

Criminal Investigation - CJUS 4360.400 - Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: By Appointment - Online

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Course Description

Study of methods of obtaining and reporting information from the crime scene, victims, witnesses and suspects. Specific attention is given to investigation of index crimes (homicide, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, arson, motor vehicle theft and larceny).

Course Structure

This course will take place completely online through Canvas. The course is composed of 15 sections grouped into 3 modules. Modules will last several weeks and the length of each is noted on the course calendar. Each module contains the relevant chapter outlines as well as other supplementary material as needed. Note, not all modules will contain supplementary materials or require extra reading beyond the textbook. The students will have one (1) analysis assignment and participate in three (3) discussions through Canvas during the course. The students will also take three (3) exams near the end of each module. The exams cover only the material contained in the respective sections being tested.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of how criminal investigations are conducted.
2. Explain why utilizing the scientific method and investigative method is critical to criminal investigations.
3. Identify the major tasks inherent to all criminal investigations (interviewing witnesses, interrogating suspects, and evaluating forensic reports).
4. Identify potential pitfalls in a criminal investigation.
5. Explain the specialized processes utilized in medicolegal investigations and investigating complex crimes such as sexual assault and death investigations.

Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses

Federal regulations state that students may apply only 3 fully-online semester credit hours (SCH) to the hours required for full-time status for [F-1 Visa \(DOC\)](#) holders. Full-time status for F-1 Visa students is 12 hours for undergraduates and 9 hours for graduate students.

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy emphasizes applied learning that connects theory to real-world practice. I promote critical thinking and active engagement with complex issues through analysis, discussion, and scenario-based instruction. I also establish clear expectations for student preparation and participation to support these learning objectives. I maintain an accessible and responsive classroom environment that encourages respectful dialogue, diverse perspectives, and timely academic support when needed. My overall goal is to develop students' ability to apply ethical and analytical reasoning beyond the classroom into professional practice.

General Policies

Communication Expectations

Connect with me through email and/or by attending office hours. Please use your official unt.edu email account for all email communications with me and include the CJUS course number in the subject line of the email. I respond to student emails as promptly as possible, typically within 48 hours during the business week. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated

Coursewide announcements will primarily be shared through Canvas Announcements and may include important updates, reminders, and course changes. It is **your responsibility** to check and read any messages sent through Canvas.

ADA Policy

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. To request accommodations, you must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) by completing an application for services and providing documentation to verify your eligibility each semester. Once your eligibility is confirmed, you may request your letter of accommodation. ODA will then email your faculty a letter of reasonable accommodation, initiating a private discussion about your specific needs in the course.

You can request accommodations at any time, but it's important to provide ODA notice to your faculty as early as possible in the semester to avoid delays in implementation. Keep in mind that you must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and meet with each faculty member before accommodations can be implemented in each class. You are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding your accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty have the authority to ask you to discuss your letter during their designated office hours to protect your privacy. For more information and to access resources that can support your needs, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>).

Academic Success Resources

UNT strives to offer a high-quality education in a supportive environment where you can learn, grow, and thrive. As a faculty member, I am committed to supporting you, and I want to remind you that UNT offers a range of mental health and wellness services to help maintain balance and well-being. Utilizing these resources is a proactive way to support your academic and personal success. To explore campus resources designed to support you, check out [mental health services](https://clear.unt.edu/student-mental-health-services) ([https://clear.unt.edu/student-](https://clear.unt.edu/student-mental-health-services)

[support-services-policies](#)), visit unt.edu/success, and explore unt.edu/wellness. To get all your enrollment and student financial-related questions answered, go to scrappysays.unt.edu.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

How to Succeed in this Course

This course is delivered fully online and does not include scheduled lecture sessions or designated class meeting times. Instruction is provided through assigned readings, recorded materials, and other posted resources. As a result, students are expected to independently review and study all course content to achieve the learning objectives. Success in this course requires a high level of self-discipline, effective time management, and consistent engagement with the materials. While the instructor will provide guidance, clarification, and feedback, students are responsible for actively managing their learning and seeking assistance when questions arise. I am here to support you and strongly encourage you to take advantage of all available academic resources, including scheduling appointments during office hours for additional guidance and clarification.

I encourage you to take advantage of office hours and communicate with me whenever questions or challenges arise. Office hours are not only for students who are struggling. They are an opportunity to discuss course concepts, clarify assignments, develop ideas, and strengthen your understanding of the material. Many students who regularly attend office hours find that the additional discussion and guidance helps improve both their confidence and performance in the course. My goal is to support your academic success and help you develop the critical thinking and analytical skills necessary for professional practice.

Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Together, we can ensure a safe and welcoming classroom for all. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.

