

Saint Leo University

**CRM 344
Scientific Writing and Courtroom Testimony**

Course Description:

This course is designed to teach the effective writing and courtroom presentation of scientific reports related to the investigation of crime scenes. Successful completion of this course will result in competence writing crime scene investigation reports and the ability to effectively present and defend investigative findings in the course setting. Further, the student will be aware of and understand the fundamental court opinions that influence the presentation of crime scene investigation findings. Part of the course experience will be practice in making professional and effective court presentations.

Prerequisite:

CRM230, POL123, CRM220

Textbooks:

Lewis, D. (2001). *The Police officer in the courtroom: How to avoid the pitfalls of cross-examination through the proper preparation and presentation of investigative reports, in-court testimony, and evidence*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, Inc. ISBN: 0-398-07212-4.

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. ISBN-13: 978-1-4338-0561-5; ISBN-10: 1-4338-0561-8

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this course, students will:

1. Describe the role of the Saint Leo University core value of *Excellence* in writing scientific reports.
2. List and describe the fundamental components of a scientific report for use in the courtroom.
3. Identify scientific aspects of gathering and analyzing evidence.
4. Demonstrate skills necessary to respond professionally during cross-examination.
5. Identify courtroom participants and their roles.
6. Describe common problems that might be encountered and solved by forensic professionals.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of case law related to forensic science and report writing.

Core Value:

Excellence: Saint Leo University is an educational enterprise. All of us, individually and collectively, work hard to ensure that our students develop the character, learn the skills and assimilate the knowledge essential to become morally responsible leaders. The success of our University depends upon a conscientious commitment to our mission, vision and goals.

Evaluation:

Exams (2)	10%
Position Paper	30%
Discussions (8)	30%
Written Legal Assignments (4)	30%
Total	100%

Grading Scale:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	60-66
F	0-59

Assignments:

****All work is individual unless specifically noted as a group assignment****

Written Legal Assignments:

Each student will be completing four (4) written legal assignments based on the subject material delivered. These assignments are utilized to showcase the student's strengths and weaknesses in scientific report writing. Please be aware this is a writing intensive course. These assignments will be graded with a Scoring Rubric. *Each Written Legal Assignment is worth a total of 7.5% of the course grade.*

Discussion Question Postings/Responses:

Students are expected to participate fully in each class module. Participation includes an initial response to the discussion question followed by substantial replies to at least two classmates. Discussion assignments are collectively worth 30% of the final course grade.

Exams:

Exams consist of multiple choice and short answer questions based on the readings, assignments, and lecture notes from the instructor. *Each is worth 10% of the final course grade.*

Position Paper:

Each student will be required to submit a position paper as to his/her opinion reference an assigned courtroom case which dealt with forensic science evidence admissibility. Regardless of the position you take, the paper must include your reasoning for choosing that position. In essence, you will "pick a side" and argue for that side. You are responsible for "convincing" the instructor as to why your position is correct and fair. Specifically, you will review ALL the facts of the case and, based on your research, you will argue FOR or AGAINST the admissibility of the forensic science evidence and/or technique used to describe/analyze the evidence.

Students will utilize at least three (3) scholarly references to support the student's position and will properly cite the source. The paper must be prepared in a manner acceptable for university level work. The paper should be between seven (7) to ten (10) pages, excluding the references page and cover page and will be completed in proper APA format.

Written Assignments and the APA Format:

The Department of Criminal Justice recognizes the value of excellence in writing for students in Criminal Justice. In part, each professor is expected to provide guidance on improving a student's writing skills. Students are required to use only the APA (American Psychological Association) format to write and develop a scholarly paper for submission in the Social Sciences. APA has been adopted by the Department as its writing standard for all academic written assignments. No other writing style is acceptable.

