

Skeletal Forensic Anthropology (ANTH 411)

Fall Semester 2009

Lectures and Labs: 107 Carpenter Building
1:00-3:00 pm, Tuesday and Thursday

Instructor: George R. Milner; 119 Carpenter; 865-1268; OST@PSU.EDU
Office hours: 10:00-12:00 Tues & Thurs, and by appointment

Purpose: This course introduces students to the osteological and archaeological aspects of forensic science. Lectures and labs cover the human skeleton; the recovery of skeletal remains; the identification of skeletal trauma and postmortem damage; and the estimation of age, sex, ancestry, and stature.

Attendance: The class meets twice each week for lectures and labs, in the same room. Regular attendance is essential for a satisfactory grade. Students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss issues in both lectures and labs. Only those students who attend class will benefit from discussions stemming from questions and points raised by their fellow class members.

Lectures will not be repeated for students on an individual basis. Labs cannot be made up later because demand for rooms is high and the materials require considerable time to collect, organize, lay out, and return to the collections. Furthermore, many activities require group interaction, an important component of conducting forensic work (for that matter, all scientific work). The same is true of the quizzes.

Requirements: Comprehension of lectures, reading materials, and lab exercises is assessed through exams and quizzes. Regular class attendance is necessary for a good grade.

Exams. Two tests will be administered to evaluate student comprehension of topics raised in class and the labs, as well as the reading materials. The exams consist of short-answer and fill-in-the-blank format questions.

The tentative date for the midterm exam is given in the schedule of topics, provided below (it is subject to change). Students are responsible for making themselves aware of any change in the exam date, which can be done by attending class or checking ANGEL. The midterm exam will be held in the same room and at the same time as the normal class.

The final exam will be held during Exam Week. The university schedules the room, date, and time for this exam, and this information is posted by the university later in the semester. The final exam is a comprehensive test, but materials presented in the second half of the semester will be emphasized.

Quizzes. Three quizzes, which focus heavily (but not exclusively) on the lab exercises, will be given. They feature, in part, "hands on" work with remains, and consist of short-answer and fill-in-the-blank format questions. Dates for quizzes will be announced in class at least one week before the quizzes take place.

Performance Evaluation: Comprehension is assessed through your performance on the exams and quizzes. The grading policy is designed to help students achieve the highest grade possible.

In each exam, the highest grade, regardless of what it is, receives a score of 100. Therefore, there will always be at least one student who scores 100% on a test. All other student scores are scaled accordingly; that is, all grades (scores) are bumped upwards. The same procedure applies to the quizzes as well.

For each student, the exam with the lowest score will contribute least to his or her overall course grade. The best score, whichever test it happens to be, makes up 40% of the overall grade; the worst score contributes 30%. Students benefit from this procedure because the greatest weight is given to the best performance, regardless of whether it occurred on the midterm or final exam. The quizzes likewise contribute unequally to the overall course grade. The two best quiz scores each represent 15% of the final course grade (collectively 30%); the lowest is dropped entirely. For students who miss a quiz, that grade is the one omitted from the calculation of the final grade.

Course grades corresponding to points earned for the combined test scores are listed below (numerical equivalents for grades of A to F). Students can calculate their standing in the class by the following formula where G is the course Grade, L is the Lowest test score, H is the Highest test score, and Q designates the two highest Quiz scores (in no particular order): $G = (L \cdot .3) + (H \cdot .4) + (Q \cdot .15) + (Q \cdot .15)$.

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|----|--------|----|-------|
| A | 100-92 | C+ | 79-78 |
| A- | 91-90 | C | 77-70 |
| B+ | 89-88 | D | 69-60 |
| B | 87-82 | F | 59-0 |
| B- | 81-80 | | |

No extra credit is available. Students wishing to improve a low grade received early in the semester should use that extra effort to apply themselves diligently when preparing for subsequent quizzes and the final exam. Keep in mind that the exams and quizzes are unequally weighted in the computation of the final course grade; that procedure provides ample opportunities for pulling up a disappointingly low grade early in the semester.

Exam Scheduling Problems: It is your responsibility to appear on the correct day and at the right time to take the two exams, and to make yourself aware of any change in the scheduling of the midterm exam. A change in the midterm exam date will not be a problem for students who attend class or check ANGEL regularly.

Students who miss the midterm exam must notify the Instructor prior to the exam or within two lecture periods following it, and a written excuse from an appropriate source must be provided (health clinic, newspaper obituary, wedding announcement, etc.).

Students rarely experience final exam scheduling conflicts. But if such a problem should arise, it must be resolved on the student's initiative in a timely fashion following standard university procedures. A final exam will not be given early simply to accommodate travel plans, so plan your holiday arrangements accordingly.

Class Materials: There is one textbook for this course. Various supporting materials are also assigned.

Textbook. S.N. Byers (2008) *Introduction to Forensic Anthropology*. 3rd ed. Allyn and Bacon. Boston, MA.

