

## ANTH 305: Forensic Anthropology - Fall 2019

Professor: Dr. April M. Beisaw - [apbeisaw@vassar.edu](mailto:apbeisaw@vassar.edu)

Course days/times: Thursdays 3:10-6:10pm - Blodgett Hall 101

Office hours: Tuesdays 3-4:30pm BH 318 or by appointment



### Course Description

Forensic anthropology is the application of physical anthropology to medical or legal issues, such as murder. This course introduces students to the basic methods of forensic anthropology, including how age, sex, race, and height of an individual can be determined from their bones. Recognition of skeletal anomalies can also reveal past health conditions and the cause and manner of death. Students gain experience in applying these methods by working with real and synthetic human bones. Special attention is given to the accuracy of each method and how to develop a biological profile that would stand up in a court of law.

### Objectives

By the end of this course, student will have:

1. Developed skills to estimate age, sex, ancestry, and stature from human remains,
2. Practiced writing and reading biological profile reports,
3. Assessed the variables involved in decomposition and estimating time since death, and
4. Critiqued the reality of forensic anthropology against media portrayals.

### About Course Content

This class is about death. We will be handling real human bones, looking at images of real dead bodies, and discussing the last moments of real people. All students are expected to maintain high levels of professionalism in this course which includes respect for the dead as well as for each other. You may not take personal photos of the real human remains. You may not handle food or drink while working with the remains. Any disrespectful behaviors will result in a penalty on your overall course grade and may result in removal from the course.

### About Class Times

The first 15 minutes of most classes will be used for our weekly quizzes. If you are late to class you will lose quiz time. If you are absent you cannot make up a quiz. Also, expect to be in class for the full 3 hours each and every week. More time with the bones will make you better at forensic anthropology and better prepare you for graded work. We will take a 15-minute break halfway through each class meeting. I will provide an assortment of snacks for this break but feel free to bring something. There is NO EATING allowed before or after snack break when we are working with skeletal material

### Textbooks

There is one required text. Each student needs to have their own copy of Burns to work with in class. The optional White textbook is recommended for students who are not already familiar with human skeletal anatomy.

### *Required*

Burns, Karen Ramey

2012 *Forensic Anthropology Training Manual*. 3rd Edition. Pearson, Boston.

### *Optional*

White, Tim D. and Pieter A. Folkens

2005 *The Human Bone Manual*. Elsevier, Burlington, VT.

### Software

The forensic anthropology software package FORDISC is available at no cost for students in this course. Unfortunately, it requires a Windows operating system connected to the Vassar network to run. See Moodle for installation instructions. The software will be installed on the main classroom computer and a classroom laptop.

### **Additional Readings**

Additional readings will be posted on Moodle.

Anderson, Bruce E.

- 2008 Identifying the Dead: Methods Utilized by the Pima County (Arizona) Office of the Medical Examiner for Undocumented Border Crossers. *Journal of Forensic Science* 53(1):8-15.

Beisaw, April M.

- 2011 Forensic Anthropology Report: Case # HEI-11-FRP-01. Report Submitted to Fremont Police Department, Fremont, OH.

Blakey, Michael L.

- 2001 Bioarchaeology of the African Diaspora in the Americas: Its Origins and Scope. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30:387-422.

Grisbaum, Gretchen A. and Douglas H. Ubelaker

- 2001 *An Analysis of Forensic Anthropology Cases Submitted to the Smithsonian Institution by the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1962 to 1994. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology* No. 45. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC.

JPAC Central Identification Laboratory

- 2006 Forensic Anthropology Report: CIL 2002-124-I-02. Manuscript on file with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

Kuckelman, Kristin A., Ricky R. Lightfoot, and Debra L. Martin

- 2002 The Bioarchaeology and Taphonomy of Violence at Castle Rock and Sand Canyon Pueblos. *American Antiquity* 67(3):486-513.

Pullman, Daryl

- 2018 Bioarchaeology, Bioethics, and the Beothuk. *American Anthropologist* 120(1):11-23.

## Grading

Final course grades will be assigned using a 1000 point scale. To receive an A in the course, 950 or more points must be earned. Below 950 points the following scale will apply.

