

Skyline College

Police Report Writing

ADMJ-110 Course Syllabus ~ Fall 2009



The information in this syllabus outlines the policies, procedures, and practices that every student must know and comply with while enrolled in this course. Students should print a paper copy of this syllabus and have it available for reference. Detailed information about Skyline College Policies & Procedures is available in the *Student Handbook*, the *Course Catalog*, the *Class Schedule*, and the college web site. Please visit the professor's web page for important information about this course.

Instructor Information

Professor: Steven Aurilio

Email: aurilios@smccd.edu

Web: www.smccd.edu/accounts/aurilios/index.html

Building 1, 3rd Floor

Office: 1-1309

(650) 738-4134/Voicemail

Availability: Daily 7:15 a.m. before first class; between classes; and by appointment. Check faculty Door Card on office door or Skyline web page for hours of availability.

Course Information

Police Report Writing

ADMJ 110

Section AA

CRN 90084

Days: Mon. - Wed. - Fri.

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Classroom: Bldg. 1-1105

Hours: 8:10 am - 9:00 am

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Aug. 19 - Dec. 11, 2009

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to provide the criminal justice student with an explanation 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 will be on essential principles of written and oral communication in law enforcement, including testifying in court. (The course will culminate with an in-class "mock trial" courtroom exercise with witness testimony.)

This is a creditable required course for students pursuing an Associate Degree and/or the vocational Certificate in Administration of Justice, and is transferable as indicated below. This course is also recommended for sociology and paralegal students, and for in-service practicing professionals who desire to broaden and develop their skills and abilities.

Hours: Three lecture/discussion hours per week (3.0 units).

Grading Method: Letter grade.

Recommended: Eligibility for ENGL 836.

Transfer: CSU.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

1. 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 *prepare* crime scene diagrams.
2. *Apply* improved and effective grammar and writing skills to *prepare* accurate, concise, and complete police reports.
3. 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.

COURSE CONTENT:

1. Why We Write Police Reports
2. Investigation Basics
3. Interviewing and Note Taking
4. The Rules of Narrative Writing
5. Describing Persons and Property
6. Crime and Incident Reports
7. Arrest Reports and Citations
8. Evidence and Property Reports
9. Traffic Collision Reports
10. Narrative and Form Reports
11. Category Report Writing
12. Preparing Sketches and Diagrams
13. Writing Search Warrants
14. Mechanics of English Grammar and Spelling
15. Testifying as a Witness in Court
16. Legal and Practical Aspects of Reports
17. Preparation of a Variety of Police Reports
18. Preliminary & In-Depth Crime Scene Investigation
19. "Mock Trial" - Exercise in Courtroom Testimony

TEXT BOOK:

Textbooks are available at the Skyline College Bookstore, first floor of Building 6, in the Administration of Justice books section located at the left rear of the store.

Required textbook: *Just The Facts - Investigative Report Writing (3rd Ed.)* by Michael Biggs (Pearson Prentice Hall Publishing) ISBN # 0-13-134763-2.

Optional (but highly recommended) paper writing reference books: *Rules for Writers* by Diana Hacker; and the *American Heritage Dictionary* by Dell Publishers.

Students are expected to adequately prepare themselves before each class meeting by completing the reading assignments as outlined in the Meeting and Reading Schedule found at the end of this syllabus. Keep the schedule handy for reference.

GRADING POLICY:

Letter grades are given to all course tests and most other work; however, some course work may simply be checked as having been completed. Final course grades will be rounded to the closest appropriate letter grade, as follows:

- Tests (True-False and/or Multiple Choice) 50%
- Assignments (Short Papers and Activities) 20%
- Attendance and Tardies 15%
- Participation and Conduct 15%
- (Extra Credit - by approval only) (10%)

Total: 100%

TESTS: (50% of final grade)

There will be two tests given during the course: a *Midterm Test* and a *Final Test*. The *Midterm* will test knowledge of the first half of the course, and the *Final* will test knowledge of the second half of the course. Both tests carry the same grading weight. Students have the option of being able to refer to their notes taken during the class, but their test score will be lowered one whole letter grade. Test dates are noted in the syllabus, and students must take tests on those dates only. There is no routine "entitlement" to make up a missed test at another time. No more than one make-up test per class will be permitted. (See "Make-Up Policy.") Make-up tests are routinely lowered one letter grade, and no notes may be used.

