

# College of San Mateo

## Course Outline

- New Course  
 Update/No change  
 Course Revision (Minor)  
 Course Revision (Major)

Date: February, 2006

**Department:** Administration of Justice      **Number:** ADMJ-710  
**Course Title:** Police Report Writing      **Units:** 3  
**Hours/Week:** Lecture: 3      **Lab:** 0      **By Arrangement:** 0

### Length of Course

- Semester-long  
 Short course (Number of weeks \_\_\_)  
 Open entry/Open exit

### Grading

- Letter  
 Credit/No Credit  
 Grade Option (letter or Credit/No Credit)

1. **Prerequisite** (Attach Enrollment Limitation Validation Form.)

Prerequisite: ENGL 838 or ENGL 848 or equivalent

2. **Corequisite** (Attach Enrollment Limitation Validation Form.)

3. **Recommended Preparation** (Attach Enrollment Validation Form.)

Recommended Preparation: ADMJ 102 and ADMJ 104 and ADMJ 106

4. **Catalog Description** (Include prerequisites/corequisites/recommended preparation.)

710 Police Report Writing (3) Three lecture hours per week. Prerequisite: ENGL 838 or ENGL 848 or equivalent. Recommended Preparation: ADMJ 102 and ADMJ 104 and ADMJ 106. Crime incident note taking, observation, interviewing and report writing techniques, utilizing scenario exercises to prepare data and provide courtroom information for prosecution purposes. Includes POST Basic Learning Domains.

5. **Class Schedule Description** (Include prerequisites/corequisites/recommended preparation.)

ADMJ 710 POLICE REPORT WRITING

Crime incident note taking, observation, interviewing and report writing techniques, utilizing various scenario exercises to prepare data and provide courtroom information for prosecution purposes. Prerequisite: ENGL 838 or ENGL 848 or equivalent. Recommended Preparation: ADMJ 102 and ADMJ 104 and ADMJ 106. Includes POST Basic Learning Domains.

6. **Student Learning Outcomes** (Identify 1-6 expected learner outcomes using active verbs.)

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

1. Examine and evaluate the role of police in contemporary society. \*
2. Recognize the value of and discuss the necessity of ethics, integrity and professionalism in law enforcement \*
3. Compare and contrast the various components and goals of the Criminal Justice System. \*
4. Recognize the importance of developing interpersonal and written communication skills necessary to function in the Criminal Justice System and society. \*
5. Recognize specific elements of crimes and incorporate them into a police report format, which include identifying information, statements, evidence, property taken/recovered and suspect information.
6. Define what an investigative report is, its value and use to all segments of the Criminal Justice System, and other stake holders.
7. Interpret a scenario and assess if a crime has been committed and what crime should be charged.
8. Using a scenario, distinguish, collect and present in written form, a set of facts in a logical and chronological manner.
9. Organize and prepare a formal police report incorporating all of the elements of a crime, probable cause to arrest, and admonishment of the suspect if appropriate.

\* Department SLO

7. **Course Objectives** (Identify specific teaching objectives detailing course content and activities. *For some courses, the course objectives will be the same as the student learning outcomes. If this is the case, please simply indicate this in this section).*

Course objectives will be the same as the student learning outcomes

8. **Course Content** (Brief but complete topical outline of the course that includes major subject areas [1-2 pages]. Should reflect all course objectives listed above. In addition, you may attach a sample course syllabus with a timeline.)

See Topical Outline

9. **Representative Instructional Methods** (Describe instructor-initiated teaching strategies that will assist students in meeting course objectives. Include examples of out-of-class assignments, required reading and writing assignments, and methods for teaching critical thinking skills.)

1. Required text readings on course material being covered in lecture.
2. Lecture on course material according to outline and supporting materials.
3. Handout material to support course content and provide extra study.
4. Overhead and other audio-visual presentations.
5. Assigned outside reading
6. Student demonstration and class critique

10. **Representative Methods of Evaluation** (Describe measurement of student progress toward course objectives. Courses with required writing component and/or problem-solving emphasis must reflect critical thinking component. If skills class, then applied skills.)

Objective 1: Examine and evaluate the role of police in contemporary society. \*

Evaluation Method: Study assignments, discussion, exam

Objective 2: Recognize the value and discuss the necessity of ethics, integrity and professionalism in law enforcement. \*

Evaluation Method: Study assignments, discussion, exam

Objective 3: Compare and contrast the various components and goals of the criminal justice system. \*

Evaluation Method: Study assignments, discussion, exam

Objective 4: Recognize the importance of developing interpersonal and written communication skills necessary to function in the criminal justice system and society. \*

Evaluation Method: Study assignments, discussion, exam

Objective 5: Recognize and examine the development and practical application of laws..

Evaluation Method: Study assignments, discussion, role play, exam (term paper)

Objective 6: Define what an investigative report is, its value and use to all segments of the criminal justice system and to other stakeholders.

Evaluation Method: Study assignments, discussion, exam

Objective 7: Interpret a scenario and assess if a crime has been committed

Evaluation Method: Discussion, role play, exam, demonstration

Objective 8: Using a scenario, distinguish and collect a set of facts in a logical and chronological manner

Evaluation Method: Study assignments, discussion, exam, demonstration

Objective 9: Organize and prepare multiple formal police reports incorporating all of the elements of the crime, probable cause to arrest and admonishment of the suspect if appropriate.

Evaluation Method: Demonstration, discussion, exam

\* Department SLO

11. **Representative Text Materials** (With few exceptions, texts need to be current. Include publication dates.)

