CFRS 760
Legal and Ethical Issues in Computer Forensics

Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
Volgenau School of Information Technology and Engineering
George Mason University, Fall 2012

Instructor

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Office Hours: By email or in person by appointment
Office Location: Engineering Building, Adjunct Office

Location and Time

Fairfax Campus, Engineering Building, Room 1108
Tuesdays, 7:20 PM to 10:00 PM

Course Description

This course will present and discuss legal and ethical topics in the context of computer forensics. Additionally, it will cover matters in "real world" computer forensics, different specializations in computer forensics, witness testimony, and forensic report writing. The course will be participative, discussion focused, and designed to prepare the student for careers in law enforcement, intelligence, or commercial computer forensics positions.

While prior work experience in computer forensics is not expected or necessary, this course will include discussion about professional computer forensic issues, and students are encouraged to share their own knowledge and experiences.

Prerequisites

CFRS 500—Introduction to Technologies of Forensics Value

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to familiarize students with the legal and ethical issues that surround the practice of computer forensics and to prepare the student with an understanding of computer forensics as a career choice. Legal and ethical issues vary widely depending upon the environment in which computer forensic examiners practice, and failure to understand the differences between those operating environments can lead to professional disciplinary measures, civil action, or even criminal charges against a practicing forensic professional. Students will learn the differences in performing in these environments, to include personal, professional, legal, and ethical expectations encountered in each area.

Grading

Raw scores may be adjusted to calculate final grades. Grades will be assessed by the following components:

Class Participation & Homework	20%
Midterm	25%
Research Paper or Presentation	20%
Final Exam	35%

Occasional homework assignments may be provided to students over the course to reinforce the topics discussed in class. These assignments will be provided in class and announced via the course website. Homework assignments are due one week following the assigned date. Late homework assignments will be assessed a penalty of 25% of the assignment grade for each day of tardiness. No homework will be accepted after the third day. If homework cannot be delivered to class personally, the student may email his/her assignment to the instructor before the start of class the week the assignment is due.

The instructor places a strong emphasis on writing due to the nature of computer forensic work. Students will be expected to communicate at a Graduate level via the written word for the majority of their assignments. Proper use of language, style, and grammar will factor into grading of such assignments due to the importance of writing and reporting skills in computer forensics.

Midterm/Final
Midterm and final examinations will be given during the course and will cover information provided and discussed during lectures, required and supplemental readings, and any information derived from homework assignments. These exams will be given in class via Blackboard.

Research Paper or Presentation
Students will complete a research paper and presentation reviewing a published computer forensic-related case discussing the legal and/or ethical topics involved. Further guidance will be given when the paper is assigned.

Textbook
The following book is required for this course:

Title: *Electronic Evidence: Law & Practice, Second Edition*
Author: Paul R. Rice
Publisher: American Bar Association
ISBN: 978-160442084-5

Author's Description: *Electronic Evidence: Law and Practice* explores the range of problems encountered with electronic communications from discovery to trial, and offers practical solutions to both existing and potential problems. Particular emphasis is given to the unique problems evolving around the way in which parties are asserting the attorney-client privilege and judges are applying it to e-mail communications.

Additional course material will be given to students via lecture. Recommended reading will be discussed during lecture. Students are encouraged to review recommended reading as needed and/or indicated by the instructor. The majority of the material covered in the midterm and final will come from the instructor's slides with a minority of questions from the reading assignments.

Honor Code
GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the [Office for Academic Integrity](#) for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office for Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Schedule (Subject to Change Due to Class Events)

Week	Date	Topic
1	Aug 28	Introductions, Course Overview, Computer Forensics as a Career Discussion, "Science vs. Art"
2	Sep 4	Personal Ethics in Computer Forensics, Understanding and Controlling Biases, Allowing the Evidence to Speak for Itself, Implicating and Exculpatory Evidence **Last day to add classes or to drop with no tuition penalty.**
3	Sep 11	Ethics of Computer Forensics in a Law Enforcement Environment
4	Sep 18	Legal Issues in Computer Forensics in a Law Enforcement Environment, Fourth Amendment, Search Warrants & Affidavits **Last day to drop classes with a 33% tuition penalty.**
5	Sep 25	Legal Issues in Computer Forensics in a Law Enforcement Environment, Chapter 8: Frye/Daubert, Chapter 4: Best Evidence/Original Writing Rule, ASCLD Labs vs. Non-ASCLD Labs **Sep 28 is the final drop deadline with a 67% tuition penalty.**
6	Oct 2	Digital Forensic Report Writing, Note Taking, Worksheets/Checklists
7	Oct 9	**Columbus Day Recess—Tuesday Classes Do Not Meet (Monday Classes and Labs Meet Today)**
8	Oct 16	Expert/Fact Witness Testimony; Possible Guest Speaker
9	Oct 23	Research Paper Presentations/Group Discussion
10	Oct 30	Mid-Term Exam
11	Nov 6	Ethics of Computer Forensics in an Intelligence Environment, Legal Issues in an Intelligence Environment, FISA: Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act
12	Nov 13	Ethics of Computer Forensics in a Commercial Environment; Possible Guest Speaker
13	Nov 20	Legal Issues of Computer Forensics in a Commercial Environment, Chapter 3: Attorney/Client Privilege, PI Laws, State Courts

Week	Date	Topic
14	Nov 27	Computer Forensic Tools Review and Discussion
15	Dec 4	Wrap-Up, Review, Professional Issues Discussion
16	Dec 11	TBD
17	Dec 18	**Final Exam — 7:30 PM to 10:15 PM**