

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

MODULE 1 – WHERE ARE WE?

LECTURE 1 – INTRODUCTION

Hello! And welcome! I'm Bob Meesig, and this is my course on the police criminal investigation process in the United States.

Prepare yourself to **enjoy a good story**. All in all, I think it's a real **crackerjack**, if I don't say so myself! I taught it as a course for several years at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, and had a good time doing so. I don't know of anything quite like it that is being taught anywhere else, particularly because much of the more recent research in the course is drawn from stuff that I personally participated in.

COURSE DESIGN

The story begins when I retired a few years back, after a long career in investigations. I thought I knew pretty much everything about investigations and such, but I had this nagging feeling that we just didn't seem to be as effective in solving crime as we thought we were. In fact, I often thought that investigators in general were poorly trained and oriented too much toward administrative things, and that we were restricted by the law from doing the things that would most effectively help us to solve crimes. We were approaching the beginning of the third millennium of our modern history (the year 2000), and it seemed that we **oughta be doing a little better, or a lot better**, with all this crime stuff by now. I mean, after practicing for 2000 years, give or take, just **how hard could it be?** So I went back to school and studied criminal justice to see what I, with all my knowledge and experience, could teach those guys.

At first, I tried to get a **better handle** on our criminal justice system overall, and to gain a better perspective of what we looked like, and what we were doing. Admittedly, I had worked with many investigators and investigations agencies all over the world and at various levels of government in the past, so I knew almost everything already. But I just wanted to sharpen up my own understanding, and I also wanted to see what everybody else thought they knew.

What I found out was **demoralizing** to say the least. First, I learned that I didn't know as much as I thought I did. That was a shock. But I also realized that I didn't even know what I didn't know! That was devastating. But worst of all, nobody else seemed to know very much, either! While there were a number of research projects that had been conducted in the field of investigations, they had been the first studies of their kind,

and they were conducted back during the 1960s to the 1980s. They framed our knowledge of the field at that time, and they provided an overview and some good insights regarding the nature of police investigations. But unfortunately, they were limited in scope, and not much had been done since then.

So at least I got a better idea of what we know and don't know about investigations. And the better idea was essentially that **we don't know very much**, and we know that we don't know very much. And, we don't seem to be doing very much about that sorry state of affairs, either!

Well, after having first been shocked, and then devastated, and all that, I was just **astonished**. How could all this have happened? How could we have progressed so little over the past two millennia? Just exactly what was the problem here? Most of the people I knew in the field were pretty smart and pretty good at what they did, so why aren't we doing better? And why don't we know more about what we are doing? What's holding us back? I mean, a lot of these questions are just basic investigative procedure, so how did we get here, anyhow? So I looked back into the history of investigations to see just **what the heck** had been going on and just **WHO SCREWED UP?** Who could I pin this mess on? Who was gonna be the offender? Yeah, the offender, the subject, the UNSUB, the perp. **Perp** stands for perpetrator – I learned that on TV.

You're just gonna have to **go through the course** to find the answers to those questions, and you may or may not like what I came up with. But anyway, once I got all that **squared away**, it became a little clearer to me that there were forces to be reckoned with in our society that basically drove us to where we are today, whether we liked it or not. And they seemed to be taking us down a similar path in the future, also. But the more I learned about that, the more I began to question in my own mind whether we were really destined to **continue repeating** the same mistakes of the past, or whether we could find a better way of dealing with the horrendous costs of crime in our society.

So I put together this course to lay out the background and the issues regarding criminal investigations, and to give you some of the **information and perspective**. You're gonna need that in order to intelligently think about and make a positive contribution to the problems that we will be faced with in our society. Because one thing is for sure – the **future's a-coming**, and you will be affected by it one way or another.

Regarding the course content, let me give you a **heads-up** right **off the bat**. **This course does not teach you how to conduct investigations**. If you are interested in learning about how to conduct investigations of different types of crimes, or how to use various investigative techniques for conducting criminal investigations,

then this course is **not for you!** If you want to learn how to be an investigator, then you should look for an investigation training course.

This course teaches you about the criminal investigation process itself, not how to be an investigator. It's essentially a survey of the process. It is presented in **six modules** that pretty much track with the story I just told you earlier. Each module consists of one or more lectures ranging roughly between five and 25 minutes long, for a total of around three dozen lectures totaling about ten hours of listening. But that'll vary depending on changes, future additions, etc.

