Broken Bones, Buried Bodies: Forensic Anthropology and Human Rights
KHC AR101 Spring 2016

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Course Description

Over the course of its historical development, forensic anthropology has moved from a peripheral application of biological anthropology to a full-fledged specialty in its own right. Contemporary forensic anthropologists work in contexts around the globe on cases which vary in scope and complexity. While some instances involve natural disasters, many forensic anthropologists work in contexts which are the direct result of political conflict, state-sponsored violence, and/or genocide. Often couched in a framework of human rights, forensic anthropologists have made significant contributions to multiple stakeholders including surviving kin of victimized individuals.

The purpose of this seminar is threefold: 1) to demonstrate how forensic anthropology has been applied to diverse human rights contexts around the globe; 2) to introduce students to basic methodological and theoretical principles of forensic anthropology applied in human rights contexts; and 3) to provide a forum where students learn from anthropologists who have been involved in human rights work.

Course Objectives

1. Understand the ways in which forensic anthropologists utilize human skeletal remains to answer questions of medico-legal significance in human rights contexts
2. Understand the ways in which anthropologists study and document human rights abuses
3. Identify regions of the world where forensic anthropologists have worked to contribute to human rights investigations
4. Develop basic skills related to the analysis of human skeletal remains
5. Continue to enhance critical thinking and writing skills
Course Requirements

Required Reading and Texts

Textbooks:

Course Blackboard Site:
Assigned readings are listed in the course readings section below; with the exception of the texts, they will be posted on the course’s Blackboard site (http://learn.bu.edu)

Course Grading
There are two short (3-4 pages) papers, laboratory exercises, and a final exam. Due dates will be announced at least 2 weeks in advance and late papers will lose 2 points for every day they are late.

Relative contributions to the final grade:
- 2 short papers: 30% (15% each)
- Laboratory exercises related to human osteology: 30%
- Final Examination: 40%

Attendance
Attendance in class is required; only 1 unexcused absence will be permitted.

Academic Dishonesty
http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/

Course Outline and Readings

Week 1. Introduction to forensic anthropology and human rights investigations (September 2nd)
Define and introduce forensic anthropology, begin to understand how forensic anthropology has been applied in human rights contexts and discuss assigned summer readings

Readings:
Week 2. **Anthropology and violence**  
*(September 9th)*

Begin to understand and discuss how forensic anthropologists and bioarchaeologists define and document evidence of violence in both the prehistoric and contemporary past

Readings:
- Martin and Anderson: Chapters 1

Week 3. **Anthropology and the investigation of genocide**  
*(September 16th)*

Define genocide and discuss how anthropologists have contributed to documenting its effects

Readings:
- Hinton: Chapters 1-3

Week 4. **The process of otherization: examples from the Holocaust**  
*(September 23rd)*

Readings:
- Hinton: Chapters 4, 5, 9

Week 5. **Local dimensions of genocide: case studies from around the world**  
*(September 30th)*

Discuss examples of genocide from Rwanda, Guatemala, and the former Yugoslavia

Readings:
- Hinton: Chapters 6, 7, 8, 10, 11

Week 6. **Introduction to the Human Skeleton Part I: Bone Biology, Bone Growth and Development**  
*(October 7th)*

Introduce human skeletal biology and discuss how the human skeleton can provide clues into the lives of individuals represented by skeletal remains

Readings:
- Bone Manual: Chapters 1-6

Week 7. **Introduction to the Human Skeleton Part II: Axial Skeleton**  
*(October 14th)*

Introduce the bones of the skull, dentition, and rib cage. Discuss how these elements are useful for documenting such parameters as sex and age-at-death

Readings:
- Bone Manual: Chapters 7-10
Week 8.  Introduction to the Human Skeleton Part III: Appendicular Skeleton  
(October 21st)  
Introduce the bones of the limbs. Discuss how these elements are useful for documenting such parameters as sex and age-at-death

Readings:  
• Bone Manual: Chapters 11-16

Week 9.  Methods of Sex and Age Estimation  
(October 28th)  
Introduce the ways in which anthropologists estimate sex and age from skeletonized remains

Readings:  
• Bone Manual: Chapter 19  

Week 10.  Skeletal Trauma Analysis  
(November 4th)  
Introduce the ways in which anthropologists understand and differentiate the types of skeletal trauma

Readings  
• Martin and Anderson: Chapters 4, 5, 15

Week 11.  Archaeological Investigations of Mass Graves  
(November 11th)  
Introduce archaeological recovery methods and discuss how human remains are excavated from mass graves

Readings:  
Week 12.  **Guest Speaker: Dr. Erin Kimmerle (University of South Florida)**  
*(November 18th)*

Dr. Kimmerle is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Florida. She worked as a forensic anthropologist for the United Nations and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

**Readings:**

Week 13.  **No Class. Thanksgiving Recess. (November 25th)**

Week 14.  **Guest Speaker: Dr. Elizabeth DiGangi (Binghamton University)**  
*(December 2nd)*

Dr. DiGangi is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Binghamton University (SUNY). She lived in Bogotá, Colombia for five years where she worked as a consultant helping train forensic anthropologists charged with helping identify missing people disappeared during the ongoing Colombian conflict.

**Readings:**

Week 15.  **Review – Last Class**  
*(December 9th)*

**Final Exam**  TBD