

DFOR/TCOM 661–Digital Media Forensics

Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

George Mason University

Spring 2025

Syllabus (revised 2025-01-27)

Administrative Information

Instructor: **John J. Larkin II**

Email: jlarkin@gmu.edu Subject = GMU-DFOR/TCOM 661

Phone: 703-944-2592

Office hours: By appointment

Teaching Assistant: N/A

Classes: Monday 4:30 pm – 7:10 pm

Location: ENG 5358 (Nguyen Engineering Building, Room 5358)

Lectures will be held in person

Course Description

DFOR/TCOM 661 - Digital Media Forensics (3:3:0)

Prerequisites: DFOR 510 and a working knowledge of computer operating systems (e.g., CYSE 211, IT 342, or equivalent) or permission from instructor. This course deals with the collection, preservation, and analysis of digital media such that the evidence can be successfully presented in a court of law (both civil and criminal). The relevant federal laws will be examined as well as private sector applications. The seizure, preservation, and analysis of digital media will be examined in this course.

Textbooks

- [Digital Forensics Workbook](#) by Michael K. Robinson (ISBN: 1517713609/ISBN-13: 978-1517713607) – **MANDATORY**
- Additional required supplies for this course will be discussed the first week of class.

Grading

The grade for the course is determined from a calculation of points on a 0 to 100 point scale, which will be assessed on the following components:

Homework (3@15% each)	45%
Article Presentations (2@5% each)	10%
Mid-term exam	20%
Final Project	20%
Class participation	5 %

Homework

Three small projects (Homework) will be assigned during the semester (see schedule).

Homework must be posted to Blackboard before the due date and time specified on Blackboard.

Blackboard Discussion Board & Class participation

Please post and answer your fellow classmates' questions via Blackboard. The purpose of this is to allow students to communicate amongst each other. Conversation does not include sharing of work. This, along with in-person participation, will make up your participation grade.

Article Presentations

Students must prepare and present two 5-minute PowerPoint presentations on articles relative to course content. The article should not come from advertisement or blogs. Students will present on two different topics during the semester (see schedule). Presentations should be conducted on different dates.

Mid-term exam

The mid-term exam will be taken online, using Blackboard, and will cover material discussed in up until exam date. Absolutely no conversation/collaboration allowed on the final.

Final Project

The final project must be uploaded to Blackboard by 11:59pm on the final week (see schedule). Students will be responsible for conducting an individual forensic analysis of a drive that will be issued during the third class. Students are not allowed to collaborate on the final project.

Late Work

Assignments will not be accepted late. This policy will be strictly enforced. In the event of an unusual and dire emergency, contact the instructor **before** an assignment is due. You may be required to provide evidence of your emergency to be considered for alternative accommodation.

Graduate Grading Scale

A+ (97-100), A (93-96), A- (90-92), B+ (88-89), B 83-87, B- (80-82), C (70-79), & F (0-69)

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend each class to complete any required preparatory work (including assigned reading) and to participate actively in lectures, discussions and exercises. As members of the academic community, all students are expected to contribute regardless of their proficiency with the subject matter.

Students are expected to make prior arrangements with Instructor if they know in advance that they will miss any class and to consult with the Instructor if they miss any class without prior notice.

Departmental policy requires students to take exams at the scheduled time and place, unless there are truly compelling circumstances supported by appropriate documentation. Except in such circumstances, failure to attend a scheduled exam may result in a grade of zero (0) for that exam.

Important Dates

Semester Calendars/Deadlines (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/>)

Religious Holiday Calendar (<https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>)

Communication

Communication on issues relating to the individual student should be conducted using email or telephone. Email is the preferred method – for urgent messages, you should also attempt to contact the Instructor via telephone. Email messages from the Instructor must be sent to students' GMU email addresses – if you use another email account, you should forward your GMU email to that account.

Lecture slides are complements to the lecture process, not substitutes for it - access to lecture slides will be provided as a courtesy to students provided acceptable attendance is maintained.

Honor Code

The material provided in the course is proprietary. Uploading this material anywhere without the express permission of the instructor is strictly prohibited and a violation of the Mason Honor Code. (See <https://oai.gmu.edu/>)

Students are required to be familiar and comply with the requirements of the GMU Honor Code (available at <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>).

All assessable work is to be completed by the individual student. Students must **NOT** collaborate on the exam or final project.

In order to fully exchange information and ensure complete candor in discussions, the policy of non-attribution will be STRICTLY enforced.

Disability Accommodations

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 of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 2500; 703-993-2474; <http://ods.gmu.edu>) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

If you have a learning or physical difference that may affect your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor. In addition to providing your professors with the appropriate form, please take the initiative to discuss accommodation with them at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. Because of the range of learning differences, faculty members need to learn

from you the most effective ways to assist you. If you have contacted the Office of Disability Services and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please tell me.

Privacy

Students must use their GMU email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Reading Assignments	Projects Due
Week 1	01/27/2025	Introduction/Course Mechanics		
Week 2	02/03/2025	Legal Issues	DFW – Chapters 1-3 News article Pres.	Complete exercises
Week 3	02/10/2025	Computer Incident Response (Crime Scene documentation)	DFW-Chapters 4-6 News article Pres.	Complete exercises
Week 4	02/17/2025	(NO CLASS) Review PowerPoint Presentation online (Registry) – Work on HW1	DFW – Chapters 7-10	Complete exercises
Week 5	02/24/2025	Data Acquisition and Duplication	DFW – Chapters 11-12 News article Pres.	Complete exercises
Week 6	03/03/2025	Crime Scene Practical	DFW – Chapters 13-15	Homework 1 due Complete exercises
Week 7	03/10/2025	Spring Recess (NO CLASS)		
Week 8	03/17/2025	Windows File System FAT	DFW – Chapters 17,18,21 News article Pres.	Complete exercises
Week 9	03/24/2025	Windows File System NTFS	News article Pres	
Week 10	03/31/2025	Mid Term - (ONLINE)		Homework 2 due
Week 11	04/07/2025	Analysis Methodology	News article Pres	
Week 12	04/14/2025	(NO CLASS) – Work on Homework & Final Project		
Week 13	04/21/2025	Tool Demonstration	News article Pres	
Week 14	04/28/2025	Managing a Computer Forensics Lab	News article Pres	Homework 3 due
Week 15	05/05/2025	Courtroom Presentation		
Week 16	05/12/2025	(NO CLASS) - Final Project must be uploaded to Blackboard by 11:59pm		Final Project Due

This schedule is subject to revision before and throughout the course.

Call 703-993-1000 for recorded information on campus closings (e.g., due to weather).