Students are expected to prepare for tests by reviewing their class notes and text readings. Tests will consist of 100 True-False and/or Multiple Choice questions which are to be completed in 50 minutes. Extra test time will not be given for students arriving late to class on test days, so be seated and ready. Students must be prepared by having their own Scantron (Form 882-E) and #2 pencil for tests. All rules relating to "academic integrity" will apply to test taking.

For grading method, refer to the "Test Grading Scale" on professor's web page. Students will be informed of test grades at the class meeting following test dates. Students who wish to have a consultation with the professor to review their tests must arrange to do so within one week of the test date. (See professor's "Door Card" for office hours and availability.)

ASSIGNMENTS/PAPERS: (20% of final grade)

Most of the assignments for this course will focus on a variety of in-class and take-home report writing exercises. THIS COURSE IS NOT DESIGNED TO TEACH ENGLISH GRAMMAR. Students are expected to already have good writing skills!

If you are a criminal justice working professional who prepares reports, memos, or business letters, bring samples of each to class with you for your own personal review. You should see an appreciable improvement in your writing skills and effectiveness upon completion of this course. Students should bring binder paper for taking notes and writing reports, and have graph paper and ruler for diagrams.

Take-home narrative and category reports must be typed. Form reports and in-class narrative reports may be neatly printed. Narrative police reports are usually single spaced, but for this course please double-space them for comments & corrections. Finished diagrams must be neatly drawn in pencil; use a straight-edge ruler for lines; measurements drawn to scale; compass direction, legend, and diagram information.

Some assignments/reports will receive a letter grade while others may be simply checked as completed. Assignments will mostly consist of report writing, diagram drawing, and English mechanics. Writing reports is about *communication!*

Assignments must be properly completed and submitted at the start of class by no later than the due date, but early submissions ahead of the due date are encouraged. Late submissions will be down-graded by one letter grade for each day late. Papers will not be accepted for any reason after one week following their due date. Papers are not to be emailed or slipped under office door.

Grading: Papers are evaluated and graded according to an objective 3-point analytic essay rubric, which is accessible on the professor's web page. Use this rubric as a guide for writing papers and for reviewing grading policy. Papers are graded on:

1. Focus on Assignment & Topic Prompts ~
2. Development and Support of Position
3. Organization, Coherency, and Use of Language



REPORTS will be graded on: format, neatness, grammar, readability, spelling, punctuation, thoroughness, accuracy, content, and correctness of application.

Format: The following format must be used for all papers, except police reports:

Typed, black ink on white paper	~	Double-spaced, one inch margins all around
12-point New Times Roman font	~	Number all pages at bottom center of page
Staple pages upper left corner	~	Title Page (correct format) for top page
No paper clips or report covers	~	Type question in bold above each response

Do not simply *summarize, reword, or repeat* information you've obtained about a topic, but rather *analyze, interpret, and logically discuss* your responses fully and in *your own words*. All rules relating to "academic integrity" apply to writing papers.

PLAN and ORGANIZE your thoughts *before* you begin writing your paper.

DRAFT a first copy of what you want to say. Make necessary corrections.

REVISE and EDIT your draft. Eliminate unneeded sentences or information.

PROOFREAD your paper one last time. Correct any grammar errors found.

ATTENDANCE/TARDY POLICY: (15% of final grade)

Regular attendance in class is an obligation assumed by every student at the time of registration. To receive credit for completing a course, students must attend the required number of course hours. Fall Monday/Wednesday/Friday courses have about 48 (50-minute) meetings. Absences and tardies are tracked and graded as below:

A = 0 to 2 absences	C = 6 to 8 absences	F = 12/more absences
B = 3 to 5 absences	D = 9 to 11 absences	

Arriving late or leaving early is disruptive, discourteous, and makes a bad impression. Students with a pattern of excessive or habitual absences or tardies, for any reason, may be dropped from the course. Two tardies are counted as one absence. Students expecting to be absent, tardy, or need to leave class early must give prior notice. Do not just get up and leave class, or disappear from regular attendance. Students who

disappear but remain on the enrollment at the end of the course, without prior arrangement, will be given an "F" (not an "Incomplete") for a grade.