Article(s). Dirkmaat DC, Cabo LL, Ousley SD, Symes SA. 2008. New Perspectives in Forensic Anthropology, *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* 51:33-52. [You can find this issue by looking under *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* for 2008.]

This article provides a thorough and up-to-date overview of Forensic Anthropology. It is available as a PDF through the Penn State Library LIAS system. Additional reading materials relevant to course topics, perhaps including news releases, might be assigned during the course of the semester as they are published.

Supporting Materials. Supporting materials include *Lecture Notes* and *Lab Exercises*. Both can be download in PDF format from ANGEL, which is accessible to all enrolled students.

Students must print the *Lab Exercises* before the appropriate lab. You will work as part of teams for many exercises, but unless instructed otherwise each student should print out a handout. Copies will not be provided in class for those who fail to do so.

It is recommended that you download *Lecture Notes* prior to class. The Powerpoint slides will guide you through what will be covered in class, introducing you to specialized terms and basic concepts before the lecture (to reduce the amount of paper needed, the slides are printed six to a page). Having the Powerpoint printout means you will not be distracted by making sure you have the correct spelling of a site, etc. You should, however, take your own notes during lecture because the Powerpoint slides only cover basic points, often in outline format. The notes on ANGEL, by themselves, are not an adequate substitute for attending class, paying attention to lectures, asking questions, and benefiting from discussions initiated by your fellow students. It follows that you should not expect that everything on a test is included on the Powerpoint slides.

Academic Integrity: Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. *Copying part, or all, of another student's test will be rewarded with the grade it deserves – failure in the course.* Cheating and plagiarism are, in short, *theft* of intellectual property. For clarification, you are encouraged to work collaboratively with other students on lab exercises, but this means working interactively with everyone sharing equally in the effort, not simply copying another student's work. Students unsure about what constitutes academic dishonesty are referred to the College of the Liberal Arts web site: <http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-LAUS/integrity/plagiarism.shtml>.

Students with Disabilities: Penn State encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. Notify me immediately if special accommodations are needed in lectures or exams; it is your responsibility to do so.

Contacting and Meeting with the Instructor: Email will be checked Tuesday and Thursday mornings, and irregularly at other times. Use my university email address (ost@psu.edu). Do not use the email function on ANGEL, as it will not be checked routinely. I will make every effort to be in the office (119 Carpenter) or lab (104 Carpenter) during office hours, although departmental meetings and other irregularly scheduled university-related tasks mean that I might not be available on a particular day. So it is best to confirm a meeting time in class. Office meetings can also be arranged by appointment.

Tentative Schedule (subject to change)

The following schedule provides the approximate dates for lecture and lab topics, the likely date of the midterm exam, and chapter assignments. The university’s final exam schedule is finalized later in the semester. Text chapters, and pages if necessary, are also indicated.

The schedule indicates the subjects covered and their sequence. It also provides a general (“best guess”) idea about when various topics will be covered, although the dates will certainly be modified through the course of the semester as circumstances dictate. Adjustments will be necessary to accommodate student discussions of various topics and the time it takes the class to complete lab exercises.

| Date | Lecture | Lab | Reading |
|--------|--|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 25-Aug | Syllabus & Intro Forensic Anthropology | | |
| 27-Aug | Introduction to Forensic Anthropology | | Chap 1, 19, AJPA-08 |
| 1-Sep | Osteology | | Chap 2, 6:137-149 |
| 3-Sep | Osteology (finish) | Osteology | |
| 8-Sep | | Osteology | |
| 10-Sep | Forensic Archaeology | | Chap 3, 4 |
| 15-Sep | Forensic Archaeology | | |
| 17-Sep | Forensic Archaeology | | |
| 22-Sep | | Archaeology | |
| 24-Sep | Taphonomy | | Chap 5, 6:150; 16 |
| 29-Sep | | Taphonomy | |
| 1-Oct | Film | | |
| 6-Oct | Circumstances of Death | | Chap 11, 12, 13, 15:354-362 |
| 8-Oct | Circumstances of Death | | |
| 13-Oct | | Trauma | |
| 15-Oct | Midterm Exam | | |
| 20-Oct | Sex | | Chap 8 |
| 22-Oct | Sex | | |
| 27-Oct | | Sex | |
| 29-Oct | | Sex | |
| 3-Nov | Age | | Chap 9 |
| 5-Nov | Age | | |

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|--------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 10-Nov | Age (finish) | Age | |
| 12-Nov | | Age | |
| 17-Nov | | Age | |
| 19-Nov | Ancestry & Stature | | Chap 7, 10 |
| 24-Nov | THANKSGIVING BREAK | | |
| 26-Nov | THANKSGIVING BREAK | | |
| 1-Dec | Ancestry & Stature | | |
| 3-Dec | | Ancestry & Stature | |
| 8-Dec | Individual Identification | | Chap 15:362-380, 17, 18 |
| 10-Dec | Individual Identification | | |
| | Final Exam | | |