

Law and Ethics in Forensic Sciences

Course introduction: generalities, presentation. Introduction to Forensic sciences, contemporary Forensic Science and Its Future.

The State of the Art and Developments in Forensic Genetics: Normative and Ethical Aspects.

DNA and the Criminal Justice System: consensus and debate.

The foundation of criminal investigation ethics.

Trials and Triumphs of DNA evidence.

Global Governance of Forensic DNA profiling and database: Individual rights and common good

Case study discussion.

Respect for human dignity of the unidentified dead from mass disasters and other violence: strategies for the ethical management of biological samples and personal data.

Lessons from DNA: restriking the balance between finality and Justice, privacy and security.

Knowledge and Understanding

By the end of the course, students will acquire a solid understanding of the legal and ethical frameworks governing contemporary forensic science, with particular emphasis on forensic genetics and the use of DNA evidence in the criminal justice system. Students will become familiar with the legal principles regulating the collection, analysis, and use of forensic evidence, as well as the role of DNA profiling within investigative and judicial procedures. The course will provide knowledge of national and international legal regulations concerning forensic DNA databases, the protection of individual rights, and the balance between privacy, security, and the public interest.

Students will also gain an understanding of the legal debates and jurisprudential developments related to DNA evidence, including issues of admissibility, reliability, and the impact of forensic technologies on criminal investigations and trials. Particular attention will be given to the legal and ethical standards governing the management of biological samples and personal data, especially in sensitive contexts such as the identification of victims of mass disasters and other forms of violence, as well as the protection of human dignity.

Skills and Competences

Students will develop the ability to interpret and critically analyze legal norms, policies, and governance mechanisms related to forensic science and forensic genetics. They will learn to evaluate how legal principles are applied within the criminal justice system in relation to DNA evidence and forensic investigations. Through the discussion of case studies, students will strengthen their capacity to apply legal and ethical reasoning to practical situations, assessing the implications of forensic practices for individual rights, due process, and public security.

In addition, students will acquire the competence to critically assess regulatory frameworks governing forensic DNA databases and the use of genetic information in criminal justice, and to engage in informed discussion on the legal challenges posed by emerging forensic technologies. The course will also foster the ability to formulate well-grounded arguments on the relationship between law, ethics, and forensic practice.

Final assessments: multiple choice exam