All students must sign-in legibly on the attendance sheet at the start of class, including the last four digits of your college ID (G) number next to your name. For courses that exceed 75 minutes, there will be a break. Students must sign-in again next to their name after returning to class from the break. It is dishonest to sign-in and then leave, or to sign-in for another student who is not present. Violators will be dropped from the course. Neglecting to sign-in means being marked absent for that day. Decisions to excuse absences or tardies are at the professor's discretion. If professor is delayed, wait 15 minutes. After that, you may leave.

PARTICIPATION/CONDUCT: (15% of final grade)

Student participation, interaction, and conduct in class are graded factors and vital to the learning process. All students are encouraged to demonstrate their interest and knowledge by participating in class discussions and activities. If you are rarely (or never) heard from, an important learning opportunity is missed by all. It will also adversely affect your grade. Please join in class discussions, and courteously afford others their opportunity to be heard and participate, too.

BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS POLICY:

To ensure a safe, peaceful, and non-disruptive teaching and learning environment, standards for acceptable behavior will be enforced. Disruptive, distracting, or offensive behavior of any kind, by whatever means of expression or activity, that is deemed by the professor to be counter-productive to the behavioral standards and policies of the college will not be tolerated, and will be appropriately dealt with. *Refer to the Student Handbook's section on College Policies & Procedures.*

Examples of "disruptive" class behavior include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Laying head down, snoozing, sleeping, or inattentiveness in class.
- Constant gazing out the window, watching the clock, or "doodling".
- Using headphones, cell phones, cameras, gaming devices, or electronics.
- Chatting, reading, daydreaming, rolling of eyes as if bored, or horseplay.
- Chewing gum, eating, or drinking. (Bottled water is ok).

- Constant interrupting of others who are already speaking.
- Rude, disrespectful, discourteous, offensive, or harassing comments or actions.
- Reading, doing work for another class, or engaging in other non-course activity.
- Text messaging or net surfing on any electronic device, (i.e. laptop, cell phone.)
- Computer use for other than taking notes. (Must sit in front half of classroom.)
- Tape recording or photographing of class lectures/activities by approval only.
- Any other disruptive, inappropriate, or similar related conduct.
- I prefer no unnecessary sunglasses or hats that can interfere with eye contact.
- I prefer no attire or display of items having words, pictures, or markings that might reasonably be interpreted to be disturbing, harassing, or offensive, (i.e. relating to violence, gangs, weapons, drugs, sexual content/innuendo, etc.)

EXTRA CREDIT POLICY: (Up to 10% of final grade)

Extra Credit submissions are available to students who are currently doing "C" work or better and by prior approval and arrangement only. Work must be the student's own work effort, specifically done for and of current value to the course. Suggestions may include preparing or arranging from among the following examples:

Guest speaker presentation	~	Video tape or DVD segment
Field trip tour	~	Oral presentation

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (Plagiarism, Cheating, and Dishonesty):

Academic dishonesty of any kind defrauds all those who depend upon the integrity of the college and its instruction. It occurs when a student attempts to show knowledge or skills which he/she does not possess, whether accomplished by intention or by carelessness. Violations will be handled according to college policies. *Refer to the Student Handbook's section on College Policies & Procedures.*

DSPS STATEMENT: (Academic Adjustments for Students with Disabilities):

Students must notify the professor at the beginning of the course of any special DSPS needs. Accommodations can only be made through the DSPS office. Contact the Disabled Student Services Program Office, Building 2; or call 650-738-4280. *Refer to the Student Handbook's section on College Policies & Procedures.*

MAKE-UP POLICY: (Tests, Assignments, Activities, etc.)

