

**MVLA  
2025-26  
COURSE INFORMATION SHEET**

**Course Title:** Forensic Science

**School:** Los Altos High School

**UC/CSU requirement:** 10 credits towards D-level lab science

**MVLA Graduation requirement:** 10 credits, interdisciplinary science

**Textbook:** *A Hands-On Introduction to Forensic Science, Cracking the Case, 2nd Edition*, M. Okuda & F. Stephenson (CRC Press, 2020)

**Course Description/Student Learning Outcomes:**

Forensic science is a laboratory-based introduction to the analysis of crime scenes by collecting and analyzing physical evidence. This course is designed to integrate the core scientific disciplines while giving students both theory and hands-on experience with the skills and knowledge required of a forensic crime scene investigator.

Through this course, students will demonstrate their ability to:

- use logic, reasoning, and content knowledge to reconstruct the events at a crime scene.
- engage in NGSS science and engineering practices to perform investigations, solve problems and communicate ideas.
- identify, analyze and evaluate scientific data.
- apply mathematical concepts and construct models to understand natural phenomena.
- evaluate the importance of confounding variables that exist in the “real world”.
- learn about content through firsthand observations and test concepts and principles that are introduced in the classroom.
- engage in dialogue and research with classmates to build listening and public speaking skills.

**Course Outline/Units of Study/:**

This multidisciplinary approach will highlight topics in crime scene analysis, DNA, human anatomy, fingerprints, trace evidence, forensic anthropology, serology, ballistics, drugs/toxicology, autopsy, and mock trial. Supplemental subject matter will also include case studies, mathematics, technology and the ethical, legal, and social concerns surrounding forensics.

**Assessment and Grading ([BP 5121](#) / [AR 5121](#)):** To ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their learning, the course instructors implement aligned grading practices and common assessments with the same frequency.

**1. Grading categories and their percentage weights:**

20%: Tests (unit/chapter) & Quizzes  
65%: Assignments & Classwork  
15%: Mock Trial/Crime Scene Analysis

**2. Achievement evidence collected within each grading category:**

Students will be informed of the quantity, weight, and due dates of assignment/assessments in each grading category on AERIES. Lab work, classwork, homework, assessments, projects/presentations, and participation will all contribute to the overall grade earned by the student.

**3. Grading scales:**

A = 100%-90%	C = 79%-68%	
B = 89%-80	D = 67%-55%	F = 54% and below

**4. Homework/outside of class practices ([AR 6154](#)):**

Students are expected to study forensic science for 20-30 minutes, three nights a week. This could include

reading, taking notes, worksheets, lab analysis, researching topics online, and/or reviewing for tests. There will be homework on some weekends. Students should use their given classtime to start their homework and greatly reduce the assignment load.

**5. Excused absence make up practices** ([Education Code 48205\(b\)](#)):

- A. When absent, it is YOUR responsibility to find out what you missed from Google Classroom, a fellow student, or the teacher.
- B. Make-up exams will not be given, unless there is an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher the day of the missed exam. It will be the teacher's discretion as to whether the test will be given in class, after school, or during ACT (Academic Collaboration Time).
- C. If you are absent the day before a test and miss the classroom review, you will still be required to take the test when you return.
- D. Lab make-ups should be prioritized during the following ACT session.
- E. If you miss class for a school related event, you must turn in homework by the due date and check in with your teacher prior to your absence.
- F. Lab experiments take time to set up and to do, therefore if you are absent, even if it is excused, you may not be able to make it up. You are still responsible for the material covered in the lab. If you have a doctor or dentist appointment on block days, please change it.
- G. Students who fail to complete a make-up test or lab will not have the opportunity to make it up again and will earn a score of zero.
- H. Completion of work is due in the number of days missed, unless the assignment was given prior to the absence (for instance, a test will be given on the day you return to class).

**6. Academic integrity violation practices** ([LAHS Academic Integrity Policy](#) / [MVHS Academic Integrity Policy](#)):

Honesty, trust and integrity are vital components of the education process. The Governing Board believes that academic honesty and personal integrity are fundamental components of a student's education and character development. The Board expects that students will not cheat, lie, plagiarize or commit other acts of academic dishonesty. Students and families should understand and act upon the values of academic integrity and should encourage the highest standards of academic behavior from themselves and their peers. It is assumed that all work completed for a class is original work created for that class, for a specific assignment. Violations of Academic Integrity will be dealt with in a manner consistent with the MVLA-LAHS Academic Integrity Policy. *Students caught cheating will earn a score of zero, denoted by a "V" in the grade book. There will not be an opportunity to make up the assignment.*

**7. Late work practices:**

- A. Assignments (i.e. homework, lab reports, etc.) will be due on the teacher's specified day and must be submitted at the START of class. Late work penalties:
  - 20% off if turned in late but BEFORE we correct it in class.
  - 40% off if turned in late AFTER we correct it in class before end of quarter.
- B. Technology issues do not constitute a valid excuse for why an assignment is late, unless the student provides evidence that assistance was requested via the district help desk. Help can be requested at [helpdesk@mvla.net](mailto:helpdesk@mvla.net).
- C. No late projects or presentations are allowed.

**8. Revision practices:**

- It is expected that students seek assistance and feedback prior to an assignment due date.
- Students may retake TWO tests in a given semester, provided they have completed the unit review sheet/study guide. The retake score will be entered into the gradebook.

**9. Extra credit practices:**

Students should not expect any extra credit opportunities.

**10. Additional grading practices:**

Group work: while students often work collaboratively on laboratory and other assignments, each student is required to submit his/her own written report for credit, including data analysis (graph). Raw data is the only information to be shared.

**11. LMS Used:** Google Classroom. Grade Book Update Policy: grades will be posted every 2-3 weeks on the Aeries/SIS student information system. Google Classroom is not used for grades.

**Instructors' email addresses:**

**Additional information:**

1. Each student must maintain a 3-ring notebook and have a charged device.
2. When absent, it is YOUR responsibility to find out what you missed from Google Classroom, a fellow student, or teacher ON THE DAY of your absence.
3. Assignments (i.e. homework, lab reports, etc.) will be due on the teacher's specified day and must be ready to pass in/submit online at the start of class. There are no excuses (finishing last question, putting name on it, internet issues, etc.).
4. There will be NO EATING, NO DRINKING, and NO GUM CHEWING allowed. Please wait until the given breaktime.
5. Take care of all restroom/bathroom needs before class, or during breaks.
6. Always demonstrate respect for your classmates, teacher, and yourself. Our classroom is a place where people work together towards a common goal in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. As young adults, you know what behaviors are appropriate in such a setting. Listen to each other carefully and speak when it is your turn. Also, learn each other's names!
7. Be responsible for your lab materials. Return lab equipment in the same way it was given. Please be careful with all laboratory equipment and class materials (including your textbook). If you are careless with or lose the equipment you may be charged for it.
8. Shared Google docs are not appropriate for assignments – you may share data with lab group members but you are responsible for completing your own analysis and review questions.
9. Sunglasses and hats/hoods (headgear) are accessory items and are NOT to be worn during class. Remove jewelry for labs and pull back long hair.