

FORENSIC SCIENCE (FRSC)

FRSC 202. Crime and Science. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Introduces the scientific theory, concepts and practices used in any physical science by relating them to the analysis of physical evidence performed in forensic laboratories and the fundamentals of crime scene investigation, and their relationship to the criminal justice system and criminal investigations. Not applicable for credit toward B.S. in Forensic Science.

FRSC 300. Survey of Forensic Science. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: BIOL 151 and BIOZ 151, each with a minimum grade of C. Pre- or corequisites: CHEM 301 and CHEZ 301, and UNIV 200 or HONR 200. Enrollment restricted to forensic science majors or by permission of instructor. Introduces the theory, concepts and practices used in the analysis of physical evidence performed in crime laboratories, and the fundamentals of crime scene investigation. Also introduces ethical and quality assurance issues of crucial importance in modern crime laboratories.

FRSC 309. Scientific Crime Scene Investigation. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture/laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: CHEM 301 and either FRSC 300 or FRSC 350, each with a minimum grade of C. Enrollment restricted to forensic science majors or by permission of instructor. Provides scientific theory of crime scene investigation and crime scene reconstruction and basic knowledge of proper crime scene protocol and evidence processing techniques. Includes the processes for documentation, collecting and preserving physical evidence.

FRSC 310. Forensic Anthropology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: ANTH 210 or FRSC 300 with a minimum grade of C. A comprehensive overview of forensic anthropology including its development and the theory and methodology on which it is based. Crosslisted as: ANTH 310.

FRSC 325. Forensic Medicine. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: FRSC 300, CHEM 301 and CHEZ 301, each with a minimum grade of C. Enrollment restricted to forensic science majors or by permission of instructor. An investigation of topics in death scene investigations as well as autopsy findings associated with natural and unnatural deaths.

FRSC 351. Forensic Science Service-learning. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. May be repeated for a maximum of 4 credits. Prerequisites: FRSC 300 and at least one additional FRSC/Z course, each with a minimum grade of C. Enrollment restricted to forensic science majors or by permission of instructor. Provides an opportunity to learn about the community's schools and how to teach forensic science concepts to school-aged students. Each week, VCU students will provide hands-on lab activities in community-based programs to reinforce lessons learned through their school curricula. Reflective writing, partner assignments and a final presentation are required, in addition to 20 community partner hours. VCU students will improve their ability to explain forensic concepts to those with differing scientific backgrounds, have increased confidence when addressing audiences and deepen their understanding of civic responsibility.

FRSC 365. Forensic Microscopy. 4 Hours.

Semester course; 4 lecture/laboratory hours. 4 credits. Prerequisites: CHEM 301 and either FRSC 300 or FRSC 350, each with a minimum grade of C. An in-depth course in the theory and practical application of microscopy to the examination, identification and individualization of physical evidence submitted to forensic laboratories.

FRSC 375. Forensic Evidence, Law and Criminal Procedure. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Pre- or co-requisites: FRSC 300 or FRSC 350. Open only to forensic science majors or by permission of instructor. The law of criminal procedure and rules of evidence as applied to forensic science. Topics will include scientific versus legal burdens of proof, legal terminology and trial procedure.

FRSC 385. Forensic Serology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: CHEM 301 and either FRSC 300 or FRSC 350, each with a minimum grade of C. Examines the application of basic chemical, biological, immunological and microscopic laboratory techniques to the examination and identification of body-fluid stains, including both presumptive and/or confirmatory identification of blood, semen, saliva, urine and feces. Applies methods that are used in forensic laboratories to identify the species of origin and includes a review of advanced methods for automated serological analysis. Laboratory exercises will supplement lectures to give students practical knowledge of the laboratory procedures.

FRSC 391. Topics in Forensic Science. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 lecture hours. 1-3 credits. Maximum total of 6 credits for all forensic science topics courses may be applied to the major. Prerequisites: CHEM 301 and either FRSC 300 or FRSC 350, each with a minimum grade of C. A study in selected topics in forensic science. See the Schedule of Classes for specific topics to be offered each semester and additional prerequisites.

FRSC 400. Forensic Chemistry. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: CHEM 409 and CHEZ 409; and either FRSC 300 or FRSC 350, each with a minimum grade of C. Provides an understanding of presumptive and confirmatory chemical analyses used in a forensic laboratory for the characterization and identification of physical evidence, such as accelerants and explosives, paints and polymers, suspected drug substances, and toxicology. Chemical analyses as pertaining to firearms, toolmarks and glass will also be explored.