A- = 900 to 949 points

B+ = 867 to 899 points

B = 834 to 866 points

B- = 800 to 833 points

C+ = 767 to 799 points

C = 734 to 766 points, etc.

### **Class Participation = 10% (up to 100 points)**

Class participation points can only be earned by being present and active in class each and every week. Active participation in class means that you regularly ASK and answer questions, challenge or defend positions, and generally help move the entire class towards new levels of understanding without dominating class discussion. Your overall course participation will receive a single grade based on the following criteria: **more than two absences (0 pts)**, passive but present (25 pts), present and occasionally active (75 pts), or present and regularly active (100 pts).

### **Weekly quizzes = 20% (4 @ 50 points each for up to 200 points)**

The first 15 minutes of most class periods will be reserved for a quiz on the previous class topic. If you are late or miss class you CANNOT makeup the quiz. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

### **Practical Exam = 20% (up to 200 points)**

One practical exam will test your ability to determine age, sex, ancestry, and stature using metric and non-metric methods, FORDISC, and your textbook. This is an **individual timed exercise**. Under time pressure, you will need to know how to:

1. Identify and side any human bones,
2. Determine what technique(s) can be applied to them,
3. Measure the bones using the instruments provided,
4. Apply any formulas necessary to calculate a result,
5. Make a determination from those results.

### **Biological profile group project = 20% (up to 200 points)**

One complete biological profile report will be compiled by a student team. This is a group project but students will receive individual grades.

Each member of your team will have a specific (see below) job but ALL members are responsible for analysis of the data and conclusions made in the final report. Everyone should agree with the report produced by the report writer (and check it for grammar, spelling, completeness) before it is submitted

1. Recorder - responsible for assembling the Case File and all its contents with no blanks on forms, measurement units, names, dates, case numbers, etc., providing report writer with appendices
2. Reporter - responsible for producing the text of the final report including grammar, spelling, and adherence to standards set out by the textbook and examples
3. Measurer - responsible for selecting the methods used, taking of all measurements for ancestry, age, sex, stature, and handedness, Fordisc methods and results, and providing report writer with names and references for techniques used.

Each team will produce;

1. A single cohesive co-authored report in the same style as the sample report provided on Moodle, and
2. A single paper case file which includes all recording sheets, measurements made, FORDISC results, etc.

Class time will be allotted for work with the bones, write the report, and produce the appendices. Additional lab time may be needed.

**Independent research project = 20% (up to 200 points)**

Each student will complete one independent research project on forensic anthropology or bioarchaeology. The paper must include analyzed skeletal data and two or more course readings plus at least one article from the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* or the *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*.

The project grade is distributed over 3 pieces:

1. Formal paper proposal (30 points) including a descriptive title, abstract, and bibliography of at least 10 sources,
2. In-class presentation (30 points) including up to 8 slides, each with an image and no more than 25 words,
3. Professional quality 1,800 to 2,200 word paper (100 points) including title, abstract, section headings, at least two figures, and seven references.
4. Citations and references (40 points) must follow the SAA style guide and include the course readings and journals described above.

**Final Exam = 10% course grade (up to 100 points)**

This "take home exam" will be in the form of a response to my feedback on your research paper and a revision of that paper. The grade will be based on how well you respond to/incorporate my feedback.

**Extra Credit**

The only extra credit opportunities in this course are documented visits to the Writing Center for help with your research paper (10 points each for up to 2 visits), the post-mortem interval in-class activity on week 8 (10 points for the top scoring and 5 points for the second highest scoring student), and completion of an optional 600-800 word essay on the ethics of studying the dead (up to 20 points). The essay must include three anthropological references.

## Written Assignment Formatting

### Word Counts

For assignments completed in this course, word counts include title and body text. Word counts do not include the reference list or figure captions or abstract. Abstracts have their own word count guidelines.

### Paper Proposals

Writing a paper proposal is an organizational tool that forces you to know what you are trying to say before you start writing your paper. The title explains what argument your paper will make. The bibliography is a list of sources you expect will help you make that argument. The abstract sets up the argument and how you think you will be able to explain it and solve a problem.

Consider the following questions when assessing your paper proposal.