By enrolling in this course, students enter into an implicit contract agreeing to participate in all course activities at their scheduled times. Sometimes, unique circumstances may make this impossible. Make-up accommodations are not a "right" but a privilege, and may be allowed based upon the professor's evaluation of the student's unique circumstance involved. Make-up work will be lowered one whole letter grade. No make-up tests or assignments after one week of scheduled date. No more than one test and no more than one assignment may be made-up per class.

Examples of Legitimate reasons:

Medical	Religious Observance	Court/ or Military Duty
Accident	Family/Personal Emergency	Serious Hardship (temp.)

Examples of Illegitimate reasons:

- Lack of timely preparation for the activity by the student.
- It was inconvenient, or the student forgot about the activity.
- Participation in extra-curricular activities (i.e. sports programs/practices.)
- Conflict with another class, or with work.
- Vacation, travel, entertainment, or similar personal endeavor.
- Other plans of personal convenience rather than necessity.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY:

Students must be properly enrolled in the course to receive credit. Adds and withdrawals must be done according to college policies and procedures. Notify professor of any change in enrollment status. Any student who is absent anytime during the first week of class may be dropped and replaced by a waitlisted student. *Refer to the Student Handbook's section on College Policies & Procedures.*

STUDENT CONTACT INFORMATION:



Skyline College has partnered with *Google* to provide students with email accounts. Students are to activate their college email account so that they are reachable. Please ensure that your current email and home addresses, and telephone number, are on file. Notify me and the College of any changes to your contact information.

MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION:

It always helps to make a good impression, whether in school or in the work place, or anywhere else for that matter. Putting your best foot forward and displaying your best efforts toward reaching your goals can benefit you in many ways, now and later. So, make a good impression in class. Your success ultimately depends on YOU.

END-NOTE:




Every student is responsible for printing a **paper copy** of this course syllabus, having it with them in class, and for reading, understanding, and complying with its contents.

Steven Aurilio
Professor, Skyline College
Administration of Justice Program

MEETING AND READING SCHEDULE:

(Note: Actual page numbers may vary slightly from instructor's text edition.)

For this course, we will not have class on the following dates:

- Monday September 7 Labor Day Holiday! 
- Wednesday November 11 Faculty Flex Day!
- Friday November 13 Veterans Day Holiday! 
- Friday November 27 Thanksgiving Day Recess! 

MEETING #: DAY / DATE: READINGS & ACTIVITIES:

For each chapter in the text book, please read the **Key Points** and **Terms** at the beginning through to the **Summary** and **Review** at the end of the chapter.

Meeting 1	Wed. Aug. 19	Registration and Orientation Course Summary & Expectations <u>First assignment by next class:</u> Go to my web page and review all information. Print out a paper copy of the syllabus and bring it with you to next class meeting. Review yellow handout sheet. Bring a Scantron sheet & pencil.
Meeting 2	Fri. Aug. 21	<u>Chapter 1:</u> (Read Pg. 1-16) <u>Why We Write Police Reports</u> Short <i>Pre-Test</i> (for survey only) Background Records Management Systems Mechanics of Writing

Report Writing Technology
Dictation
Cost-Effectiveness
Training
Approval Process
Need for Effective Rep. Writing
Why A Report Writing Course?

Meeting 3 Mon. Aug. 24

Chapter 2: (Read Pg. 17-30)

Investigation Basics

Who is an Investigator?
What is an Investigation?
When Do Investigations Occur?
Administrative Investigations
Initiating an Investigation
5-Ws and 2-Hs of Investigation
Qualities of an Investigator

Meeting 4 Wed. Aug. 26
(Skip to Chap. 8)

Chapter 8: (Read Pg. 119-127)

Interviewing People - Tips

Purpose of the Interview
Preparing for an Interview
Conducting the Interview
Writing the Interview

Meeting 5 Fri. Aug. 28

Film: "Interview Techniques"

Meeting 6 Mon. Aug. 31



Chapter 8: (Read Pg. 119-127)

