

ANT3520: Skeleton Keys: Forensic Identification

Introduction to Forensic Anthropology

Spring 2026 | 3 credits

Sections 1688 (Class Number 10338) and 2425 (Class Number 10339)

NOTE: This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see UF's "[Academic Policies and Resources](#)" web page.

I. General Information

Meeting days and times: Asynchronous

Class location: Online

Instructor(s):

Name: Maria Sellers

Office Building/Number: Turlington B325 or via Zoom

Email: mlocke.sellers@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30 AM-1:30 PM or by appointment

Anthropology Department Phone: (352) 392-2253

Course Description

Survey of forensic anthropology, an applied field of biological anthropology, focusing the wider scope of skeletal biology on problems of medicolegal significance, primarily in determining personal identity and cause of death from human remains.

Prerequisites

Prereq: Sophomore standing or higher.

General Education Designation: none.

Course Materials

- Required: Warren MW et al. 2011 Bare Bones: A Survey of Forensic Anthropology. 2nd edition. Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Materials will be available through the following means:

Additional readings will be provided by the instructor and posted on Canvas. Required readings are listed below in the course schedule. All graded assignments will only reference required materials. Optional readings and videos are also provided in each module to give you additional avenues to learn about forensic anthropology and its specific applications but will not be required to complete graded assignments or exams successfully.

Materials Fee: N/A

II. Course Goals

Course Objectives

In this course we will:

- Define the field of forensic anthropology and its purview
- Gain a general understanding of basic human osteology
- Understand the basic concepts underlying determination of the biological profile, including sex, age, ancestry, and stature
- Describe different types of skeletal trauma, and differentiate between antemortem and postmortem trauma

Student Learning Outcomes

A student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

- Recall important tools and details regarding the recovery of human remains from forensic scenes
- Identify features of human remains relevant to forensic investigations
- Synthesize forensic data in a clear and comprehensive way

Course Format

This is an asynchronous online course with prerecorded lectures each week and assignments with due dates. Students should keep up with the material in a timely manner and meet expected due dates. **IMPORTANT: *The use of Canvas (eLearning) will be essential to student success in the course.*** All assignments are to be submitted through Canvas. Canvas Inbox and communication is preferred.

Course Communications:

Course information will be sent as “announcements” on the course Canvas page. The instructor and TA will use Canvas inbox tool to contact students directly about their work. Students are responsible for checking the Canvas page and their official UF email regularly to keep up to date with course information.

You are responsible for materials posted on E-Learning (Canvas) at <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>, including required readings, announcements, details on assignments, and other supplementary material. Canvas technical support available at <https://elearning.ufl.edu/student-help-faqs/>. Do not wait until the last minute to reach out if there are problems in Canvas.

The instructor and the TAs may use email to make general class announcements or to contact you directly about your work. You are responsible for checking your official UF email regularly to be aware of communication from your instructors. There are no allowances for students who fail to read their email announcements or whose inboxes are full at the time an announcement is sent.

How to be Successful in an Online Course

- Adjust [Canvas Notification Preferences](#) to enable Canvas to directly send you an email.
 - In your Canvas “Account,” click on “Notifications.” Set the notification for “Submission Comment” to either “Notify Immediately” or “Daily Summary.” The instructors will provide many comments on your assignments using the “Submission Comments” feature, but if you have concerns about your assignments, it is better to use Canvas to contact instructors via email.
- Keep up with the lecture videos and take notes.
- Keep track of module assignments and quiz due dates. Many assignments need preparation time and cannot be done on the day it is due.
 - Some activities require outside class work, such as library research which could take a few days.
- Communicate with your instructor and TA about course questions, grading, and if you are falling behind.
 - Reach out as early as possible if you will be late in turning in assignments, sick, or have other extenuating circumstances that will affect your participation in the course.
 - We are willing to work with students when they communicate well about these issues.
- It is important to recognize that the online classroom is in fact a classroom, and certain behaviors are expected when you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. Guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette. See Canvas for more details.
- Keep an open mind, be respectful, be considerate, and learn! You will enjoy this class!