1. Does the title tell you what the paper will be about in a specific manner? Is it vague as to the issue and place that the paper will be about?
2. Does the abstract set up an argument and reveal how the problem can be solved?
3. Does the abstract go beyond the case studies to reveal applicability to a larger issue?
4. Are the references appropriate for the argument being made? Were multiple perspectives (including counter perspectives) considered?
5. Overall, does the proposal meet the assignment criteria?

### Titles

The title of a written work reflects the thesis of that work. The title must be specific to the argument your paper will make, revealing both the topic covered and method, theory, and or case study being used to explore that topic.

If your paper does not have a title then you probably aren't sure what your thesis is.

If your paper title is vague then you probably aren't sure what your thesis is.

If your title would work for a murder mystery novel then it is a bad title for an academic paper.

### Abstracts

An abstract is a brief summary (150-200 words) of what a longer piece is attempting to argue. It should include a sentence for each of the following:

1. Problem to be addressed
2. Method you are using to assess the problem
3. Theory or perspective used to find the solution
4. Solution being proposed
5. Region(s) for which problem and solution are addressed
6. Applicability of this case to others and the wider problem

### Figures

All tables, charts, and images included within written work must have a numbered caption that explains the figure and what it represents. This caption is an abbreviated form of the description that appears within the text. Every figure must be cited within the text and cited in the order in which they appear. An example is below.

On the first day of the course I brought the students to the house and asked them to write down what they thought of it. Most students had never noticed the distinctive octagon-shaped building (Figure 1) that they walked past to arrive at our classroom.



Figure 1. The Octagon house on the campus of Heidelberg University, Tiffin, Ohio. Photograph by April M. Beisaw.

### Bibliography vs References or Works Cited

A reference list is **not** the same as a bibliography. A bibliography is a list of recommended readings. A reference list is a list of what you have **read** and **used** to make your argument. A reference list is the same as “works cited” because all references must be cited to show where and how they informed your research. **References are your evidence.**

### Referencing and Citing Sources

In this course, we will use the Society for American Archaeology’s format for references and citations. The full style guide is available through this [link](#). Every source you cite must be in your reference list and every source in your reference list must be cited in your text.

The basic reference formats are below. Additional authors are listed First Name Last Name after the first author’s Last Name, First Name entry. Reference lists are sorted alphabetically by that first author’s last name. Two sources with the same authorship are sorted chronologically with the oldest first. There are two spaces before and after the date.

Last Name, First Name

Date Article Title. *Journal Name* Volume(No):page-page.

Last Name, First Name

Date Title. Publisher, Publisher City.

The city in which a book was published is always included. If the city is not well known, then a two letter abbreviation for the state or country is added after a comma to clarify the location of publication. Such as:

White, Tim D. and Pieter A. Folkens

2005 *The Human Bone Manual*. Elsevier, Burlington, VT.

Some books include chapters written by different authors. When citing and referencing such works you must use the specific chapter title and author, not the book title and editor. Each chapter you use gets its own line in the reference list.

Last Name, First Name

Date Chapter Title. In *Book Title*, edited by First Name Last Name, pp. page-page. Publisher, Publisher City.

Citations point a reader to your reference list so that they can find the same exact information in the source you used. Ask yourself “could I have made this statement without having read a specific work?”. If the answer is no, add a citation to that statement. Use author and date when the concept being pointed to occurs throughout the source. Specific page numbers are included in citations when the information being pointed to occurs only on a certain page of the source. The title of the source is never included in the citation. Examples of citations are below.

- Facial recognition is a forensic technique of last resort and is rarely used (Ubelaker 2008).
- “Social identities are deeply rooted in historical visions which are strongly defined along intersecting axes of race/ethnicity, class, and gender” (Reckner 2002:97).
- According to Beisaw (2016:12), citing sources is not fun, but it is necessary. This perspective helps to contextualize the suffering of her students.

### Quoting and Paraphrasing Sources

When you use the exact words of someone else, you must put those words within quotes and cite the source. Direct quotes should be reserved for instances when the way the original author said something is the point of the quote.

