



E115 The Use of Large-Scale Faux Crime Scenes and Cold Case Coursework to Teach Forensic Science in Social Science-Based Coursework

Michelle Rippy, California State University-East Bay, Hayward, CA 94542*

Learning Overview: After attending this session, attendees will be able to identify common issues with teaching science-based courses in a social science major. Attendees will be able to discuss assignment options for non-scientists and employ new tactics for expanding learning. Attendees will be able to outline coursework options using assignment examples provided and relate assignments to student feedback.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by offering background and ideas on how to teach complicated forensic science topics to non-science majors. Examples of coursework and student evaluations of the assignments are provided to allow educators to expand knowledge and assist in assessing projects to enhance student learning and application of knowledge.

Educating undergraduate students in a social science major on forensic science topics is especially challenging, as many have not taken a science course since high school. Teaching basic science is required for understanding of forensic science techniques and processes, which consumes valuable class time and can lead to student frustration. Complex forensic science topics can be successfully broken down using case studies and by showing the intersection of forensic science with social science-related criminal justice topics. The high-impact practice of incorporating collaborative assignments assists in increasing student involvement and learning to work in a team. The use of large-scale faux crime scenes incorporates collaborative assignments and gives students groundwork of basic science relating to different types of evidence. The students are responsible for recognizing evidence, photographing, collecting, processing, and recognizing the proper type of scientific forensic testing to request—showing application of the material. The crime scene also incorporates interviewing witnesses at the scene to employ knowledge and skills gained during the foundation portion of the course. Cold cases from local agencies are presented by detectives, and students are provided with the case files to review and “work” in a tabletop format. Using foundational knowledge gained from the beginning of the class, student groups review the evidence, assess the evidence and information available, and complete assignments based on other work or theories that can be followed. Student evaluations of forensic science-based activities in social science coursework show support of the assignments in analyzing cases, employing the basic science concepts learned, and interpreting evidence found during the faux crime scenes.

Forensic, Education, Non-Scientists