

# BIOARCHAEOLOGY

Winter 2019

**Instructor:** Dr. Tracy Prowse

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**Seminar schedule:** Mondays, 1:00-4:00pm

**Location** – CNH 307

**Office:** KTH 129

**Office Hours:** TBD

## Course Description

This seminar will explore methodological and theoretical issues related to the study of human skeletal remains in archaeological contexts, generally known as the sub-field of bioarchaeology. We will examine how bioarchaeologists investigate human skeletal remains and relate these analyses to larger social, political, and economic processes. Topics will **vary depending on instructor and student interest** but can cover a range of topics including the bioarchaeology of childhood, gender, violence, and colonialism (among others), as well as topics relating to mortuary analysis and the archaeology of death. The seminars may also focus on methodology (e.g., biochemical methods) and emerging theoretical perspectives.

We will work together in the first class meeting to set the direction of the course and to choose the topics and ideas to be considered. This schedule may be modified through group consensus as our interests broaden through exposure to the literature and to new ideas.

## Course Objectives

- To understand how bioarchaeological research relates to other sub-disciplines in Anthropology and across disciplines to areas like Classics and History. What does it mean to be a bioarchaeologist, and how well does bioarchaeology integrate with other theoretical and disciplinary perspectives?
- To gain exposure to the wide body of literature on bioarchaeology and some of the central themes running through this literature. What is the bioarchaeology of: Imperialism/Colonialism? Identity? Violence? Migration and Human Mobility? Inequality? Slavery? Childhood?
- To encourage you to think critically about current research in the field of bioarchaeology.
- To help you develop transferrable skills that will be useful in your professional careers.

## Required Materials and Texts

Martin DL, Harrod RP, Perez VR (2013) 'Bioarchaeology – An Integrated Approach to Working with Human Remains'. New York: Springer. This is available as an e-book through McMaster Libraries.

### *Recommended Texts*

Agarwal SC and Wesp JK. 2017. Exploring Sex and Gender in Bioarchaeology  
Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Agarwal SC and Glencross B. 2011. Social Bioarchaeology. Walden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Beauchesne P, and Agarwal SC. 2018. Children and Childhood in Bioarchaeology.  
Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Buikstra J. 2019. Bioarchaeologists Speak Out: Deep Time Perspectives on  
Contemporary Issues. New York: Springer.

Buikstra J and Beck L. 2006. Bioarchaeology: The Contextual Analysis of Human  
Remains. London: Academic Press.

Klaus HD, Harvey AR, and Cohen MN (2017) Bones of complexity: Bioarchaeological  
case studies of social organization and skeletal biology. Gainesville, FL: University  
Press of Florida.

Larsen CS. 2015. Bioarchaeology: Interpreting Behavior from the Human Skeleton. 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis ME. 2006. Bioarchaeology of Children: Perspectives from Biological and Forensic  
Anthropology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sofaer JR. 2006. The Body as Material Culture: A Theoretical Osteoarchaeology.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Course Evaluation- Overview

- **40% - Opinion Pieces and Discussion Questions.** These will be handed in each week at the end of the seminar. These opinion pieces should identify themes, pertinent viewpoints, underlying assumptions, and raise questions about the readings that facilitate discussion in the seminar.

**The night before each seminar** (i.e., by midnight on Sunday), each participant is required to post **two issues or questions** on the AVENUE discussion board that

have arisen from your readings. These questions/ideas will help to frame our discussion for the next day.

The papers should be 1 page MAXIMUM (typed, 12 pt., single spaced) synthetic **critiques** of the readings. References are only required if you discuss new material. Note: these are not just **summaries** of what you have read (this will earn you a 'B'), but rather are thoughtful analyses of what you have read. Full credit will only be given if the written summary refers to all assigned readings and includes some independent critique or synthesis. The pieces will be given to me for evaluation of your progress throughout the term.

- **25% - Class Participation.** Class participation is **obligatory**. You are expected to attend, ask questions, make comments, bring your perspective to discussions, and raise issues from your own ongoing research. The degree to which each participant is enriched by this class relates directly to the degree to which all of us share information and ideas.

After we have established a list of potential topics for each week, each student will work with me to select readings for at least one of those weeks. I will be responsible for selecting one or two seminal publications that have laid the theoretical and/or methodological foundations for a particular area of research, and you will select relevant recent readings that fit with the framework of the topic.

- **35% - Independent Project.** This is open for negotiation. I would like students to do something that is useful and relevant to their individual goals and academic interests. That may be writing a standard ~20 page research paper, based on library or actual data collection, but it could also be developing a series of lectures and course evaluations to teach one aspect of bioarchaeology. It can be writing a complete grant proposal, or developing a session topic for an upcoming conference.

## Course Schedule

### *January 7 – What is bioarchaeology?*

Reading – Martin et al. (2013) Chapter 1 – The practice of bioarchaeology.

- **For our first seminar, please prepare an “intellectual autobiography” (~1-2 pages) instead of the critique.** I would like you to write about who you are (personally and professionally), your background, what experiences have shaped your academic interests, and why you are taking this course in bioarchaeology. Please also provide **at least three potential topics or questions** that you are interested in pursuing in this course. We will discuss these during the first seminar and I will use them to help develop topics for the course.

### *January 14 – Suggested topic – Ethics in Bioarchaeology*

Readings - TBD

*January 21 - TBD*

*January 28 - TBD*

*February 4 - TBD*

*February 11 - TBD*

*February 18 – no seminar; midterm break*

*February 25 - TBD*

*March 4 - TBD*

*March 11 - TBD*

*March 18 - TBD*

*March 25 – no seminar; PPA meetings*

*April 1 - TBD*

## Course Policies

### *Avenue to Learn*

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

## University Policies

### *Academic Integrity Statement*

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious

consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### *Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

### *Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)*

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student’s religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

### *Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy*

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

### *Privacy Protection*

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in

boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

### *Course Modification*

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.