Course Topic Structure

To meet the above-stated objectives, the course is structured in a series of 16 modules. Each module is structured to contain lecture video material, requires weekly reading from the *Bare Bones* text, and has graded assignments linked to the module topic. These modules are partitioned into four main sections:

- 1) Introduction to the Course and Forensic Anthropology
- 2) The Biological Profile and Personal Identification
- 3) Skeletal Trauma and Burned Bone
- 4) Applications and the Profession of Forensic Anthropology

Section 1 (Modules 1-5): Introduction to the Course and Forensic Anthropology

The first two modules describe the field of forensic anthropology – historically and the current science – as well as the larger medicolegal system. In this section, the purpose and the place of forensic anthropology within this larger system will be described. The third and fourth modules more specifically describe the duties of the forensic anthropologist in the field and in the laboratory. Module 5 focuses on taphonomy, which discusses the variety of processes that can alter the body after death, such as decomposition.

Section 2 (Modules 6-12): The Biological Profile and Personal Identification

The sixth module (osteology and osteometry) introduces a much more nuanced look into the anatomy of human bones. The sixth module lays the foundation of the remaining modules in this section, as forensic anthropologists analyze the variation of the human skeleton to help identify individuals, which can be done using the biological profile – basically, a list of an individual’s biological demographic descriptors consisting of their sex, age, ancestry, and stature – as well as idiosyncratic skeletal features. Aspects of the biological profile and how we can recognize these aspects in the skeleton are covered in Modules 7 through 10. Idiosyncratic skeletal features and how they are used to personally identify an individual from their skeletal remains are the topic of Module 11, and Module 12 shows how forensic art can aid personal identification efforts. Section 3: Skeletal Trauma and Burned Bone While Section 2 shows how forensic anthropologists can interpret features of the skeleton to assist with the identification of human remains.

Section 3 (Modules 13 and 14): Interpretation of Skeletal Trauma and Burned Bone

The interpretation of skeletal trauma and burned bone can help answer important questions such as, what happened to this individual? When did it happen – before they died, or around the time of death? What sort of implement may have caused the injury to bone?

Section 4 (Modules 15 and 16): Applications and the Profession of Forensic Anthropology

The final section of this course is presented in Modules 15 and 16 with discussions of the application of forensic anthropology in various contexts (such as with responses to mass fatalities, human rights investigations, and recovering/identifying the remains of the war dead) and the potential, various career paths that forensic anthropologists may pursue.

Course Mechanics

Because this is an online class, students are expected to be self-motivated. During the sixteen-week period the class is in session there will be sixteen modules with one a week – excepting the first week, in which you have an introductory module to the course and Canvas along with Module #1.

Assignments from the first week of the course will be due with assignments from the second week of the course to accommodate those who add the course late during the drop/add period. **Initial original posts to discussion boards** will be due ***Wednesday at 11:59 PM*** Eastern Time (ET). **All other assignments** for the modules (including discussion responses) must be completed during the week they are assigned and will be due each ***Friday at 11:59 PM*** Eastern Time (ET) except for discussions (see below), **DON’T wait until the last minute to complete the assignments.**

The instructions and materials needed for each assignment can be found under the relevant

module. Please make sure you read the syllabus and familiarize yourself with Canvas. Students are responsible for all the material in each module and need to view all required links posted on the course's website (e.g., lecture videos, films, articles).

III. Graded Work

Graded Components

Discussion Posts (60 points, 18% of grade%): Every week there will be a discussion topic. Students must post a substantive original comment to the discussion by Wednesday at 11:59pm ET (worth 5 points total). They must then make two substantive responses to other individual's comments by Friday at 11:59 pm ET (worth 2.5 points each). This means there are 6 original comments and 12 responses. Online discussion groups will be assigned by the instructor once the Add/Drop period has closed.

Weekly Assignments (79 points, 23% of grade%): Students will also need to complete ten online activities. This averages about one a week. The activities range from 5 to 10 points. With that in mind, include this skeleton joke on question 11 of the syllabus quiz for a point of extra credit: Why did the skeleton read the syllabus? They wanted *tibia* good student!

Quizzes (160 points, 47% of grade%): There is one quiz for each of the sixteen modules. This means there will be one quiz per week. Each quiz is multiple choice and worth 10 points (160 points total). Quizzes are due at 11:59pm ET on Fridays of the week they are assigned.

Final Exam (40 points, 12% of grade%): There will be a cumulative final exam administered online. You must complete this by the indicated date. This exam covers material from the entirety of the course.

There may be opportunities for extra credit at the purview of the instructor.