- During ethnographic fieldwork with ghost hunters, Michelle Hanks recorded the thoughts of one ghost tourist: “you get to know a lot of history doing this. ...Certainly more than I learned at school” (Hanks 2015:130).

When using a direct quote that will take up more than 3 lines of your paper, you must set that quote off as a block quote using a space before and after the quote and a tab for each line. This makes it obvious when the bulk of your paper is relying heavily on the words of others. Block quotes are discouraged.

The majority of your citations should **not** be direct quotes. Instead you should paraphrase the words of others and restate them in a way that is applicable to the argument you are making. Those citations do not get direct quotes because it is the idea that matters, not the exact words used to convey that idea.

- Archaeology, once the stuff of exciting stories (Holtorf 2010), took on the unfathomable labels of “boring” and “tedious.”
- One archaeologist advocated storytelling as a way to enhance archaeological practice by presenting possible explanations along with much-needed imagination (Lewis 2000:7). Another archaeologist suggested that the fear of seeming unscientific has kept archaeologists from developing better ways of speaking to and writing for the public (Majewski 2000:18).

Whether or not a paraphrased citation gets a page number depends on whether the idea being cited occurred throughout the source (was the subject of the paper) or appeared in only one place in the source (may have been a tangential idea just touched on).

### Generating Reference Lists With Refworks

All Vassar students have a free Refworks account that is accessible through the library home page. Use it to create bibliographies and reference lists for your assignments.

Go to [library.vassar.edu](http://library.vassar.edu) -> Research -> Citation Tools—> Refworks. Create an account if you don't already have one.

Go back to [library.vassar.edu](http://library.vassar.edu) -> Databases to do your searching

For peer-reviewed sources in sciences, social sciences, humanities try Scopus

For peer-reviewed anthropology & archaeology sources try Anthropology Plus, AnthroSource, & Annual Review of Anthropology

When you find sources to use for your paper choose Export -> Refworks

Go back to Refworks and select the sources you want to include

Under Output Styles select American Antiquity - modify the template to capitalize titles and journals

Create Bibliography

You now have a **draft** of your reference list that you need to check for accuracy

Check capitalization & punctuation for consistency - be sure page numbers are included for articles

## **Policies**

### Academic Integrity

As a Vassar student, you have agreed to the academic integrity policy in “[Vassar College Regulations](#).” This includes:

1. Each student’s work shall be the product of the student’s own effort.
2. Each student shall give due and appropriate acknowledgement of the work of others when that work is incorporated into the writing of papers.
3. Unless otherwise directed, every student working in a laboratory is expected to make all necessary measurements, drawings, etc., independently, from his or her own observations of the material provided.
4. Collaboration in preparation of written work may take place only to the extent approved by the instructor.

Penalties for violating Vassar’s academic integrity policy can be found in the same regulations document.

### Appointments

Students are welcome to drop in unannounced during office hours. This time is available on a first-come first-served basis. If you need to speak with me outside of those scheduled times, use the [Google Calendar](#) link on Moodle to schedule an appointment. Make sure you have your Google Calendar set to Eastern Standard Time zone before reserving an appointment block.

### Assignment Submission

Unless otherwise indicated, all work is to be submitted electronically through Moodle. Files cannot be sent through email or handed in on paper or electronic media. Work not submitted according to the assignment’s instructions or by the assignment deadline will be subject to the Late Work Policy.

### Attendance

Class content and assigned readings are related but they are not the same. Therefore all students are expected to attend every class as well as complete every assignment. Some class meetings may take place in alternate locations and during alternate times. Attention to the course schedule is essential. Tardiness may result in a missed exercise. Accommodations for health-related issues require a health advisory from Health Services. Accommodations for personal issues require communication from the class Dean.

### Changes and Moodle

This syllabus is general outline of the course content. The professor reserves the right to deviate from this outline. All changes will be posted on Moodle. Therefore the content on Moodle is what the students are expected to follow for successful completion of this course.

### Class Participation

This is an interactive course that requires full participation in order to meet the course objectives. Students who find it difficult to speak in class are expected to discuss course material with the instructor during office hours or by email. When course exercises take place outside of the classroom students are expected to maintain classroom behaviors: pay attention, stay with the group, and stay engaged. Unacceptable behaviors include listening to music, reading material not related to this course, and napping while being transported to a field site.