FRSC 410. Forensic Pattern Evidence. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture/laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: FRSC 309 with a minimum grade of C. Enrollment restricted to forensic science majors or by permission of instructor. Covers topics in pattern evidence analysis including analysis of latent prints and impression evidence of footwear and tire treadmarks as applied to forensic casework. Covers both the theoretical and practical aspects using lectures and laboratory exercises focusing on the visualization, examination and interpretation of pattern evidence.

FRSC 412. Forensic Analysis of Firearms and Toolmarks. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture/laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: FRSC 365 with a minimum grade of C. Enrollment restricted to forensic science majors or by permission of instructor. An investigation of topics in firearms and toolmark examination for forensic applications. Covers both theoretical and practical aspects using lectures and laboratory exercises.

FRSC 438. Forensic Molecular Biology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: CHEM 302, CHEZ 302, and BIOL 310 or equivalent, each with a minimum grade of C. Provides an understanding of molecular biology testing methodologies as applied to analysis of forensic samples. Current topics in forensic DNA analysis will include quality assurance, DNA databanking, contemporary research and population genetics. Crosslisted as: BIOL 438.

FRSC 445. Forensic Toxicology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: CHEM 301, CHEM 302 and CHEZ 301, each with a minimum grade of C. Provides a comprehensive overview of the basic principles of toxicology and the practical aspects of forensic toxicology. Students will learn to define the toxic agents most commonly resulting in legal problems in U.S. society and also the process by which the U.S. judicial system is aided by scientific investigation. Crosslisted as: PATH 445.

FRSC 490. Professional Practices in Forensic Science. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: CHEM 301; FRSC 300 or FRSC 350; and one additional forensic science course, each with a minimum grade of C. Enrollment restricted to seniors in forensic science with at least 85 credit hours toward the degree. An examination and evaluation of historical and current issues in the scientific analysis of physical evidence in criminal investigations. Individual and group activities relating to professional practices (ethics, quality control and testimony) of forensic scientists.

FRSC 492. Forensic Science Independent Study. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 independent study hours. 1-3 credits. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 credits. Prerequisites: CHEM 301; and FRSC 300 or FRSC 350, each with a minimum grade of C. Enrollment restricted to forensic science majors with at least sophomore standing and a minimum GPA of 2.5. A determination of the amount of credit and the written permission of both the instructor and the program director must be procured prior to registration for the course.

FRSC 493. Forensic Science Internship. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 research hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: FRSC 300 or FRSC 350 with a minimum grade of C. Enrollment restricted to forensic science majors with a minimum GPA of 2.75. An application is required in advance of admission with permission of the internship coordinator. Through placement in an approved organization, the student will obtain a broader, more practical knowledge of forensic science and its applications. Written progress and final reports are required. Graded as pass/fail.

FRSC 505. Forensic Entomology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture and 1 laboratory hour. 3 credits. Enrollment requires permission of instructor. Course focuses on proper collection, preservation and identification of entomological evidence. Students collect entomological evidence from a mock crime scene and utilize these specimens for estimation of minimum postmortem interval. There is a significant laboratory component.

FRSC 510. Developmental Osteology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: FRSC 300; ANTH 307 and ANTZ 307; ANTH 310; graduate standing in forensic science; or permission of instructor. Examines the human musculoskeletal system and its development from an embryonic state to the adult form. Students learn the developmental course of each bone in the human skeleton and those of the associated soft tissue structures. Students are provided with training in the recognition of skeletal elements and bony landmarks, siding skeletal elements (and fragments thereof), knowledge of muscle structure and function and knowledge of nervous and venous structures associated with bony landmarks. Developmental defects and trauma associated with birth and child abuse are discussed. Juvenile age estimation from bones and radiographic images are emphasized.

FRSC 515. Advanced Forensic Anthropology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: FRSC 510; ANTH 307 and ANTZ 307; or permission of instructor. Focuses on estimation of the biological profile, statistical basis of estimations, pathological conditions, analysis of antemortem and perimortem trauma, human identification in mass casualty situations, age estimation of living individuals and writing of case reports. Techniques discussed will include macroscopic and microscopic analysis of morphology, histological analysis, radiographs and CT scans. There is a significant laboratory component.

FRSC 520. Forensic Fire Investigation. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: FRSC 375 with a minimum grade of C (for undergraduate students), FRSC 670 or equivalent. Examines the specialized field of forensic fire investigation including on-scene investigation, fire theory, accelerant-assisted burn patterns and expert-witness testimony.

