

# Skyline College

## Official Course Outline

**Date:** August 2008

**1. TITLE:**

**ADMJ 110 – Police Report Writing**

3.0 units. Three lecture hours per week

Recommended: Eligibility for ENGL 836

**2. COURSE CLASSIFICATION:**

Credit course applicable to the Associate Degree, and to the Criminal Justice Certificate

**3. COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**

**Catalog Description:**

Exploration of effective police report writing techniques, including crime, arrest and incident reports. Examination of interview methods, note taking, report organization and documentation, crime scene diagrams, search warrant affidavits, and case preparation for prosecution. Emphasis on essential principles of written and oral communication in law enforcement, including testifying in court.

**Schedule of Classes Description:**

Exploration of effective police report writing and courtroom testimony. Essential principles of written and oral law enforcement communication and documentation, from crime scene to courtroom.

**4. COURSE JUSTIFICATION:**

This is a transfer course to fulfill General Education requirements of the Associate Degree (F3), and is transferable as follows: CSU. This course is a required core course in the Administration of Justice Program curriculum for students seeking a Criminal Justice Certificate.

**5. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO'S):**

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

- Effectively plan, organize, and construct well-written police reports documenting investigations, events, and activities, such as crimes, incidents, arrests, traffic collisions, and evidence/property reports; and various internal investigations, such as background investigations; and preparing crime scene diagrams.
- Apply improved and effective grammar and writing skills to prepare accurate, concise, and complete police reports.
- Effectively use the police report as a basis for providing information when called to testify as a witness in court, and to demonstrate proper courtroom demeanor, etiquette, and delivery of testimony while on the witness stand.

## 6. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

To assist students in reaching the goals outlined in the course SLO's, this course will include:

- Study of the legal, ethical, operational, and professional considerations for documenting observations, statements, activities, discoveries, events, and investigations in police reports.
- Familiarization with various police report formats used by law enforcement, such as narrative-style, form-style, category-style, and combination-style police reports.
- Analysis of cases and situations that will require the preparation and writing of police reports.
- Review of the basic mechanics of criminal investigation as a prelude to writing police reports.
- Illustration of crime scenes, traffic accident scenes, and other events by designing sketches and diagrams.
- Participating in class exercises involving interviewing victims, witnesses, and suspects of crime; note taking and report writing exercises; preparing sketches and diagrams; writing improvement exercises; and participation in a role-playing "mock trial" exercise at the end of the course.

## 7. COURSE CONTENT:

- a. Why We Write Police Reports
- b. Investigation Basics
- c. Note Taking
- d. Interviewing Victims, Witnesses, and Informants
- e. Interrogating Suspects of Crime
- f. Rules of Narrative Writing
- g. Describing Persons, Property, and Evidence
- h. Crime Scene Investigation Tips
- i. Face Sheet (Form) Reports
- j. Arrest Reports and Probable Cause Forms
- k. Writing Search Warrants
- l. Miscellaneous Issues in Writing
- m. Sketch and Diagram Preparation
- n. Category Report System
- o. Various Police Reports
- p. English Grammar in Report Writing
- q. Tips for Testifying as a Witness in Court
- r. Mock Trial Exercises (at conclusion of course).

## 8. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

Methods of instruction will include:

- Lectures on course lessons, text readings (25-50 pages assigned per week), and related topics, combined with class discussions to stimulate critical thinking and provide students with opportunities to demonstrate understanding of course material. Students are expected to take notes and engage in class and group discussions to maximize retention of the course material.
- Reviews of course related handouts, articles, illustrations, and current events to enhance the students' experience by exploring and applying material to a contemporary real-world setting.
- Audiovisual presentations which illustrate and enhance the concepts of topics covered in class.

- Tests, quizzes, research papers, and writing assignments to demonstrate comprehension of the course material through hands-on applications and written examinations.

Methods of instruction may also be augmented by:

- Practical demonstrations, displays, and in-class role-playing exercises, as applicable to the topic.
- Student interviews of criminal justice professionals and preparing a written report on the results.
- Guest speakers with expertise in various areas of criminal justice, to provide diverse and unique perspectives on a variety of controversial issues in their field.
- Field trips to law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies, courts, jails, and prisons.
- Individual student consultations, as necessary, to ensure that student learning is taking place.
- Practical work experience such as ride-alongs or other applicable site work to enhance learning.

## **9. ASSIGNMENTS:**

Typical assignments:

- a. Research and Writing or Oral assignments about course related topics which demonstrate student knowledge, comprehension, and application skills, may include:
  - term papers, short papers, research papers, essay papers, and oral presentation reports.
  - reports on field interviews, site visits, observations, work performed, or film critiques.
- b. Case Study assignments to develop critical thinking and concept application, may include:
  - reviewing and critiquing Supreme Court, appellate court, and trial court cases.
  - responding to the questions, scenarios, or case studies included in text chapters.
- c. Tests and Quizzes, consisting of the written, oral, and/or practical application variety to assess comprehension of assigned readings, course content, and other related course activities.

## **10. EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE:**

Typical methods of evaluation of student performance may include the following:

- a. Written examinations, such as quizzes, midterm exams, and final exams to demonstrate student understanding and proficiency skills concerning the material presented in the course.
- b. In-class and out of class assignments to demonstrate student ability to apply course concepts to assigned tasks utilizing comprehension, application, analysis, and critical thinking skills.
- c. Case study exercises to demonstrate student ability to integrate multiple concepts to solve realistic situations.
- d. Class discussions of course material to permit the exchange of ideas involving a variety of course related issues and concerns.
- e. Attendance and promptness, class citizenship and conduct, and participation and cooperation.
- f. Grading Method: Letter Grade.

## **11. RECOMMENDED or REQUIRED TEXT(S):**

The recommended or required course textbook, selected at the discretion of the course instructor, may include (but is not limited to) the following suggested current editions on the subject matter:

- *Just The Facts – Investigative Report Writing*, by Michael Biggs; published by Prentice Hall.
- *Painless Report Writing for Criminal Justice Professionals*, by Barbara Frazee and Joseph N. Davis; published by Prentice Hall.
- *Report It In Writing*, by Debbie J. Goodman; published by Prentice Hall.
- *Report Writing for Criminal Justice Professionals*, by Larry S. Miller and Dan Moeser; published by Lexis Nexis.