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## Press release : 2016 : 12 : 21 : USFSP, NFSTC Partner to Offer Forensic Studies Course

University of South Florida St. Petersburg. Office of University Advancement.

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## USFSP, NFSTC PARTNER TO OFFER FORENSIC STUDIES COURSE



*Max Houck*

Starting in January, students in the new Field Forensics class at USF St. Petersburg will head off campus to study at the National Forensic Science Technology Center (NFSTC) in Largo. Through a partnership between the center and the university, students enrolled in the special topics course will participate in weekly three-hour sessions to gain hands-on experience collecting and handling evidence, working with DNA and fingerprints, combing through cell phones and collecting trace materials. However, the course will not only focus on the science.

"Instead of focusing only on forensic science, it's geared toward understanding cognitive biases and systemic issues that will help to identify the uses and abuses of forensic science in investigations," said Max Houck, an adjunct professor in the Department of Society, Culture and Language in the College of Arts and Sciences. "Students will get a basis in forensic science and learn how it can be used correctly or incorrectly, and methods to avoid making mistakes—essentially, ways to prevent wrongful convictions going forward."

Houck, who has researched crime labs for the past 10 years, has nearly 25 years of experience in the fields of forensic science and management. He worked in the private and public sectors in forensics labs, at West Virginia University, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) laboratory, and at a Washington, D.C. think tank before moving to Florida.

"When I moved down here and saw an opportunity with the university, it was natural to reach out to NFSTC because they do lots of practical training for the military," said Houck, who has known NFSTC CEO Kevin Lothridge for many years. "It's a huge facility where they do tons of practical work and training, and testing of new devices and methodologies for a variety of agencies."

NFSTC houses several in-house training rooms, labs, and a full media production facility as well. According to its website, the Center has worked with several universities in Florida to develop curriculum, including USFSP, the University of Central Florida, and the University of Florida.

The course would also serve as part of the new major in Forensic Studies that the university is proposing to offer beginning in Fall 2017.

"The College of Arts and Sciences is moving quickly to revise existing degree programs and build exciting new degree options for students," stated Dr. Frank Biafora, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. "It is our view that all students should benefit from career focused internships, faculty mentored research experiences, and relevant field based learning opportunities, much like the exciting new course in Field Forensics in partnership with NFSTC. We are very much looking forward to Fall 2017 when we officially launch the new B.S. in Forensic Studies and Justice."

## **USFSP, NFSTC Partner to Offer Forensic Studies Course**

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