FRSC 565. Scientific Crime Scene Investigation. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture and/or laboratory hours. 3 credits. Presents the theory and techniques of scientific crime scene investigation including: recognition, documentation, collection and enhancement of physical evidence. A comprehensive introduction to the use of physical evidence for crime scene reconstruction is presented.

FRSC 566. Advanced Crime Scene Investigation. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: FRSC 309 with a minimum grade of C (for undergraduate students), FRSC 565 or equivalent. An advanced study of the methods and techniques of crime scene investigation with an emphasis on crime scene reconstruction by the use of physical evidence. Course will include extensive practical applications with mock crime scenes.

FRSC 570. Forensic Science Seminar. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. May be repeated for a maximum of 3 credits. A seminar course featuring presentations by faculty, crime laboratory staff, students and visiting lecturers. Instruction includes discussions of research and developments and current topics in various forensic science disciplines and related fields. Graded as S/U.

FRSC 580. Applied Statistics for Forensic Science. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: STAT 210, STAT 212 or equivalent statistics knowledge; or graduate standing in forensic science. The course will focus on the forensic applications of data visualization methods, hypothesis testing, analysis of variance, correlation measures, regression, multivariate analyses and concepts in database "matching" procedures. Techniques discussed will include ANOVA, MANOVA, principal component analysis, non-metric multidimensional scaling, discriminant function analysis and machine learning/neural network analysis.

FRSC 591. Topics in Forensic Science. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; variable lecture hours. 1-3 credits; maximum of 6 credits for all forensic science topic courses may be applied to major. Prerequisite: graduate standing in the forensic science program or permission of instructor required for enrollment. A study in selected topics in forensic science. See the Schedule of Classes for specific topics to be offered each semester and additional prerequisites.

FRSC 607. Forensic Taphonomy. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Focuses on the process and sequence of human decomposition, as well as the burial, water disposal and surface dispersal of human remains. The course covers current issues in taphonomic research and practical application, including both domestic and international examples of mass disasters and mass graves. An understanding of the principles of archaeological stratigraphy is an integral part of the course. There is a significant laboratory component.

FRSC 644. Forensic Toxicology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and 2 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Lecture and demonstrations in which common poisons and groups of poisons are discussed as to detection, diagnosis and treatment of poisoning. Demonstrations include basic principles of analytical toxicology, forensic science and courtroom testimony. Crosslisted as: PHTX 644.

FRSC 661. Analysis of Pattern Evidence. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: FRSC 673 and FRSZ 673 or equivalents. Covers topics in pattern evidence analysis including analysis of latent prints and other patterned evidence as applied to forensic casework. The course covers both the theoretical and practical aspects, using lectures and laboratory exercises focusing on the collection, analysis and interpretation of pattern evidence.

FRSC 662. Firearm and Toolmark Identification. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: FRSC 673 and FRSZ 673L or equivalents. Covers topics in firearm and toolmark identification as applied to forensic casework. The course covers both the theoretical and practical aspects, using lectures and laboratory exercises.

FRSC 663. Forensic Medicine. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Covers the fundamentals of forensic medicine including topics such as forensic death investigations, postmortem changes, time-of-death determinations, identification of unknown human remains and the forensic pathology of natural and traumatic deaths in adults and children. The characteristics and diagnosis of various types of trauma as well as the characteristics of common natural diseases that cause sudden death will be presented.

FRSC 670. Forensic Evidence and Criminal Procedure. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Presents the law of criminal procedure and rules of evidence as applied to forensic science. Explores issues of scientific versus legal burdens of proof, legal terminology and trial procedure.

FRSC 671. Instrumentation in Forensic Chemistry. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Theory and applications of chromatography, mass spectrometry and spectroscopy as used in modern crime laboratories. Instruction will focus on instrumental analysis as applied to drug analysis, toxicology, fire debris identification and general trace evidence examination.

FRSC 672. Advanced Drug Analysis. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture and/or laboratory hours. 3 credits. Isolation and identification of abused drugs emphasizing the analysis of unknowns, problems encountered in analysis and chain of custody issues.

FRSC 673. Forensic Microscopy. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Establishes the foundation for the theory of microscopy. The knowledge acquired in this course can be applied to forensic disciplines such as firearms examinations, forensic biology, controlled substances, questioned documents and trace evidence.

FRSC 675. Forensic Serology and DNA Analysis. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and/or laboratory hours. 2 credits. Presents the theory and methodology used for the examination and identification of body fluid stains and determination of species. Provides students an introduction to the theory and methodology of forensic DNA analysis as well as forensic DNA quality control issues. Instruction will focus on molecular biology techniques as they are applied in a forensic DNA crime laboratory setting.

