EXP-0028-F: Introduction to Forensic Anthropology

Syllabus

Instructor: Jennifer M Bauder, Ph.D.
Email: Jennifer.Bauder@tufts.edu
Course Time: Mondays 6:30 – 9:00 pm
Meeting Place: Eaton 333

Course Description: Forensic anthropologists play an essential role in diverse contexts where human skeletal remains are involved. TV shows in popular media such as “Bones” and “CSI” depict the contribution forensic anthropologists make in criminal investigations. In addition, forensic anthropologists are often called to the scene of mass disasters such as plane crashes or train wrecks and are increasingly involved in international human rights investigations. This course will explore the role of the forensic anthropologist in these scenarios and discuss the responsibilities and ethical considerations of working with human skeletal remains. In addition, the methodologies used to extract information on the life history of an individual (age, sex, stature, ancestry, pathology, trauma etc) from skeletal remains will be presented.

Required Texts:

Additional readings in the form of articles are required and will be available through Blackboard.

Course Requirements:
Grades will be assigned based on evaluation of the following components: attendance to class, participation/contribution to discussions and exercises, 2 quizzes, 3 assignments, and a final examination.

Attendance to class is mandatory. Absences are only excused in cases of documented medical or family emergencies. It is the responsibility of the student to provide documentation and make up lost work. Cases of repeated tardiness to class is considered equivalent to unexcused absences. Attendance will count toward 10% of the final grade. Note: This percentage represents a minimum and the instructor retains the right to change this. For example, a student who misses more than half of the class sessions may fail the course regardless of performance on other requirements.

Participation in class discussions and exercises is mandatory. All students are expected to come to class having done the required readings and be prepared to contribute to discussion or planned exercises. Class discussion will come in two forms: 1. Predetermined discussion topics handed out by the instructor 2. Informal class discussions. Participation in these two types of class discussion and in class exercises will count toward 20% of the final grade. Like attendance, the value of participation represents a minimum value and may be adjusted at the discretion of the instructor.

Two quizzes will be given in class. Each quiz will count for 10% of the final grade for a total of 20% of the final grade. No make-up quizzes will be given.
Three assignments will be required in the course. It is expected that assignments will be turned in on time. Late assignments will not be accepted. The assignments will, in total, count toward 30% of the final grade.

One exam will be given in the course. This will be a final exam of mixed format combining multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, T/F, short answer, etc. No make-up exams will be given. The final exam is a cumulative exam and will count toward 20% of the final grade.

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<th>Requirement</th>
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<td>Attendance</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>2 @ 10% each = 20%</td>
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<td>Assignments</td>
<td>3 @ 10% each = 30%</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Grading:
Final grades are based on a standard scale. There is no curving of scores or grades.

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<td>D+</td>
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Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student who is caught plagiarizing other students, texts or internet materials or cheating on exams will receive an F in the course and be referred to the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.

Schedule:

**September 12: Week 1: Introduction and History of Forensic Anthropology**

*Topic:* This session will introduce the field of forensic anthropology and give a history of the profession tracing it roots both through the development of an American anthropological tradition and through forensic sciences. In addition, the syllabus will be reviewed and class policies and expectations explained.

*Readings:*
Steadman Chp 1

**September 19: Week 2: Forensic Context and Legal Issues**

*Topic:* This session will cover how it is determined if a set of remains is a case of forensic interest. In addition, legal issues for forensic anthropology such as the standard governing expert court testimony will be discussed.

*Readings:*
Steadman pp 1-7, 63-67, and Chps 7 and 21

*Assignment 1 handout:* Each student will prepare an oral presentation detailing a real life forensic anthropology case study from one of the following three areas: Mass Disasters, Human Rights Work or Police Investigations. Presentations should summarize the chosen case study focusing on details of the scenario, analyses, results and broader implications of the case. Further instructions on how to find an appropriate case study and expectations of the presentation will be given in class. Presentations will occur during Weeks 5, 7 and 9.

**September 26: Week 3: Search and Recovery, Introduction to the Human Skeleton**

*Topic:* This session will start with an exercise (see below) aimed to illustrate forensic anthropology search and recovery techniques. After the exercise, back in the classroom, the students will be introduced to the human skeleton. It is an in-depth knowledge of human skeletal biology and variability which allows a forensic anthropologist to “read” the life history of an individual from the skeleton. This session will cover basic bone biology as well as give an overview of human skeletal anatomy focusing on those areas of the skeleton most useful to forensic investigations.

