Fall 2021 Forensic Science Program Newsletter

The Forensic Science Program is relaunching our twice yearly newsletter to keep you updated on program news and updates. Please take a moment to read through our Fall 2021 edition. Reacquaint yourself with our faculty, meet our new staff and faculty members, and read about our new courses being offered this coming Spring. Thank you!

Meet our faculty!

Bill Campbell

Dr. Campbell teaches FRNSC 427W – Forensic Chemistry I, FRNSC 532 – Drug Chemistry and Toxicology, and FRNSC 831
– FRNSC Chemistry II. His research interests are in forensic drug analysis, including street drugs and drugs in biological matrix, as well as the development of HPLC phases to accomplish those drug analysis goals.

Jason Brooks

Dr. Brooks is the Director of the Forensic Science Program since September 2020. He is a board-certified veterinary pathologist and has performed veterinary forensic autopsies at the Penn State Animal Diagnostic Laboratory for over 18 years. His research is focused on the estimation of the postmortem interval and the pathology of gunshot wounds.
Jen McElhoe

Dr. McElhoe teaches PSU-016 – First-Year Seminar and a graduate-level statistics course for our students. Her research interests are bioinformatics and its application to DNA-related statistics.

Mike Kusluski

Mr. Kusluki teaches FRNSC 200 – Introduction to Crime Scene Investigation, FRNSC 485W – Coalescence of Forensic Science Topics, FRNSC 497 – Firearms and Toolmarks Examination, and FRNSC 801 – Criminalistics III. His research interests are in shooting incident reconstruction and bloodstain pattern analysis.
Mitch Holland

Dr. Holland teaches FRNSC 400 – Courtroom Proceedings and Testimony, FRNSC 421W – Forensic Molecular Biology I, and FRNSC 821 – Forensic Molecular Biology II. His research interests are advancing forensic DNA applications, especially in the area of mitochondrial DNA analysis and heteroplasmy.

Ralph Ristenbatt
Mr. Ristenbatt teaches FRNSC 410 – A Scientific Approach to Crime Scene Investigation, FRNSC 415W – Laboratory in Crime Scene Investigation, and FRNSC 490 – Traceology and Event Reconstruction. His research interests are anything used in or relevant to crime scene investigation and reconstruction.

Reena Roy

Dr. Roy teaches FRNSC 413: Criminalistics – Biology, FRNSC 562 – Ethics in Forensic Science, and FRNSC 894 – Research Projects in Forensic Science. Her research interests are forensically relevant biology, DNA, and bacterial genome research.
Stewart Hung

Mr. Hung teaches PSU 016 – First-Year Seminar, FRNSC 210 – Essential Practices of Forensic Science, FRNSC 411 - Criminalistics: Trace and Impression Evidence, and FRNSC 475 – Forensic Science Seminar. His research interests are examination of trace evidence using analytical scientific instrumentation and trace elemental analysis using ICP-OES.

Meet our Staff!
Carol DeArmitt

Carol is the forensic program’s Administrative Support Coordinator. Her work for the program includes overseeing daily office activities, assists in the management of program budgets, processes orders and payments, organizes meetings and events, and supervises the administrative support staff.

Katie Mantz

Katie is the forensic program’s Education Program Associate. Her work for the program includes maintaining our FEPAC accreditation, course and curriculum design/development, outreach and online presence, and she also teaches FRNSC 100 – Introduction to Forensic Science.
Noelle Waggett

Noelle is the forensic program’s undergraduate advisor. Her work for the program includes acting as a guide in course selection and scheduling for our majors and pre-majors, monitoring student academic progress, and helping students meet their academic and professional goals while at Penn State.

Tara Wales

Tara is the forensic program’s Administrative Support Assistant. Her work for the program includes overseeing the day-to-day administrative duties related to the graduate program, maintaining the course schedule each semester, assisting with scheduling exams, and helping our program coordinator when necessary.
Graduate Open House

Join us on November 3rd for our Grad Open House for prospective MPS in Forensic Science students. Our open house will be held from 6:30 - 8:00pm.

Hear from our program director, faculty, and current students. Get your questions answered and see why Penn State Forensic Science is the right choice for you!

Click to Join

New Courses Added for Spring 2022

FRNSC 419 - Firearms and Toolmarks Examination
(FRNSC 497 - Special Topics for Spring 22)
Introduction to theory and application of firearm and tool mark examination in forensic science. Fundamental scientific concepts used in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of this evidence are applied in
course work and through hands-on laboratory experiments. Focuses on the examination and comparison of evidence from crimes involving firearms (guns, bullets, cartridge cases, shotshells and ammunition) as well as the manufacturing processes which allow these items to be classified and/or individualized. Also examines reconstruction of shooting incidents (trajectory analysis, function testing, muzzle-to-target distance estimation), restoration of obliterated serial numbers and the examination of tool mark evidence.

**FRNSC 490 - Traceology & Reconstruction**
This course will explore the knowledge and methods relevant to traceology and the scientific reconstruction of events. Traceology will be compared and contrasted with historical and experimental science; rigorous utilization of the scientific method will also be discussed. Philosophical topics will include scientific inductivism and falsificationism, the two primary methods used to evaluate hypotheses, and other epistemological approaches to the pursuit of knowledge and truth. A significant portion of the course will be devoted to the knowledge and techniques necessary to identify and sequence discrete actions that comprise events including the analysis of blood deposits, firearm evidence including ballistics, and other traces.

Thanks for being a part of the Penn State Forensic Science Program.