- **Module 1**, which is entitled "**Where Are We?**" looks at our current situation as we enter into the third millennium A.D. (again, that's the year 2000) regarding **crime, police agencies** and the **investigation process** in our society, and it discusses why we're **effective** – or not.

- **Module 2**, called "**Who Are the Detectives and What Do They Do?**" tries to answer that question based on what we know from the research.

- **Module 3**, entitled "**How Did We Get Here?**" goes back a couple of centuries to find out how the idea of detectives came about in the first place. Or, who's responsible for this current mess? It describes the different **models** of detectives that have been tried and failed in the past, including such hombres as the **Government Spy, the Classical Detective, Secretive Rogues, and Inquisitors**, so we can get a better understanding of how our current situation evolved.

- **Module 4**, named "**Where Are We Going?**" examines the ramifications of **9/11, forensics and technology** on the current investigation process and takes a look at where they seem to be leading us into the future.

- **Module 5**, entitled "**Where Do We Want to Go?**" reviews the hard-learned lessons of the past and considers whether we are fated to **repeat history**, - once again (!!!), or whether we can use those lessons to chart a **more productive future**. I mean, it looks like we are on the brink of some pretty tremendous opportunities to improve the criminal investigations process over the next 100 years, and we face some potentially disastrous consequences if we don't. We are smarter and more aware of the problems, and more capable of dealing with them now than we have ever been in history. So do we go for the **brass ring** and take advantage of what we know? Or do we just "**stupe**" out, and **punt** and recycle – once again?

- **Module 6**, entitled “**2084**,” as in the year 2084, takes a look at how future technological developments may affect the investigation of different crimes. It applies what we learned in order to draw conclusions about what we may expect from sources of crime information in the 21st century.

So that’s it – we start with a look at where we are today in terms of organization and effectiveness, and what detectives look like. Then we look into the past to try to figure out how we got to this mess, and whether or not it’ll change in the near future. And then we talk about where we should be going based on what we’ve learned so far, and how all the new technological developments being predicted today may transform the criminal investigations process by the year 2084. **The present, the past, and three takes on the future.** I know I’m repeating here, but try to keep that pattern in your head as we travel, OK? It’ll help you keep on track and maintain a perspective.

So in short, **this course does not teach you how to be an investigator.** Now that’s at least the **second time** I told you that, so fair warning. It teaches you about the police criminal investigation **process** in the US as it looks from where we are standing now in the second decade of the third millennium AD. Big difference, as you shall soon see.

Another heads-up. This course was scripted to be understood by the casual **observer**, as well as the experienced **investigator** and the aspiring **academic**. Having been each of those at one time or another myself, I thought it was the best way to go. It’s informational in nature. But it’s based on research and well-cited, and it’s presented with varying degrees of formality. Some of you will find that to be **off-putting**, and others may think it’s still too technical, or maybe something else. Also, the course may seem to drag on in a spot or two – well, it’s a course, right? But hopefully, a little levity here and there will help alleviate any laborious **lucubrating**. That word is hard enough just to pronounce, so you can go look it up yourself.

Before you get the impression that this is a funny ha-ha type of course, let me also alert you that there will be times when I will **rag on you**, criticize you, yell and berate you, even though I can’t see you. First off, to borrow a phrase, crime and criminal investigations **ain’t beanbag**. It’s tough stuff and it really hurts lots of people every minute of every day. In teaching this course to college students, I’ve seen where some of them have occasionally fallen out of the rapture of my lectures, or maybe even “forgotten” some important points when I asked them simple questions. Things like that cannot be tolerated in investigations because of the lives and reputations at stake. And I periodically, and pointedly, reminded them of their inattentions. I will also do

the same with you to sharpen your focus, just in case you get side-tracked or distracted. So **toughen up** quick – I don't like it when you **SCREW UP!!** Ah, don't be overly concerned about all this – a little criticism every now and then does remarkable things for one's perspective, and most of you can probably handle it pretty easily by now. If not, then its time you started getting used to it.

The **ragging** and criticism serves another purpose also. Crime is mostly emotional, and detectives must routinely deal with and manipulate emotions in a legal way to solve crime. **Confrontation and challenges** are tools of their trade. It's hard to talk about that without getting into the how-to-investigate stuff, but throwing in emotional views here and there during the course can reinforce that inherent aspect of the investigation process and highlight the investigators' mindset. While I present research findings impartially during the course, the arguments surrounding them are typically emotional, and I **present them in that context**. I do not pretend to know how victims feel, or exactly what the viewpoints of all sides of the arguments are, but I have tried to represent them in the various emotional contexts that I myself have heard over the years. I'm sure that this will be unpleasant to some of you. Nevertheless, as I said, crime **ain't beanbag**, and just sitting and listening to a machine **jabbering** away on something seems, in my opinion, to lack the necessary context for an appropriate understanding of the subject.

