

San José State University
Justice Studies
JS 185-02 (29886): Forensic Eyewitness Interviews
Spring 2021

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Gil Zamora
Office Location:	Online (Synchronous/Asynchronous)
Google Chat:	Online
Email:	Gil.zamora@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Mondays, by appointment – email or chat to schedule appointment
Class Days/Time:	(Survey to be distributed first week of class)
Classroom:	Online, Wednesdays, 1330 hrs. – 1615 hrs.
Prerequisites:	JS 10, JS 11, JS 25, or FS 11

Course Description

This course critically examines the interview techniques used for obtaining reliable information from eyewitnesses. Comparing the interview techniques used by law enforcement to more advanced processes, allows the student to gain exceptional knowledge about current investigative interview methodologies. Misidentifications by eyewitnesses have led to the incarceration of thousands of innocent victims. Preparing students to minimize the pitfalls of interviewing eyewitnesses will prepare them to identify questionable interview techniques in order to develop best practices.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Distinguish the roles and responsibilities of criminal investigators in criminal justice (e.g., investigations, field contacts), and victimology (e.g., sexual abuse, testimony, violent assaults, fraud).
2. Examine the cognitive interview technique as applied to various types of eyewitnesses.
3. Contrast interview questions that may lead to unreliable information.
4. Analyze the research on eyewitness memory; discuss criminal justice reforms about photo-lineups, and system and estimator variables.

Required Texts/Readings

- Fisher, R.P. & Geiselman, R.E. (1992). *Memory–Enhancing Techniques for Investigative Interviewing: The Cognitive Interview*. Springfield, Ill: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.
- Loftus, E.F. (1996). *Eyewitness Testimony*. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press.

Textbook (Potential)

- Benton, T.R., McDonnell, S.A., Thomas, N., Ross, D.F., & Honerkamp, N. (2005). On the Admissibility of Expert Testimony on Eyewitness Identification: A Legal and Scientific Evaluation. *Tennessee Journal of Law & Policy*. 2(3). 1-62
- Smalarz, L. & Wells, G.L. (2012). Eyewitness-Identification Evidence: Scientific Advances and the New Burden on Trial Judges. *Court Review: The Journal of the American Judges Association*, 48, 14-21.
- The National Research Council of the National Academies. (2015, January). *Identifying the Culprit:*

Other Readings Supplied electronically via Canvas; *Elements of Style* (EOS).

Library Liaison

Nyle Monday (Nyle.Monday@sjsu.edu)

<http://libguides.sjsu.edu/justicestudies>

Course Requirements and Assignments

In-Class Discussion (20%): Participation in class discussion requires being present and prepared to critically discuss the implications of key issues of the topic. This requires completing the weekly readings and other assignments prior to participating in online discussions. Your grade will reflect the importance of being active in this course, which relies in great part on the reflections, discussions, and exercises in class. Attendance is encouraged in order to receive maximum points. These discussions will specifically address CLO's 1, 2 and 3.

Midterm and Final Examination (40%): You will be administered a midterm and final examination, each worth 20% of your final grade. Each exam will cover material from lectures (including all media presented) and assigned readings. The midterm will be held during regularly scheduled class time while the final will be held during the final exam period. Each exam will be non-cumulative and comprised of multiple choice and short answer questions. These examinations will specifically address CLO's 1, 3 and 4.

Papers

Misidentification Paper (20%): Students must write a minimum five-page research paper (APA/EOS) on a US misidentification case or reforms about misidentifications. Detailed assignment guidelines will be provided in person and via Canvas. (CLO's 2, 3, and 4)

Interviews

Investigative Interview Sessions (20%): Students will test their interview techniques by conducting mock interviews with three different types of eyewitnesses (to be determined). Each student will be evaluated by their peers and the instructor. These evaluations will score the reliability of the information each student obtained. (CLO's 1 thru 4)

Grading Information

A plus = 98.0 to 100.0

B plus = 85.0 to less than 89.0

C plus = 70.0 to less than 74.0

F = less than 59.0

A = 94.0 to less than 97.0

B = 80.0 to less than 84.0

C = 65.0 to less than 69.0

A minus = 90.0 to less than 93.0

B minus = 75.0 to less than 79.0

C minus = 60.0 to less than 64.0

- To receive a grade for this course, all course requirements must be met, and every assignment must be completed. Failure to complete any one assignment may result in a failing grade for this course.
- Late assignments or papers will not be accepted unless specifically announced at the time of the assignment. You may lose a minimum of 10% for late assignments/papers.
- Extra credit opportunities will be assigned after the midterm. Extra credit points will be added to your final grade (after your final examination).
- This course satisfies **Area E (Human Understanding & Development)** and **Area D (Human Behavior)**.

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 65 hours over the length of the course for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>"

ACCESS Success Center

The Academic Counseling Center for Excellence in the Social Sciences (ACCESS) provides General Education advising for undergraduate students majoring or intending to major in any of the departments in the College of Social Sciences (CoSS). ACCESS Academic Advisors are committed to helping you develop a clear path to graduation and supporting your academic success.

Fall 2020 Office Hours: Monday-Thursday 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM and Friday 9:00 AM-4:00 PM. You can schedule an appointment and find more information at sjsu.edu/access.

JS 185: Forensic Eyewitness Interviews Spring 2021 Course Schedule

This course schedule is subject to change with fair notice, at the instructor's discretion. Changes will be communicated via Canvas, and in-class. All reading assignments listed should be completed prior to class on that date. Additional readings may be assigned.

Week	Date	Weekly Overview (Subject to Change)
1	Introduction	Introduction: Interviewing Eyewitnesses
2	Eyewitness Memory	Perceiving the event Retaining the event
3		Event Factors/Witness Factors
4		Confidence levels
5		Recognizing people Theoretical issues
	Misidentifications	Innocence Project
6		Interview vs. Interrogation
7		Picking Cotton analysis Case study - misidentifications
8		
9		MIDTERM
	Sequence of cognitive interview	Introduction
10		Open-ended narration Probing memory codes Reviewing the Interview

11	Student Mock interviews	Closing the Interview Mock Interviews
12		Feedback on mock interview
13	Cognitive Interview principles	Dynamics of the interview Developing Rapport Eyewitness expectations and goals Altering Eyewitness behavior
14	Evaluation of Final Interviews	Wording questions
15		Tone and voice Pace and timing Reviewing statements
16	Evaluation of Final Interviews	
17	FINAL	