### Collaboration

Unless otherwise indicated, each student’s work should be easily distinguishable from that of any other student in multiple ways. Don’t share files. Do share ideas. Don’t produce one result and turn it in with different names. Do work independently alongside one another. Don’t rely on anyone else to get you through. Do be sure you can and do complete your own work. See Academic Integrity policy above.

### Disability

If you have a condition that requires special accommodations (speech or hearing problems, attention disorder, etc.) it is your responsibility to have that disability documented by the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity and provide me with a copy of your AEO accommodation letter before accommodations are needed.



### Late Work

Unless otherwise indicated, all late work will be penalized according to the following schedule: 10% for first 12 hours, 20% for second 12 hours, 50% for the third 12 hours. Beyond 36 hours past an assigned deadline, late work is only accepted when accompanied by a communication from Health Services or the Dean's office.

### Letters of Recommendation

Requests for letters of reference or recommendation must be made two weeks before the submission deadline for that letter. Before I consider a request, you must provide the following: 1) who the letter should be addressed to, 2) the submission deadline, 3) why you are applying for the position/funding, and 4) what you hope to get out of the experience/funding.

I am happy to provide letters to students who go beyond the basic requirements of attending class and completing assignments. Before requesting a letter from any professor, consider how well the professor knows you as an individual. The best letters of recommendation tell stories about how students work independently or as part of a team, how they deal with adversity, what their goals and aspirations are, and what related strengths or weaknesses they have. If I don't know these things about you I cannot write a good letter.

### Office Hours

See Appointments above.

### Textbooks

I do my best to keep the of textbooks under \$100/course. Students are expected to obtain a copy of each required textbook but are encouraged to explore cheaper options such as purchasing used or electronic copies or renting books. Anyone who elects to use an electronic version of a text should be able to bring an e-reader to class so that they have access to the textbook material for class discussion and exercises.

### Title IX Responsibilities

Please be aware all Vassar faculty members are "responsible employees," which means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship abuse, or stalking, I must share that information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, the Title IX office will only provide outreach by email. You will control how your case will be handled — you don't have to read or respond to the email, and it is completely up to you whether to pursue a formal complaint. Vassar's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to resources you may need.

## Schedule

Week 1: Forensic Anthropology & the Human Skeleton

Thursday - Read Burns Chapters 1, 2, 12

Week 2: Skull

Thursday - Read Burns Chapters 3, 11, 14 - **QUIZ** on skeleton

Week 3: Shoulders, Ribs, Sternum, Vertebrae, Pelves

Thursday - Read Burns Chapters 4, 5, 8 - **QUIZ** on skull

Week 4: Arm and Hand

Thursday - Read Burns Chapters 6, 7, and pages 199-201 - **QUIZ** on thorax

Week 5: Leg and Foot

Thursday - Read Burns Chapters 9, 10, and review pages 199-201 - **QUIZ** on arm/leg

Week 6: Trauma, Taphonomy, and Biological Profiles

Thursday - Read Burns Chapters 13, 15, 16

Week 7: Practical **Exam**

See Moodle for your assigned time slot

## Fall Break

Week 8: Realities of Casework and the Bones Effect - Guest Lecture

Thursday - Read Grisbaum & Ubelaker (2001) and Anderson (2008)

Week 9: Bioarchaeology and Research on Human Remains

Thursday - Blakey (2001), Kuckelman, Lightfoot, and Martin (2002), and Pullman (2018)

Week 10: **Research Proposals Due** via Moodle by 6:30pm on Nov 14th

Thursday - No class meeting - Away for conference

Week 11: **Research Presentations Due** via Moodle BEFORE class on Nov 21st

Thursday - 8-10 minute presentations on work in progress

Week 12: No class for Thanksgiving

Week 13: **Research Papers Due** via Moodle BEFORE class on Dec 5th

Thursday - Biological Profile group work in class

Week 14: Biological Profile Group Work - **Report due** by 7:30pm on Dec 10th

**Tuesday** - Read JPAC (2006) and Beisaw (2011)

Final Exam - Paper revisions