*Readings:*
Steadman Chps 9 and 13

*Exercise:* In this exercise students will learn about and practice various aspects of a forensic search and recovery effort including transect line searches, evidence tagging and mapping. Weather permitting this exercise will be conducted outside on a grassy area to simulate real-life conditions. If the weather does not cooperate the exercise can be simulated indoors.

**October 3: Week 4: Mass Disasters I**

*Topic:* Forensic anthropologists are integral members of the federal DMORT (Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team) organization which responds to mass fatalities such as train wrecks, plane crashes and terrorist attacks including the Sept 11 World Trade Center attacks. This session will discuss the role of the forensic anthropologist in mass disasters focusing on the formation and deployment of DMORT including a movie about the Hardin, MO flood. This session will also discuss the reading which provides an anthropological read on events of Sept 11.

*Readings:*

3
October 10: Columbus Day: No Classes

October 17: Week 5: Mass Disasters II: Student Presentations

*Topic:* Students who have chosen to do a case study on Mass Disasters for Assignment 1 will present these case studies to the rest of the class.

October 24: Week 6: Human Rights Work I

*Topic:* Forensic anthropologists are increasingly involved in the international arena of investigations of human rights violations, both current and past. This session will discuss the work of Clyde Snow, considered to be the “father” of anthropological human rights work as well as the instructor’s personal experiences in this milieu analyzing massacre victims from the Spanish Civil War.

*Readings:*

*Quiz 1*

October 31: Week 7: Human Rights Work II: Film and Student Presentations

*Topic:* This session will start with the viewing of a film which presents forensic anthropology work in identifying the “disappeared” from Guatemala. After the film, students who have chosen to do a case study on Human Rights Work for Assignment 1 will present these case studies to the rest of the class.

November 7: Week 8: Police Investigations I

*Topic:* This session covers the role of the forensic anthropologist in modern criminal investigations. How is a set of remains determined to have forensic value? What relationship does the forensic anthropologist have with police and medical agencies? How does an investigation proceed? The instructor will detail two forensic investigations from her portfolio.

*Readings:*
Steadman, Chps 3 and 19

November 14: Week 9: Police Investigations II: Film and Student Presentations

*Topic:* This session will start with the viewing of a film which presents a “typical” forensic police investigation involving human skeletal remains. After the film, students who have chosen to do a case study on Police Investigations for Assignment 1 will present these case studies to the rest of the class.

*Assignment 2 handout:* Students will prepare a written summary (3-5) pages of a real life forensic anthropology case study which focuses on methods of estimating the biological profile. Summaries of the chosen case studies should focus on details of the scenario, analyses, results and broader implications of the case. Further instructions on how to find an appropriate case study and expectations of the summary will be given in class.

Assignment 2 is due at the beginning of class Week 11.
November 21: Week 10: Age and Sex

*Topic:* This session teaches the methodologies used to estimate the age and sex of an individual from the skeleton.

*Readings:*
White Ch 19 (pp 363-398)

*Assignment 3 handout:* The students will be given the background information on a hypothetical forensic case. They will be required to detail a plan of investigation including a discussion on the appropriate methodologies to establish a biological profile. This assignment is due at the beginning of class, Week 13.

*Quiz 2*

November 28: Week 11: Stature and Ancestry

*Topic:* This session will demonstrate how to estimate stature and ancestry from the skeleton. This session will include a discussion on what, if any, biologic basis there is to racial differences and why the term ancestry is preferred by anthropologists.

*Readings:*
Steadman Ch 14 + 4
White Ch 19 (pp 398-404)

*Assignment 2 due.*

December 5: Week 12: Pathology and Trauma

*Topic:* This session will introduce the various diseases that can leave signs on skeletal remains focusing on those most important in a forensic context. Issues of diagnosis and interpretation will be included. This week also covers analysis of trauma on the human skeleton including blunt trauma, sharp force trauma and gunshot wounds. Classification and interpretation of trauma are detailed.

*Readings:*

Steadman, Chs 15 + 17


*Exercise:* Students will learn about properties of cranial blunt force trauma through an exercise that simulates this trauma type on hard boiled eggs. The eggs will allow students to see the various types of fractures produced by cranial blunt force trauma as well as learn the principles of determining the number and sequence of individual blows to the head.

December 12: Week 13: Final Examination

No readings.

*Assignment 3 due.*