

Community Education – Fall Quarter 2026

Course Title: Forensic Genetics: The Science Behind DNA Evidence

Instructor: Steven Clark, Biology Professor Emeritus

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Course Details

Dates: 10/30, 11/6, 11/13, 2-3:30 PM

Day: Friday

Classroom: STEM 151

Course Description

In 2018 DNA evidence was used to identify the Golden State Killer—a murderer whose crimes occurred in the late 1970s. How do forensic scientists use DNA to solve crimes? This class starts with basics—it is designed to appeal to a science beginner even though it will cover technical information. What is DNA? Is it on clothing as well as in blood? How is it analyzed and used? How accurate is it? This class will cover beginning DNA, DNA evidence and analysis as well as a few case studies in how DNA has solved crimes and exonerated innocent people.

Class Style: Lecture and discussion with a microscope activity (if a lab room is available).

Course Schedule

Week 1: Oct. 30, 2-3:30.

- Introduction to DNA.
- DNA differences between individuals.
- DNA profiling and analysis.
- Lab/microscope activity: Seeing cells from your cheek.

Week 2: Nov. 6, 2-3:30.

- How DNA is used to solve crimes
- Other forensic science:
 - Time of death determinations
 - What can hair tell investigators?
 - What can blood tell investigators?

Week 3: Nov. 13, 2-3:30.

- Case studies (as time permits):
 - DNA discovered in Neanderthal skeletons.
 - DNA fingerprinting first used to convict Colin Pitchfork.
 - Green River killer.
 - Golden State Killer.
 - Eddie Murphy paternity test.
 - King Richard III remains.
 - Tsar Nicholas II remains.
 - Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson.
 - Jesse James' remains.

Resources

Recommended references for further study:

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Class Evaluation

- Class evaluations are sent by email.
- If you don't see it right away, check your **junk/spam folder**.
- Evaluations are **anonymous** and come directly from Clark College.
- If you don't receive one, contact:
 - Email: continuingeducation@clark.edu
 - Phone: 360-992-2939

Inclement Weather

- If the college closes due to weather, updates will appear at www.clark.edu
- Community Education may also cancel classes independently if travel is unsafe.
- If canceled, you will be notified by both phone and email.
- Please check that your contact information is correct on the class roster.

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