

Unbound Prometheus Program - Summer 2017

Villains, Victims and Forensic Evidence: an introduction to forensic anthropology theory and practice



Instructor:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Forensic anthropology involves using a variety of methods and theories about human biology to answer medical and legal questions. Forensic anthropologists collaborate closely with police officers, lawyers, doctors, medical examiners, and other specialists to analyse heavily decomposed and often skeletonised remains and assist in police investigations. Whether recovered from crime scenes, war graves, or mass disasters, the human remains of a deceased person can provide such information as age at death, sex, stature, and indications of general health and lifestyle, all of which can assist in the personal identification of that individual, and provide an insight into the circumstances surrounding death. This course will provide an insight on the history of the discipline of forensic anthropology and current methods and practice.

While proficiency in forensic methods will not be the focus of this course, general identification techniques will be addressed.

COURSE AIMS: understanding of the tasks and duties of forensic anthropologists, the methods employed and their overall contribution to the medicolegal investigation of death.

TARGET AUDIENCE: The course is designed for UG or PG students of various studies (e.g. Archaeology, Social Anthropology, Anatomy, Medicine) who seek an exposure to the discipline of forensic anthropology as a future professional path but also for any adult that would like to be familiar with the theory and practice of the discipline. Previous knowledge in anatomy is not a requirement. An overview of skeletal anatomy will be given in the beginning of the course. Although the course itself does not provide proficiency in forensic methods it can serve as preliminary training for the entry in UG or PG programs in forensic anthropology.

TEACHING METHOD: Each class will be designed to have two components; a theory portion where we will cover the basic principles, and a second portion where case examples will be used to illustrate the applications of the discussed methods in forensic and archaeological situations. The course will be very much hands-on and constant participation from the class will be fostered and encouraged. 3D virtual tools will be used to visualise some case examples thus students are encouraged to bring a laptop with RAM of 4GB minimum and a good processor with capacity to run 3D software. One laptop per two persons can be used in case some students cannot bring a laptop that supports 3D software. From day 3 a class quiz of 15 minutes will take place before each lecture. More information on the content will be given in the introductory session on Day 1.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (July 10-14, 2017)

Day 1. History of Forensic Anthropology and introduction to basic principles. The role of the forensic anthropologist in the medicolegal investigation of death.

Day 2. Basic principles of Bone Biology and Histology

Day 3. Basic principles of skeletal anatomy

Quiz 1

Day 4. Methods of sex and stature estimation

Quiz 2

Day 5. Methods of age and ancestry estimation

Quiz 3

Week 2 (July 17-21, 2017)

Day 1. Skeletal trauma (sharp force, blunt force, ballistic and blast injuries) and interpretation

Quiz 4

Day 2. Skeletal pathology and taphonomic alterations on the skeleton.

Quiz 5

Day 3. Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) procedures. Methods of positive identification

Quiz 6

Day 4. Forensic Anthropology in the living

Quiz 7

Day 5. Forensic Anthropology and Expert witness testimony.

Quiz 8

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Basic principles of human bone biology and skeletal anatomy.
2. Methods for sex, age, stature and ancestry estimation from human skeletal remains.
3. Assessment of trauma and/or pathological conditions of the human skeleton
4. Principles of positive identification from human skeletal remains
5. Role of the forensic anthropologist and learn how to work in a cooperative manner with law enforcement officials
6. Disaster Victim Identification Units and procedure
7. Legal obligations of the forensic anthropology as an expert witness
8. Interpretation of evidence from human remains in forensic and archaeological context

READING MATERIAL:

Students are expected to bring with them a copy of **White TD, Folkens PA The Human Bone Manual 1st Edition Academic Press; 1st edition 2005 (Amazon price \$36.87 new)** or **White TD, Black M, Folkens PA. The Human Bone Manual Academic Press 3rd edition 2011 (Amazon price \$84.96 new)**. The latest edition is more complete but the first edition is equally sufficient for this course.

For students who wish to extend their reading two more suggestions are listed below and an additional list of references will be given by the instructor upon request.

Christensen AM, Passalacqua NV, Bartelink EJ. Forensic Anthropology: Current Methods and Practice Academic Press; 2014

Işcan MY, Steyn M. (eds) The Human Skeleton in Forensic Medicine. 3rd ed. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas; 2013.

GRADING POLICY:

Grades for the course will be based on class participation/discussion (20%) 8 in class quizzes (40%) and a take-home final essay, to be submitted within four weeks after the end of the course (40%)with the following grading scale: ▸ A: 90-100 ▸ B: 80-89 ▸ C: 70-79 ▸ D: 60-69 ▸ F: 0-59.