

Mock Crime Scene Challenges Budding Investigators

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Students in the Forensic Science AT class at NSU University School recently put their skills to the test during a mock crime scene investigation.

The activity had the students analyze the same crime scene, both indoors and outdoors, as part of their final examination. Evidence was collected and processed, with each team handling different roles throughout the investigation. This included blood spatter and hair/fiber analysis, forensic toxicology, forensic geology, ballistics, and fingerprinting. Some students were also in charge of photographing and sectioning off the scene.



Arnold Miller, the teacher of the course, said the curriculum is split in two, with the class first going through microbiology earlier in the year before switching over to forensic science. Miller founded the program and wrote the lab manuals that are used. He emphasized hands-on learning environment and usually only gives lectures to inform the students on the background of a topic.

The course has gotten so popular over the years that they've had to increase the number of sections available. Miller said it used to only be students that wanted to go into the criminal justice field but he now sees a good mix of students.

"It's, in a way, like playing a game, a whodunit game," said Miller. "I love to teach it because it's such a fun thing to do."

Once everything was processed, the young detectives were then tasked with writing a detailed paper on their findings and contributions during the investigation. Miller said the results are usually almost 100 percent successful across the entire class.

"This school is by far the best school that I ever taught at because of the opportunities that the students have going to school on a college campus and being able to take advantage of the college facilities," said Miller.

Senior Abigail Carswell said she enjoyed the activity but remains passionate about pursuing marine biology in the future. Carswell's team had to photograph the scene throughout different stages of the investigation, including before it was removed, while it was being removed, and during the analysis of the evidence.

"Without opportunities like this, there would be a lot of students who are unsure of what they would like to do with their future," Carswell said.

Taylor Dumas, a senior in the class, was surprised by the different elements behind a crime scene, especially how inaccuracies can ruin an investigation. Dumas was a part of the team that had to photograph, lift and analyze fingerprints.

"It was nice to be able to actually feel like a forensic scientist and live in the job for a little bit," said Dumas. "You could always discover a love for a job you thought you could never be interested in."