You're listening to the **audio portion** of this course. A more expanded video presentation is (or soon will be) available to you online for a slight fee to cover costs. It consists essentially of videos, slides, links, miscellaneous visual representations, a syllabus, and references for the information presented, among other things. So you will eventually have the options of reading, listening, or reading and listening.

The material in the course is amply referenced, and **citations** are included in the **transcripts**. The citations include most of the major published works on the overall criminal investigation process that have been conducted, with the exception of materials relating to forensics, specific case types, techniques, and such. And, in order to make this course as comprehensive as possible, I'm always grateful for having any omissions or oversights called to my attention, so that I may include them, as appropriate. So the list of references and cites can serve as a fairly comprehensive bibliography on this subject.

So, DEAR FELLOW **TRAVELER** (and I use the term as a friendly form of address as we journey through this course), you will notice that I will often refer you to the **Internet** for further information on particular items in the course that may be of interest to you, but which are not explored in detail. I also cite references accessible through Google, Google Scholar, Wikipedia, or other sources on the Internet. While the sources

and information found on the Internet may always be open to question regarding their reliability and accuracy, the ones I've cited are **generally sufficient** for the purposes of this course, and they can always be challenged and researched further by interested TRAVELERS. Often the original source documents are readily available through the Internet, and the Internet can provide quick access to them. So it's a valuable resource overall.

This audio course provides you access to a **bulletin board** to post questions, type out thoughts, carry on discussions with other participants, etc. Also included in the modules are **short quizzes** covering some of the main points. The first few quizzes are designed to allow you to check and see how well you **understood** what was just presented, and to **review** information you will find useful further on in the course. The quiz at the end of the fifth module **challenges you to use what you learned** to decide where **you** think we should go. **Good luck with that!**

All the quizzes are **open-book**, or at least open-audio (?), if that's a word. You can go back through the audio for the answers, that's OK. The idea here is not to give you a grade, but to present something that you can **put into your head** and **then make use of**. In the past I've heard students complain that they didn't learn anything useful in a course. Well, you can't make use of info if it is not first in your head. My job is to give you the info. Your job is to put into your head, and then make use of it once it's there. Bounce it around, see if it makes any sense, check if it contradicts what you already know or may have seen on TV or somewhere else. Try and figure out why something is the way it is, who thought of it, or if you can see a better way. Or just remember it and try to use it later. If you've spent any time in college, you've probably heard more than once that a major purpose of education is to **learn how to think** and to **reason**. Well, here's your big opportunity! Put this stuff into your head, and then use it. I might even give you some ideas about how to do that during the course. So **go for it!!**

You would probably **get more out of the course** if you had already taken an introductory course in criminal justice or policing, or if you had some general familiarity with our criminal justice system in the US. However, that's not critical, and this course should, in any case, prove to be an interesting and rewarding experience in and of itself.

AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Now, a little about me and my background. I served **26 years as a Special Agent** in the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, which is abbreviated as the AFOSI, or just OSI, for short. The AFOSI is the major

investigations and counterintelligence agency in the United States Air Force. My overseas assignments included 5 years in Korea, 27 months in Vietnam, six months in Iran, and 3 ½ years at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. I served in field, command, and staff positions in AFOSI, and I retired from the Air Force in 1989 as a Lieutenant Colonel.

I earned a **Bachelor** of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Rochester in NY, in 1963; a **Master** of Arts degree in Correctional Counseling from Chapman College in CA, in 1977; and a **Master** of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University, in 1994. I received my **Ph.D.** degree in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University in 2004, and taught policing and investigations courses for six years as an Assistant Professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Grand Valley State University in Michigan.

I am presently **retired**. Retirement has been quite a lifestyle change for me, but I think I'm finally starting to get the hang of it~~

Well, that about covers the introductory stuff, and now we're ready to begin. I invite you, as a FELLOW TRAVELER, to join me as we enter into the intriguing and inscrutable world of criminal investigations. So what are you waiting for? **Let's get this show on the road!!**