Interrogating People - Tips

Purpose of the Interrogation
Preparing for an Interrogation
Conducting the Interrogation
Writing the Interrogation

Meeting 7 Wed. Sep. 2



Film: "Interrogation Techniques"

Meeting 8	Fri. Sep. 4 (Back to Chap. 3)		<u>Chapter 3:</u> (Read Pg. 31-44) <u>Note Taking (Field Notes)</u> Importance of Field Notes Basic Uses of Field Notes Mechanics of Note Taking Types of Note Books Accessing the Information What Should Be Included Recording Notes
NO MEETING!	Mon. Sep. 7		Labor Day Holiday!
Meeting 9	Wed. Sep. 9		<u>Chapter 4:</u> (Read Pg. 45-60) <u>Rules of Narrative Writing</u> #1 - Writing in First Person #2 - Writing in Past Tense #3 - Writing in Active Voice #4 - Write Chronologically #5 - Clear, Concise, & Concrete Other Writing Considerations
Meeting 10	Fri. Sep. 11		<u>Chapter 5:</u> (Read Pg. N/A) <u>Describing People</u> Film: "Eyewitness" (60 Minutes)
Meeting 11	Mon. Sep. 14		<u>Chapter 5:</u> (Read Pg. 61-69) <u>Describing People</u> Categorizing People for a Report Assessing Weights, Measures & Descriptions (People & Property) Interviews: Suspect Description <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison Descriptions • Composite Descriptions

Meeting 12	Wed. Sep. 16	<p><u>Chapter 5:</u> (Read Pg. 69-75) <u>Describing Property</u> Describing Property in a Report The "Average Person" Test Photos & Sketches of Property Determining Property Value: <i>(Use Fair Market Value of Items)</i></p>
Meeting 13	Fri. Sep. 18	<p><u>Chapter 5:</u> (Read Pg. 75-85) <u>Describing Evidence</u> Writing Evidence Reports Describing Evidence Evidence Report Formats Establishing Chain of Custody <i>Property/Evidence Report Form</i></p>
Meeting 14	Mon. Sep. 21	<p>Traffic and Crime Citations: <i>Completing a Citation Form</i></p>
Meeting 15	Wed. Sep. 23	<p><u>In-Class Exercise</u> (Pair-Up) <i>Victim Interview - Theft Case</i> <i>(Keep notes for future report)</i></p>
Meeting 16	Fri. Sep. 25	<p><u>Chapter 6:</u> (Read Pg. 86-103) <u>Crime Reports: Face Sheets</u> Purpose of a Crime Report Completing Crimes Reports Supplemental Reports Three Parts of an Investigation Types of Police Reports</p>
Meeting 17	Mon. Sep. 28	<p><u>Chapter 6:</u> (Read Pg. N/A) <u>Crime Reports: Face Sheets</u> <i>"Offense Report" Face Sheet</i> <i>(Students: make 2-sided copies)</i></p>

Meeting 18	Wed. Sep. 30	<p><u>Chapter 7:</u> (Read Pg. 104-118) <u>Arrest Reports</u> Documenting the Arrest Arrest Report Styles Completing the Arrest Report Report Formats <i>Probable Cause for Arrest Form</i> <i>Arrest & Booking Report Form</i></p>
Meeting 19	Fri. Oct. 2	<p><u>In-Class Exercise</u> (Pair-Up) <i>Suspect Interview - Theft Case</i> <i>(Keep notes for future report)</i></p>
Meeting 20	Mon. Oct. 5	<p><i>Familiarization with various Sample Police Report Forms Pt. 1</i></p>
Meeting 21	Wed. Oct. 7	<p><i>Familiarization with various Sample Police Report Forms Pt.2</i></p>
Meeting 22	Fri. Oct. 9	<p><i>Helpful English & Grammar Hints</i></p>
Meeting 23	Mon. Oct. 12	<p><u>MIDTERM TEST (Chap's. 1-8)</u></p>
Meeting 24	Wed. Oct. 14	<p><u>Chapter 9:</u> (Read Pg. 128-144) <u>Writing Search Warrants</u> Search Warrants The Warrant Process How to Write a Warrant Writing the Affidavit Including Expert Opinions Return to Search Warrant</p>
Meeting 25	Fri. Oct. 16	<p><u>Chapter 9:</u> (Read Pg. N/A) <u>Writing Search Warrants</u> <i>Search Warrant "Affidavit"</i> <i>(Will Judge ME Issue a S/W?)</i></p>

