

FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY: HUMAN REMAINS AND THE LAW

January 27, 2016 – MAY 4, 2016
Wednesdays, 6:30-9:00 pm
ESC 139

Jolee West, Ph.D.
Information Technology Services, ESC 510
860-685-2763, jwest@wesleyan.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

SYLLABUS (Spring 2015)

Forensic anthropology is the medicolegal application of biological anthropological methods, generally pertaining to the identification of human remains. When badly decomposed, burned, and skeletonized remains are discovered, a forensic anthropologist is usually called in by law enforcement officials to help establish identity and aid in ascertaining time and manner of death. Forensic anthropologists maintain a skill set that is different from that of the average forensic pathologist, one that cross-cuts human osteology, archaeology, and taphonomy.

The course begins with an overview of the history of forensic anthropology and an introduction to the forensic anthropologist, their training and role in aiding law enforcement in recovery and documentation of the forensic context, in determining the time and manner of death, and the personal identity of remains. Next, we delve into the fundamentals of human osteology, and in addition to a general introduction to human skeletal anatomy, we examine the growth, structure, and histology of the human skeleton and compare these to some non-human mammals often misidentified (by the uninitiated) as human. Next, we consider the methods used by forensic anthropologists to aid in personal identification: the basics—determinations of age, sex, stature, and ancestry; and the more specific—identification of occupational markers, evidence of medical history, and indications of perimortem and postmortem trauma. While these determinations are actually statistical estimates and interpretations, we will explore how they are founded on considerable scientific research into human growth and development, population variation, extensive studies of donated human remains and medical records, and a broad array of experimental and actualistic research human and non-human remains in well-described depositional and preservational contexts (e.g., "The Body Farm").

We go on to learn about the role of the forensic anthropologist in the recovery of remains—the preparation and processing of remains, documentation, and contributions to understanding the forensic context of the remains, including the time and manner of death. We are introduced to some other forensic science specialties, such as crime scene investigation, facial reconstruction, forensic odontology, forensic entomology, and forensic pathology, among others. Lastly, we consider the role of the forensic anthropologist as an expert witness and review the ethics and laws pertaining to the treatment of human remains.

Required Reading

Tersigni-Tarrant, MariaTeresa A., and Natalie R. Shirley. 2013. *Forensic anthropology: an introduction*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

- Publisher's website: <https://www.crcpress.com/Forensic-Anthropology-An-Introduction/TersigniTarrant-Shirley/9781439816462>

Several other, short readings TBD, from the primary literature or news.

Field Trip

I will arrange for a tour (possibly after hours) of the State of Connecticut Forensic Science Laboratory in Meriden. The date and time of this trip will be determined during the semester so as to arrange the most convenient time for all enrolled.

Assessment

Students will be evaluated based the following:

1. Classroom discussion/participation (15%)
 - Note that because participation is graded, absences detract from the full grade. If you have an unavoidable need for an absence, please talk to me asap and I will arrange for a make-up assignment, if appropriate (my prerogative).
2. Several short, written case-oriented analyses (20%)
3. A 10-15 page narrowly-defined research paper concerning a topic relevant to this course, broken down into five separately graded assignments:
 - Basic formulation of the paper topic, a rough outline, and a list of at least 5 references (10%)
 - Instructor-graded 1st-draft (15%)
 - Peer-graded 2nd draft (15%)
 - Student presentation of paper (5%)
 - Final draft (submitted paper). (20%)

I can provide a list of suitable paper topics, or help you define your own, based on your personal interests.

Moodle

We will be using Moodle, the online course management system, for announcements, communications, document distribution (background info, lectures, news stories), assignment submission, and grading. You can log into Moodle by going to <http://moodle.wesleyan.edu> or by clicking on the Moodle link in your e-portfolio.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings (Chapters in Tersigni-Tarrant & Shirley, 2012)	Location
Jan 27	Introductions & Overview of the Course The Human Skeleton and Anatomical Terminology	Chapter 4 (we'll be continuing with this soon)	ESC139
Feb 3	The History of Forensics & Forensic Anthropology Establishing forensic context, and the forensic anthropologist's role	Chapters 1, 2, 3 (32 pages)	Online!
Feb 10	The Human Skeleton: overview of structure, growth and histology	Chapters 4 (again!), and 5 (66 pages)	ESC139
Feb 17	Sex & ancestry	Chapters 8 and 11 (36 pages)	ESC351
Feb 24	Age & stature	Chapters 9, 10, 12 (83 pages)	ESC351
Friday, Feb 26, 6pm	Research paper topic, outline and sample references due (will be graded by Mar 2 meeting)		
Mar 2	Occupational markers, asymmetry and pathology	Chapter 20 (24 pages)	ESC139
Mar 4-21	SPRING BREAK		
Mar 23	Perimortem and postmortem trauma to the skeleton	Chapters 14, 15, 16 (54 pages)	ESC139

Friday, Mar 25 6pm	First draft of paper due (will be graded by Mar 30 meeting)		
Mar 30	Trauma continued	Chapters 14, 15, 16 (54 pages)	ESC139
Apr 6 Lab Tour to be arranged...	<i>Crime Scene Investigation:</i> Guest Speaker Preparation, processing and documentation Laws, Ethics and Expert Witnesses Testimony	Chapter 6, 7 (22 pages)	ESC139
Apr 13	Taphonomy, Weathering and Postmortem Interval	Chapters 17, 18, 19 (72 pages)	ESC139
	Second draft of paper due for peer-review by <u>3pm</u>; you will have 1 week to grade it according to the provided rubric		
Apr 20	30 min Q&A on Peer Review Student Presentations		ESC139
	Peer review due to by <u>3 pm</u>		
Apr 27	Student Presentations		ESC139
May 4	Final Papers Due by <u>9 pm</u>		