TOTAL: 339 points possible

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	100-93.00
A-	92.99-90.00
B+	89.99-87.00
B	86.99-83.00
B-	82.99-80.00
C+	79.99-77.00
C	76.99-73.00
C-	72.99-70.00
D+	69.99-67.00
D	66.99-63.00
D-	62.99-60.00
E	59.99-0

Note: A minimum grade of C is required to earn credit.

COURSE POLICIES

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see UF's "[Academic Policies and Resources](#)" web page.

Online attendance and Late Policy:

Late work will not be accepted without official documentation. It is the student's responsibility to provide the instructor with the appropriate documentation and meet with the instructor to devise a schedule for completing the missed work. If possible, the student must notify the instructor that they will miss an exam before the examination period begins. **No make-ups will be accepted after two weeks past the original exam/assignment/quiz if practicable.** If a student misses an exam, quiz, or assignment without making the appropriate arrangements with the instructor, they will be assigned a grade of E (0 points). Note that the format of the make-up exam(s) may differ from that of regularly scheduled exams (e.g., primarily composed of essay questions). **Documentation for late or missed work, including exams, should be provided within 48 hours of the excused period of absence.**

Religious observances: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#religiousholidaystext> The Florida Board of Education and state law govern university policy regarding observance of religious holidays. The following guidelines apply:

- Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith.
- Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.
- Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

****The use of ChatGPT or any other AI program to generate student work is not allowed in this course. ****

Why This Matters: The goal of this course is to help you develop your own critical thinking through writing and reflection. While AI tools can be helpful, over-reliance on them can hinder your learning and growth. There are not many written assignments in this course, but the process of writing is the point of those assignments. The process of writing is the process of thinking, and we are interested in your own thoughts and reflections in those assignments, not those of AI.

Library Resources:

The [UF Libraries](#) provide access to numerous resources and services that will help you succeed in this course. Access thousands of [online databases, books, and articles](#), or visit one of the [branch locations](#) for additional [resources, services, and study spaces](#). Can't find what you are looking for? You can [Ask A Librarian](#) for help by email, chat, text, or phone.

IV. Calendar

Date	Topic	Readings/Lectures	Work Due (All assignments are due Fridays at 11:59 PM EST unless otherwise specified)
January 12, 2026- January 16, 2026	"Start Here" Module: Introduction to the Course and Canvas Module 1: The History of Forensic Science	1) Syllabus "Start Here" module 2) Canvas Overview Video 3) Bare Bones Ch. 2 4) Lecture: What is Forensic Anthropology 5) Lecture: History of Forensic Anthropology at UF	1) Syllabus Quiz 2) Discussion Post 1; original post on Wednesday, two responses by Friday 3) Module 1 Quiz
January 20, 2026- January 23, 2026 (January 19 th is a holiday)	Module 2: The Medicolegal System	1) Bare Bones Ch. 1 2) Lecture: Medicolegal Aspects of Death	1) Module 2 Quiz 2) Activity 1: Medicolegal Matching Exercise
January 26, 2026- January 30, 2026	Modules 3/4: Forensic Anthropology in the Field and Lab	1) Bare Bones Ch. 3 2) Articles on CSI effect (online) 3) Supplementary Lab SOP (online) 4) Lecture: Recovery of Human Remains I 5) Lecture: Recovery of Human Remains II 6) Lecture: Processing Remains into Evidence 7) Lecture: Laboratory Protocols	1) Discussion Post 2; original post on Wednesday, two responses by Friday 2) Module 3 Quiz 3) Activity 2: Recovery Scene Activity 4) Module 4 Quiz
February 2, 2026- February 6, 2026	Module 5: Taphonomy	1) Bare Bones Ch. 4 2) Article: Stock et al. 2017 3) Practice Activity (online) 4) Lecture: What Happens After Death? Part I 5) Lecture: What Happens After Death? Part II	1) Module 5 Quiz 2) Activity 3: Taphonomy 3) Discussion Post 3 Taphonomy and Forensics; original post on Wednesday, two responses by Friday