APA is the American Psychological Association, and the style is one of many in the academic world used to regulate the language, citations, procedure, and formatting of manuscripts and other examples of writing in the social sciences. Please be consistent throughout each written paper. *Refer to APA Guide under Resources on the Course Menu for APA specifics.*

All projects, assignments, or papers submitted for grading will be required to include an abstract and reference page. All references are to be cited using the American Psychology Association (APA) format (6th edition). Other formats will not be accepted. For each scholarly paper and group assignment(s), the work will be assessed using an individual grading rubric for each assignment. This tool and process helps the students identify and professor measure the key points necessary to successfully complete written or group assignments. *Wikipedia is not an appropriate source for any scholarly writing and is not permitted for any assignment in this program.*

Module 1: Overview of Course and Case Report Observations

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Observe and record facial expressions in order to defend the importance of good observation skills for report writing.
- Explore the differences among scientific report writing, case reports for crime scene investigation, and “colloquial” writing.
- Demonstrate good grammar and spelling when writing case reports.

Assignments:

Assignment	Due no later than
Post Introduction to the class	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Read Textbook Chapter 1 "Verifying and Evaluating Online Sources" on the Cannon Memorial Library website	
Review Key Concepts	
Post Initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post Responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Assignment A	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Begin Select case law topic for Position Paper	Module 2

Module 2: Report Writing Basics: Grammar/Spelling and Types of Report Writing

Objectives:

At the conclusions of this module, students will be able to:

- Construct coherent and succinct reports for courtroom presentation.
- Develop properly written crime scene reports.
- Compare poor grammar/spelling with proper grammar/spelling for report writing.

Assignments:

Assignment	Due no later than
Read Textbook 2 Assigned website article	
Review Key Concepts	
Post Initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post Responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Case Law Topic for Position Paper	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Assignment B	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 3: Depositions: What is an Expert Witness?

Objectives:

At the conclusions of this module, students will be able to:

- Develop a written report from which a deposition can be provided.
- Develop a formula for participating in a deposition.
- Compose a proper technical report with good writing skills.

Assignments:

Assignment	Due no later than
Read Textbook Chapter 3 Language in the Courtroom handout	
Review Key Concepts	
Post Initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post Responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 4: Case Law and Forensic Evidence

Objectives:

At the conclusions of this module, students will be able to:

- Analyze the *Frye* rule and how it impacts expert witness testimony.
- Examine case law involving use of forensic evidence.
- Develop an understanding of courtroom proceedings and the skills needed to testify about physical evidence.

Assignments:

Assignment	Due no later than
Read Textbook Chapter 4 Ashlock Article	
Review Key Concepts	
Post Initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post Responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete Midterm Exam	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 5: Courtroom Testimony Tactics & Techniques

Objectives:

At the conclusions of this module, students will be able to:

- Develop skills for testifying in court.
- Distinguish between helpful and harmful tactics by attorneys when testifying.
- Explain the importance of the *Daubert* ruling and assess its importance for forensic evidence cases.

Assignments:

Assignment	Due no later than
Read Textbook Chapter 5 Additional Reading Material	
Review Key Concepts	
Post Initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post Responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 6: Cross-Examination

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this module, students will be able to:

- Evaluate effective methods of cross-examination techniques.
- Prioritize the importance of information contained in a written report used on the stand during testimony.

Assignments:

Assignment	Due no later than
Read Textbook Chapter 6	
Review Key Concepts	
Post Initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post Responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit Assignment C	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 7: Ethics and the Justice System

Objectives:

At the conclusions of this module, students will be able to:

- Examine the role ethics plays in criminal justice court proceedings.
- Compare the witness' role in an international judicial system with that of the US.
- Discuss the value of truthfulness and ethical decision making when testifying in court.

Assignments:

Action	Assignment	Due no later than
Read	Read Assigned Articles	
Review	Review Key Concepts	
Post	Post Initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post	Post Responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit	Submit Position Paper	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT

Module 8: Moot Court Testimony

Objectives:

At the conclusions of this module, students will be able to:

- Provide "expert witness" testimony regarding courtroom cases involving forensic science and crime scene investigation.
- Appraise the expert witness testimony system and critique its benefits and drawbacks.

Assignments:

Action	Assignment	Due no later than
Post	Post Initial response to the discussion question	Thursday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Post	Post Responses to at least two classmates	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Submit	Submit Assignment D	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT
Complete	Complete Final Exam	Sunday 11:59 PM EST/EDT