

## Course Objectives/Course Outline

### Spokane Community College

---

---

**Course Title: CJ Technical Writing**

**Prefix and Course Number: CJ 217**

---

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

**By the end of this course, a student should be able to:**

- Demonstrate the ability to write a complete, chronological, and accurate basic police report using the appropriate format, from information gathered from interviews, observations and evidence at the scene
- Demonstrate the ability to complete basic law enforcement forms such as evidence logs and other common law enforcement forms
- Demonstrate the ability to write a complete and accurate search warrant affidavit and arrest warrant using the appropriate format, using information gathered from a police investigation
- Determine elements of the crime, aggravating and/or mitigating circumstances which are necessary to accurately justify actions taken and prosecutions pursued

**Outline:**

- I. Investigation Basics
  - a. Goal of investigations
  - b. Role of an investigative police report
  - c. Who, what, where, when, why and how
  - d. Qualities of a superior investigator
  - e. Clear and particular descriptions
    - i. The average person test
    - ii. Reasonable particularity
- II. The Rules of Narrative Writing
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Rule: first person
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> Rule: past tense
  - c. 3<sup>rd</sup> Rule: active voice
  - d. 4<sup>th</sup> Rule: chronological order
  - e. 5<sup>th</sup> Rule: Short, Clear, Concise and concrete words
  - f. Other Considerations
    - i. Spelling, use of abbreviations, names, jargon, and use of quotes
- III. Note Taking
  - a. The importance and uses of field notes
  - b. Mechanics of note taking
  - c. Accessing information/ what should be included
  - d. Notes as evidence
- IV. Describing Persons and Property
  - a. Categorizing people on the police report
    - i. Victims
    - ii. Complainants
    - iii. Suspects
    - iv. Witnesses
    - v. Others
  - b. Suspect description

- c. Property
  - i. Descriptions
  - ii. Photos and sketches
  - iii. Determining property value
    - 1. Victim appraisal
    - 2. Replacement cost
  - iv. Evidence Logs/Reports
    - 1. Formats
  - v. Chain of Custody
- V. Basic Police Report
  - a. Purpose
  - b. Completing the report
    - i. Filling in the form
      - 1. Case number and other basic facts
      - 2. Solvability factors
      - 3. Person reporting and person discovering the crime
      - 4. Characteristics of premises or area
      - 5. Motive/type of property taken
      - 6. Weapons/tools/vehicles
      - 7. Evidence
      - 8. Injuries
    - ii. Supplemental reports
    - iii. Juvenile Investigation Reports/Complaints
  - c. Arrest Reports
    - i. Documenting the arrest
      - 1. How Probable Cause was established
        - a. Senses, statements, evidence (totality of circumstances)
      - 2. Training and experience
      - 3. DUI reports
      - 4. Required other
        - a. Warrant requests
        - b. Arraignment Waivers
        - c. Subpoenas
        - d. Arrest/booking sheet
        - e. Domestic Violence victim notification
    - d. Investigative Supplemental Reports
- VI. Search Warrants
  - a. The Warrant Process and defining terms
  - b. The warrant
    - i. "particularly described" premises/property
  - c. The affidavit
    - i. Establishing probable cause
  - d. The Warrant Return
- VII. Issues in law enforcement technical writing
  - a. Records Management Systems
  - b. Fact or Opinion
    - i. When opinions are appropriate
  - c. Documenting Responses to *Miranda*
  - d. Eye Witness Identification
  - e. Documenting Field Show Ups
  - f. The Approval Process