campus Resources Education Web by calling (254) 299-8561 or by emailing [crew@mclennan.edu](mailto:crew@mclennan.edu) or a Success Coach by calling (254) 299-8226 or emailing [SuccessCoach@mclennan.edu](mailto:SuccessCoach@mclennan.edu). Both are located in the Completion Center located on the second floor of the Student Services Center (SSC) which is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Paulanne's Pantry (MCC's food pantry) provides free food by appointment to students, faculty and staff. To schedule an appointment, go to [https://mclennan.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_07byXd7eB8iTqJg](https://mclennan.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_07byXd7eB8iTqJg). Both the Completion Center and Paulanne's Pantry are located on the second floor of the Student Services Center (SSC).

**MCC Foundation Emergency Grant Fund:**

Unanticipated expenses, such as car repairs, medical bills, housing, or job loss can affect us all. Should an unexpected expense arise, the MCC Foundation has an emergency grant fund that may be able to assist you. Please go to <https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/scholarships-and-resources/emergencygrant.html> to find out more about the emergency grant. The application can be found at [https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/docs/Emergency\\_Grant\\_Application.pdf](https://www.mclennan.edu/foundation/docs/Emergency_Grant_Application.pdf).

**MCC Academic Integrity Statement:**

Go to [www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity](http://www.mclennan.edu/academic-integrity) for information about academic integrity, dishonesty, and cheating.

**Minimum System Requirements to Utilize MCC's D2L|Brightspace:**

Go to <https://www.mclennan.edu/center-for-teaching-and-learning/Faculty-andStaffCommons/requirements.html> for information on the minimum system requirements needed to reliably access your courses in MCC's D2L|Brightspace learning management system.

**Minimum Technical Skills:**

Students should have basic computer skills, knowledge of word processing software, and a basic understanding of how to use search engines and common web browsers.

**Backup Plan for Technology:**

In the event MCC's technology systems are down, you will be notified via your MCC student email address. Please note that all assignments and activities will be due on the date specified in the Instructor Plan, unless otherwise noted by the instructor.

**Email Policy:**

McLennan Community College would like to remind you of the policy (<http://www.mclennan.edu/employees/policy-manual/docs/E-XXXI-B.pdf>) regarding college email. All students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to use their McLennan email addresses when conducting college business.

A student's McLennan email address is the preferred email address that college employees should use for official college information or business. Students are expected to read and, if needed, respond in a timely manner to college emails. For more information about your student email account, go to [www.mclennan.edu/studentemail](http://www.mclennan.edu/studentemail).

**Instructional Uses of Email:**

Faculty members can determine classroom use of email or electronic communications. Faculty should expect and encourage students to check the college email on a regular basis. Faculty should inform students in the course syllabus if another communication method is to be used and of any special or unusual expectations for electronic communications.

If a faculty member prefers not to communicate by email with their students, it should be reflected in the course syllabus and information should be provided for the preferred form of communication.

**Email on Mobile Devices:**

The College recommends that you set up your mobile device to receive McLennan emails. If you need assistance with set-up, you may email [Helpdesk@mclennan.edu](mailto:Helpdesk@mclennan.edu) for help.

You can find help on the McLennan website about connecting your McLennan email account to your mobile device:

- [Email Setup for iPhones and iPads](#)
- [Email Setup for Androids](#)

**Forwarding Emails:**

You may forward emails that come to your McLennan address to alternate email addresses; however, the College will not be held responsible for emails forwarded to an alternate address that may be lost or placed in junk or spam filters.

For more helpful information about technology at MCC, go to [MCC's Tech Support Cheat Sheet](#) or email [helpdesk@mclennan.edu](mailto:helpdesk@mclennan.edu).

**Disclaimer:**

The resources and policies listed above are merely for informational purposes and are subject to change without notice or obligation. The College reserves the right to change policies and other requirements in compliance with State and Federal laws. The provisions of this document do not constitute a contract.