Meeting 26	Mon. Oct. 19	Chapter 9: (Read Pg. N/A) <i>Search Warrant "Return"</i> (Returning S/W to Judge ME)
Meeting 27	Wed. Oct. 21	Chapter 10: (Read Pg.145-148) Issues in Writing Facts, Opinions, and Conclusions When Opinions are Appropriate Expert Opinions vs. Lay Opinions
Meeting 28	Fri. Oct. 23	Chapter 10: (Read Pg.148-160) Issues in Writing Documenting Miranda Responses Documenting Field and Photo Show Ups, and Staged Line Ups
Meeting 29	Mon. Oct. 26	Sketch and Diagram Preparation
Meeting 30	Wed. Oct. 28	Category Report System: 1 - Summary
Meeting 31	Fri. Oct. 30	Category Report System: 2 - Victims & Witness 3 - Suspects
Meeting 32	Mon. Nov. 2	Category Report System: 4 - Investigation
Meeting 33	Wed. Nov. 4	Category Report System: 5 - Physical Condition 6 - Vehicles
Meeting 34	Fri. Nov. 6	Category Report System: 7 - Evidence 8 - Property Case Status, Routing, Approval

Meeting 35	Mon. Nov. 9		5150 W&I - Commitment Report
NO MEETING!	Wed. Nov. 11		Faculty Flex Day!
NO MEETING!	Fri. Nov. 13		Veterans Day Holiday!
Meeting 36	Mon. Nov. 16		Traffic Collision Reports
Meeting 37	Wed. Nov. 18		Juvenile Contact Reports
Meeting 38	Fri. Nov. 20		Effective Communication for Effective Report Writing
Meeting 39	Mon. Nov. 23		Legal and Ethical Considerations in Report Writing
Meeting 40	Wed. Nov. 25		Internal Reports: ~ Memoranda and Emails ~ Business Letters ~ Internal Investigations: (a) Applicant Backgrounds (b) Business Backgrounds (c) I.A. Investig. Reports
NO MEETING!	Fri. Nov. 27		Thanksgiving Day Recess!
Meeting 41	Mon. Nov. 30		<u>Preparation for "Mock Trial":</u> 1. Tips for Testifying in Court 2. Assignments for "Mock Trial" 3. <u>Film</u> : "Courtroom Testimony"
Meeting 42	Wed. Dec. 2		<u>Testifying as Witness in Court:</u> Mock Trial - Day #1
Meeting 43	Fri. Dec. 4		<u>Testifying as Witness in Court:</u> Mock Trial - Day #2

Meeting 44 Mon. Dec. 7

COURSE EXIT SURVEY:

Students to complete *Course Exit Survey* today. Bring pencil. (I will supply the Scantron form)

POST-TEST:

Short *Post-Test* (survey only.)
(Bring a Scantron and pencil.)

Short Review for Final Test.

Meeting 45 Wed. Dec. 9

FINAL TEST (Chap's. 9-16)

Final Test will begin promptly at our usual starting time, so please arrive on time. You will have 50 minutes to complete the 100-question T-F Final Test. You may leave after the test. Last class meeting is day after next.

Meeting 46 Fri. Dec. 11

FINAL CLASS MEETING!

Test grades and papers will be returned. (Sorry, but no final grades will be ready yet.)

I will be in my office (1-1309) in the mornings for the first part of next week. Course grades will not be available until they are posted by the college on Websmart, which will take about two weeks (see Semester Class Schedule for date). I cannot give out course grades before Websmart posts them.

It was a pleasure having you in my class this semester and hope to see you again in my other Administration of Justice classes next semester. Please REGISTER EARLY for next semester to ensure your space in class. See you then!

Prof. A. ☺