Required/Recommended Materials

- Criminal Investigation: Theory and Practice 2nd Edition, Wall and Johnstone, ISBN 13 : 9798765781524

Note: In addition to the required text, journal articles, documentaries, and other sources of reference **may** be used to further enhance students' learning and will be made available on Canvas.

Course Technology & Skills

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System and other required equipment or software such as a webcam, microphone, Adobe Photoshop, etc. If circumstances change, you will be

informed of other technical needs to access course content. Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere](https://online.unt.edu/learn) (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

Minimum Technology Requirements

- Computer
- Reliable internet access
- Speakers
- Microphone
- Plug-ins
- Microsoft Office Suite
- [Canvas Technical Requirements](https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/canvas/requirements) (<https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/canvas/requirements>)

Computer Skills & Digital Literacy

- Using Canvas
- Using email with attachments
- Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats (.doc, .pdf)
- Downloading and installing software

Technical Assistance

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

UIT Help Desk: [UIT Student Help Desk site](http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm) (<http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>)

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu

Phone: 940-565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130

Walk-In Availability: 8am-9pm

Telephone Availability:

- Sunday: noon-midnight
- Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
- Friday: 8am-8pm
- Saturday: 9am-5pm

Laptop Checkout: 8am-7pm

For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328) (<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328>)

Course Requirements

This course uses a combination of exams and discussions to assess student learning. These assignments are designed to promote consistent engagement with course material, reinforce understanding of key concepts, and develop the ability to apply investigative framework to real-world criminal justice situations.

1. Introduce Yourself Discussion (5 points total)

The course will begin with an introduce yourself discussion. The goal is to allow the other students and me to get a feel for where you are in your academic journey. This discussion is brief, and all I ask is that you answer a few short questions. ***Due date is listed in Canvas and the course calendar below***

2. The CSI Effect (10 points total)

Early in the semester, you will complete a short assignment analyzing a scene from a crime drama or true crime program of your choice. This assignment introduces the gap between how criminal investigations are portrayed in popular media and how they function in practice, a concept known as the "CSI Effect." ***Assignment due date listed in Canvas and the course calendar below***

3. Exams (150 points total)

There will be a total of three (3) exams administered through Canvas, each worth 50 points, for a total of **150 points (67% of the final grade)**.

Each exam will consist of 50 multiple-choice and true/false questions covering assigned readings, lecture material, and related course content. Exams are open-note and open-text, and students may consult assigned readings and course materials while completing them. Once opened, each exam must be completed within 60 minutes.

Each exam will be available for a 7-day submission window, and due dates are listed in the course calendar. Students are responsible for monitoring exam availability and completing the exams before the submission window closes. Exams not completed before the deadline will receive a zero and generally cannot be made up except as permitted under university policy and the course late work policy. ***Exam due dates are listed in Canvas and the course calendar below***

4. Discussion Posts (60 points total)

Each student will be required to respond to 3 Canvas discussions throughout the course of the semester. Each Canvas discussion is worth 20 points, for a total of 60 points (**26% towards your final grade**). Discussion posts should include your response to the post, and a response to a classmate's post. Your original post should be approximately 200–250 words; your peer reply should be approximately 100 words. ***Students must reply to at least one other student's posts for full point potential*** (responding appropriately and meaningfully). Discussion assignments will generally open on Canvas about one week before they are due, allowing you to plan your schedule and complete the work before the deadline. ***Discussion due dates are listed in Canvas and the course calendar below.***

Your discussions will be graded on depth of explanation, utilization of sources, connection to course materials, specific efforts to back up your arguments with logical points and sources, grammar and spelling, and adhering to the assignment. ***A detailed rubric for the discussions is provided in Canvas.***

To locate the discussion boards, click the Discussions tab to the left of the main screen. Select the appropriate Canvas Discussion assignment. Next click on the appropriate forum. To post a comment select "Create Thread." In order to receive full credit, you must post an original response and respond to at least one other students' post. ***Note that you will NOT be able to see any other students' posts until you have first posted a thread yourself.***

Schedule

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class. The calendar is subject to change in line with the [Campus Closures Policy \(https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006\)](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/15-006).

Course Schedule (Fall 2026)

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment	Due
Module I				
1	08/17-08/23	An Introduction to Criminal Investigation	Text: Chapter 1 Introduce Yourself Discussion	08/23
2	08/24-08/30	The Initial Response and At-Scene Investigations	Text: Chapter 2 Assignment: The CSI Effect	08/30
3	08/31-09/06	Crime Scene Processing	Text: Chapter 3	
4	09/07-09/13	Investigative Resources and Procedures	Text: Chapter 4	
5	09/14-09/20	Laws of Arrest Search and Seizure	Text: Chapter 5 Exam 1 (Covers weeks 1-5)	09/20
6	09/21-09/27	Case Preparation, Submission and Court Procedures	Text: Chapter 6 Discussion 1	09/27
Module II				
7	09/28-10/04	Common Forensic Analyses and Interpretation	Text: Chapter 7	
8	10/05-10/11	Interviewing Witnesses	Text: Chapter 8 Discussion 2	10/11
9	10/12-10/18	Interrogations and False Confessions	Text: Chapter 9	
10	10/19-10/25	Reconstruction and Non-Laboratory Based Sciences	Text: Chapter 10 Exam 2 (Covers weeks 6-10)	10/25