Date	Topic	Readings/Lectures	Work Due (All assignments are due Fridays at 11:59 PM EST unless otherwise specified)
February 9, 2026- February 13, 2026	Module 6: Anatomy, Osteology, Measurement, and Statistics	1) Bare Bones Ch. 5 2) Practice activity (online) 3) Lecture: Skeletal Anatomy and Osteology 4) Lecture: Osteometry	1) Module 6 Quiz 2) Activity 4: Osteology Matching Exercise
February 16, 2026- February 20, 2026	Module 7: Group Characteristics I: Biological Sex	1) Bare Bones Ch. 6 2) Lecture: Sexual Dimorphism, Birth and Locomotion 3) Lecture: Methods of Sex Determination	1) Module 7 Quiz
February 23, 2026- February 27, 2026	Modules 8/9: Group Characteristics II/III: Age-at-death and Stature	1) Bare Bones Ch. 8 2) Bare Bones Ch. 9 3) Ousley 1995 (online) 4) Jantz et al 1995 (online) 5) Lecture: Estimating Age in Children 6) Lecture: Estimating Age in Adults 7) Lecture: Methods of Age Estimation 8) Lecture: Stature	1) Module 8 Quiz 2) Activity 5: Age Matching Exercise 3) Module 9 Quiz 4) Activity 6: Stature Exercise
March 2, 2026- March 6, 2026	Module 10: Group Characteristics IV: "Race"... Fact or Fiction?	1) Bare Bones Ch. 7 2) Documentary Website 3) Sauer 1992 (online) 4) Lecture: "Race"... Fact or Fiction 5) Lecture: Clinal Variation 6) Lecture: Determination of Ancestry	1) Module 10 Quiz 2) Activity 7: Sorting People Exercise 3) Discussion Post 4; original post on Wednesday, two responses by Friday
March 9, 2026- March 13, 2026	Module 11: Individual Characteristics and Personal Identification	1) Bare Bones Ch. 10 2) Practice Activity 3) Lecture: Individualizing Skeletal Characteristics 4) Lecture: Antemortem and Postmortem 5) Video: Finding Anastasia	1) Module 11 Quiz 2) Activity 8: Radiographic Comparison Matching Exercise
March 14, 2026- March 22, 2026	Spring Break	6) Enjoy your break!	3) :)

Date	Topic	Readings/Lectures	Work Due (All assignments are due Fridays at 11:59 PM EST unless otherwise specified)
March 23, 2026- March 27, 2026	Module 12: Forensic Art	1) Bare Bones Ch. 11 2) Lecture: Forensic Reconstructions 3) Video: Forensic Files Saving Face	1) Module 12 Quiz 2) Discussion Post 5; original post on Wednesday, two responses by Friday
March 30, 2026- April 3, 2026	Module 13: Trauma	1) Bare Bones Ch. 12 2) Langley 2007 (online) 3) Lecture: Trauma and Cause of Death I 4) Lecture: Trauma and Cause of Death II 5) Lecture: Trauma and Cause of Death III	1) Module 13 Quiz 2) Activity 9: Trauma Matching Exercise
April 6, 2026- April 10, 2026	Module 14: Cremation	1) Bare Bones Ch. 13 2) Lecture: Burned Bodies and Cremated Remains 3) Lecture: What Survives Cremation	1) Module 14 Quiz 2) Activity 10: Cremation Artifact Identification Exercise
April 13, 2026- April 17, 2026	Module 15: Mass Fatalities	1) Bare Bones Ch. 14 2) Lecture: Mass Fatality Case History I 3) Lecture: Mass Fatality Case History II 4) Lecture: Mass Fatality Case History III	1) Module 15 Quiz 2) Discussion Post 6; original post on Wednesday, two responses by Friday
April 20, 2026- April 22, 2026 (April 23 rd and 24 th are reading days, but you will still have access to modules)	Module 16: Career Paths and Applications of Forensic Anthropology	1) Bare Bones Ch. 15 2) Bare Bones Ch. 16 3) Lecture: Human Rights Missions 4) JPAC Video Links	1) Module 16 Quiz
April 25, 2026- May 1, 2026	Finals Week	The final exam may be completed any time between April 25 th at 8 AM to April 30 th at 11:59 PM, but the April 30 th	Final Exam due 4/30 at 11:59 PM

Date	Topic	Readings/Lectures	Work Due (All assignments are due Fridays at 11:59 PM EST unless otherwise specified)
		11:59 PM (ET) deadline is firm and absolutely no late work will be accepted beyond this deadline.	

V. Procedure for Conflict Resolution

Any issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Prof. John Krigbaum (krigbaum@ufl.edu, (352) 294-7540), Chair of Anthropology. Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1261).