Text: "The New Police Report Manual" (second edition), by Devallis Rutledge [Copperhouse Publishing, 2000]

Basic Course Workbook Series [Student Materials]

"Investigative Report Writing" - Learning Domain 18/Current Version

[California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST)]

"Gould's Penal Code Handbook of California", [Gould Publications, Longwood, FL] (current year California Penal Code)

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Submission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE DEPARTMENT  
TOPICAL COURSE OUTLINE**

**ADMJ 710 "Police Report Writing"**

[Revised 1/06]

- I. Setting the Stage
  - A. The components, roles, and goals of the Criminal Justice System
  - B. The role of police in contemporary society
  - C. The value and necessity of police ethics, integrity and professionalism
  - D. The importance of developing effective interpersonal and written communications skills
  
- II. Documenting facts and activities of an investigation to prosecute a criminal case
  - A. Definition of an investigative report
  - B. Legal basis for requiring investigative reports
  - C. How investigative reports are used
  - D. Prospective users of investigative reports
  - E. Six characteristics of effective investigative reports
  
- III. Field note-taking: Recognition of information gathered during the initial investigation as the foundation for investigative reports.
  - A. Primary considerations for determining what should be included in an officer's field notes
  - B. Appropriate officer actions during each step of the three-step process for taking notes during a field interview
  - C. Differences between information
    - 1. Opinion
    - 2. Fact
    - 3. Conclusion
  
- IV. Organization and development of the report: to include facts needed to establish that a crime has been committed and that all actions taken by officers have been legally appropriate
  - A. Category vs. narrative report formats
  - B. Advantages and disadvantages of using category or narrative report formats
  - C. Primary questions that must be answered within an effective investigative report
  - D. Fundamental content elements that are common within effective investigative reports
    - 1. Initial information
    - 2. Identification of the crime
    - 3. Identification of the involved parties
    - 4. Victim/witness statements
    - 5. Crime scene specifics
    - 6. Property information
    - 7. Officer actions
  
- V. Effective reports must exhibit command of the language and be free of errors in sentence structure, grammar and other writing mechanics
  - A. Guidelines for recommended grammar used in investigative reports
    - 1. Proper nouns
    - 2. First person pronouns
    - 3. Third person pronouns
    - 4. Past tense
    - 5. Active Tense
  - B. Organization of information within a paragraph for clarity and proper emphasis
  - C. Language that will clearly convey information to the reader of the investigative report
  - D. Commonly used words that sound alike but have different meanings

- E. Proofreading for content and mechanical errors
  - 1. Spelling
  - 2. Punctuation
  - 3. Grammar
  - 4. Word choice
  - 5. Syntax

VI. Accompanying Weekly Instructional Activities

- A. Students will be required to write practice reports based on either re-enactments of crimes, investigations of law enforcement-related incidents, or based upon equivalent simulations, scenarios, or situations developed by the instructor.
  - The events selected will require reports reflecting a progressive level of difficulty from a simple incident or crime to more complex events involving the articulation of probable cause to stop, probable cause to arrest, statements of witnesses, etc.
  - Learning activities will incorporate:
    - 1. Generation of appropriate field notes narrative
    - 2. Feedback to the student regarding the quality of his/her writing to provide ongoing evaluation of the student's strengths and weaknesses to facilitate progressive improvement.
- B. Assessment of the practice reports includes:
  - 1. Adequacy of the decisions made by the student regarding the incident or crime
    - The determination of the existence or nonexistence of a crime
    - If a crime has been committed, the proper identification of that crime
    - The taking of proper safety measures
    - The preservation of evidence
    - The capturing of all essential information
  - 2. The ability of the report/narrative to communicate with the reader and employ proper format and conventions.
    - The organization and development of the report
    - The inclusion of relevant information
    - The anticipation of possible defenses that might be asserted by the suspect
    - The use of the active voice
    - The use of the first person
    - The proper use of grammar, punctuation, spelling and word choice

VII. Required Course Exams

- A. An exercise test that requires the student to prepare an arrest report as described below: Given a depiction of an arrest situation which is based upon a developed video re-enactment or scenario, or an equivalent presenter-developed video, simulation or scenario, the student will write an acceptable report in class.

To be of sufficient complexity, the report must reflect an arrest situation which minimally incorporates:

- 1. Elements of a crime
- 2. Probable cause to stop
- 3. Probable cause to search/seize
- 4. Recovery of evidence
- 5. Probable cause to arrest
- 6. Admonishment of the suspect, if appropriate

To be considered acceptable, the report should meet the following criteria:

1. The writing must be reasonably fluent, well developed, and well organized to clearly communicate to the reader
2. All essential information, including any facts needed to establish the corpus of the crime, must be included in the report
3. The report must be free of mechanical errors (i.e., grammar, punctuation, spelling and word choice) that significantly diminishes its evidentiary value or usefulness
4. The report must be reasonable and consistent with the expectations of a typical field training program

- B. An exercise test that requires the student to prepare an investigative report as described below: Given a depiction of a criminal investigation which is based upon a developed video re-enactment or scenario, or an equivalent instructor-developed video, simulation or scenario, the student will write an acceptable report in class.

To be of sufficient complexity, the report must reflect an arrest situation which minimally incorporates:

1. Elements of a crime
2. Statements of victim(s) and/or witness (es)
3. Pertinent crime scene details
4. Physical evidence

To be considered acceptable, the report must meet the following criteria:

1. The writing must be reasonably fluent, well developed, and well organized to clearly communicate to the reader
2. All essential information, including any facts needed to establish the corpus of the crime, must be included in the report
3. The report must be free of mechanical errors (i.e., grammar, punctuation, spelling and word choice) that significantly diminishes its evidentiary value or usefulness
4. The report must be reasonable and consistent with the expectations of a typical field training program