Module III				
11	10/26-11/01	Homicides and Assaults	Text: Chapter 11	
12	11/02-11/08	Sexual Assaults	Text: Chapter 12	
13	11/09-11/15	Crimes Against Children/ Human Trafficking	Text: Chapter 13 Discussion 3	11/15
14	11/16-11/22	Cybercrime and Computer Crimes	Text: Chapter 14	
15	11/23-11/29	NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING	BREAK
16	11/30-12/06	Organized Crime, White Collar Crime, and Fraud	Text: Read Chapter 15 Exam 3 (Covers weeks 11-15) SPOT Evaluation	12/06

Assessing Your Work

This course uses a variety of assignments and assessments designed to support the course learning objectives and evaluate your understanding of course material. Throughout the semester, students will do an analyses assignment, take exams, and complete discussion questions. These assessments are intended to encourage consistent engagement with assigned readings, class discussion, and applied analysis of criminal justice issues.

Grades and feedback will generally be made available within 7 business days, although larger written assignments may require additional grading time. Students are encouraged to regularly review feedback and monitor their progress throughout the semester. There is a total of **225** points that can be earned in this class. The grading policy along with other class requirements is presented below.

Assignment	Points	Percent of Grade
Exams (3) @50 points each	150 points	67%
Discussions (3) at 20 points each	60 points	26%
The CSI Effect	10 points	5%
Introduce Yourself Discussion	5 points	2%
Total	225 points	100%

Grading Scale

A = 203-225

B = 180-202

C = 158-179

D = 135-157

F = Below 135 points

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. To read more about the policy, please visit: [Academic Integrity Policy \(PDF\)](#).

Every student in my class can improve by doing their own work and trying their hardest with access to appropriate resources. Students who use other people's work without citations will be violating UNT's Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of [guidelines for your academic success](#) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>). If you have questions about this, or any UNT policy, please email me or come discuss this with me during my office hours.

Generative AI Use

In this course, the use of GenAI tools is limited as directed by the instructor. Any additional use requires explicit permission, proper citation, and authentic student work.

Throughout the semester, you will or may use specific Generative AI (GenAI) tools for certain assignments, with guidance on responsible use. These assignments help build ethical resilience and GenAI literacy, preparing you for careers in a GenAI oriented workforce.

I use GenAI to enhance materials, streamline tasks, generate prompts, create scenarios, draft syllabi, build study guides, and analyze performance. I will always disclose how I use GenAI, and I expect the same from you.

In accordance with the UNT Honor Code, unauthorized use of GenAI tools is prohibited. Using GenAI content without proper credit or substituting your own work with GenAI undermines the learning process and violates UNT academic integrity policy. If you're unsure whether something is allowed, please seek clarification

Late Work

Late work and make-up assignments are generally not accepted except in cases of authorized university absences or documented extreme circumstances approved by the instructor. Authorized absences are those recognized under university policy. Students are responsible for following university procedures for requesting an excused absence and should provide written documentation in advance whenever possible.

If a serious illness or emergency prevents completion of a required assignment or exam, documentation must be provided within 3 calendar days. The instructor reserves the right to evaluate exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

Any approved make-up work must be completed within 3 days of returning from the authorized absence. For assignments or exams with extended availability windows, the authorized absence must substantially prevent access to the full submission period in order to qualify for a make-up opportunity.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit offered for this course. Any change to this policy would apply to the entire class and not to individual students. Students should focus on completing assigned coursework and maximizing performance on required assessments.

Attendance and Participation

Students are required to login regularly to the online class site. The instructor will use the tracking feature in Canvas to monitor student activity. Students are also required to participate in all class activities such as the discussion board.

I understand that many students balance academic responsibilities with work, family, and other personal obligations. If circumstances arise that may affect your attendance or participation, I encourage you to communicate with me as early as possible so we can discuss available options and support your success in the course.

Syllabus Change Policy

I reserve the right and have the discretion to change this syllabus. While every effort will be made to follow this syllabus as closely as possible, it is sometimes the case that it must be modified. In the case that it needs to be adjusted, I will announce such adjustments to the class. I will make every effort to ensure that any changes to the syllabus benefit the class as a whole. It is the student's responsibility to check announcements/email so that all changes are documented. Failure to obtain syllabus changes because of failure to check and read announcements/email does not constitute a defense against a missed Reading, test date, or other applicable changes.