FRSC 676. Advanced Forensic DNA Analysis. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Focuses on the specific principles and modern procedures used for analysis of forensic nuclear and mitochondrial DNA evidence. Other topics include current research and development for forensic DNA instrumentation and applications, statistical interpretation of results and case report writing. Students gain individualized, hands-on experience with DNA procedures and instrumentation in the laboratory exercises. Students will process mock forensic casework.

FRSC 677. Professional Practices and Expert Testimony. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: must have successfully completed a minimum of 18 credit hours in the forensic science master's degree program. Topics related to professional practices in the forensic science field will be covered, including ethics, bias, quality assurance, laboratory management and professional development. Individual and group activities relating to these topics will be completed. Additionally, this course will examine forensic expert testimony in the courtroom, communication of scientific findings to a general audience, trial preparation and cross-examination in moot court format.

FRSC 680. Forensic Psychiatry. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Guilty mind requirements in criminal law. Competency to stand trial, insanity defense, mental disorder and crime. Behavioral profiling of serial murders and sex offenders. Issues in the use of clinical and statistical prediction methods in criminal justice. Crosslisted as: CRJS 680.

FRSC 681. Analysis of Fire Debris and Explosives. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture and 3 laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: FRSC 671, FRSC 673 and FRSZ 673L or equivalents. Presents the collection, analysis and interpretation of fire debris and explosives as they are applied in forensic casework. Covers the theoretical and practical aspects. Laboratory exercises include hands-on instruction with appropriate instrumentation and techniques, including stereomicroscopy, gas chromatography, GC-MS, thin layer chromatography, HPLC and FT-IR.

FRSC 682. Forensic Analysis of Paint and Polymers. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 5 lecture/laboratory hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: FRSC 671, FRSC 673 and FRSZ 673L or equivalents. Covers topics in paint and polymer analysis including collection, classification and analysis of paint and fiber evidence as applied to forensic casework. The course covers the theoretical and practical aspects, using lectures and laboratory exercises. Laboratory exercises include hands-on instruction with appropriate instrumentation and techniques, including stereomicroscopy, microchemical testing, fluorescence molecular tomography, fluorescence microscopy, FT-IR and polarizing light microscopy.

FRSC 686. Emerging Molecular Applications for Forensic Biology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: FRSC 676. Emerging forensic molecular technologies as well as molecular applications for nontraditional forensic needs will be covered. Emphasis will be given to current research and to technologies most likely to be implemented in forensic laboratories. Molecular applications may include those that involve analysis of DNA, RNA, protein, or other cell macromolecules and/or those that use advanced molecular tools for separation, detection, manipulation, identification, imaging and analysis. Students gain individualized experience in literature research, in summarization/simplification of technical information and in oral presentation.

FRSC 690. Scientific Writing. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. Enrollment restricted to students in the M.S. in Forensic Science program. Focuses on scientific writing techniques, including abstracts, posters, review articles and research proposals. Emphasis will be placed on writing for scientific journals in forensic science and other peer-reviewed journals.

FRSC 692. Forensic Science Independent Study. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; variable hours. 1-3 credits. Maximum credit for all independent study applicable to degree is 6 credits. The amount of credit must be determined, and written permission of instructor and program director must be obtained prior to registration. This course is designed to provide an opportunity for independent laboratory research in an area of forensic science or related scientific discipline. The end products of this experience will include an oral presentation at a campus seminar and a written report.

FRSC 693. Current Topics in Forensic Science. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. May be repeated for credit. A course designed to develop skills in reading journal manuscripts and delivering oral presentations in conjunction with an in-depth study of a current topic in forensic science. Student will conduct library research, present talks and lead discussions on the selected topic. See the Schedule of Classes for specific current topics course to be offered each semester and prerequisites.

FRSC 792. Research Techniques. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 3 laboratory hours. 1 credit. Enrollment restricted to students with graduate standing in forensic sciences and with permission of faculty mentor. Application of basic laboratory methods used in forensic science to the investigation of topics of interest. Emphasis on experimental design, data collection and analysis, communication skills, and critical thinking. Graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory.

FRSC 793. Directed Research in Forensic Science. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 practicum hours. 1-3 credits. May be repeated for credit with up to 6 credits counted toward the degree requirements. Enrollment restricted to students in the forensic science master's degree program with permission of the instructor. A capstone course in which students will conduct independent, original laboratory research in a forensic specialization area of interest, while also gaining practical experience in crime laboratory practices and methods. A minimum of 300 hours of laboratory research and a minimum of three credits are required for graduation.