

# ANTHROPOLOGY 4J03: FIELD METHODS AND PRACTICE IN FORENSIC ARCHAEOLOGY

Fall, 2018

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## Contents

Course Description.....	3
Course Objectives .....	3
Required Materials and Texts .....	3
Class Format.....	3
Course Evaluation – Overview .....	4
Course Evaluation – Details .....	4
Class participation (15%), evaluated weekly in class.....	4
Laboratory/writing assignments (40%), due weekly.....	4
Midterm exam (15%), October 22.....	4
Final poster presentation (30%), December 3 .....	5
Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings .....	5
Week 1 (September 10).....	5
Week 2 (September 17).....	5
Week 3 (September 24).....	5
Week 4 (October 1) .....	5
Week 5 (October 8) .....	5
Week 6 (October 15) .....	5
Week 7 (October 22) .....	6
Week 8 (October 29) .....	6
Week 9 (November 5).....	6
Week 10 (November 12).....	6
Week 11 (November 19).....	7
Week 12 (November 26).....	7
Week 13 (December 3).....	7
Course Policies .....	7

Submission of Assignments..... 7  
Grades..... 7  
Late Assignments ..... 8  
Absences, Missed Work, Illness ..... 8  
Avenue to Learn ..... 8  
Turnitin.com..... 8  
University Policies ..... 9  
Academic Integrity Statement..... 9  
Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities..... 9  
**Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO) ..... 9**  
Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy ..... 10  
**Privacy Protection ..... 10**  
Course Modification..... 10

## **Course Description**

How do investigators locate clandestine graves? How do they document a scene? How do they recover and investigate unusual scenes like mass graves? What can archaeology contribute in a forensic context?

While the analysis of human remains is a key component of forensic investigations, so is their location, recovery, and the interpretation of contextual clues. Forensic archaeology is the application of archaeological principles in a medicolegal context. This course will expose you to these principles, including the search and recovery of human remains in various contexts, in-depth discussion of methods used in forensic investigations, and practice in problem solving during the course of a forensic investigation. We will practice many key components of a forensic archaeological investigation, from locating human remains and evidence to recovering, recording, and interpreting them. These methods, and the problems faced by archaeologists in a forensic context, will also be critically discussed in depth. Students will develop and refine skills that will aid them in future endeavors in forensics, archaeology, or interpreting what they see in the media.

## **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Apply skills learned in class in theoretical and hands-on investigations of mock crime scenes
- Interpret forensic scenes and case studies
- Discuss and critique scholarly and news articles about forensic archaeological methods

## **Required Materials and Texts**

- Required text: Dupras, T. L., Schultz, J. J., Williams, L. J., & Wheeler, S. M. (2016). *Forensic recovery of human remains: Archaeological approaches*. CRC Press.
- All other weekly readings are journal articles that are available online through the McMaster library website. Links will be posted on Avenue to Learn.

## **Class Format**

This course involves both seminar meetings and hands-on activities designed to develop skills related to forensic archaeological field excavation and recovery methods. We will begin each week by meeting at the classroom; however, some activities in the first few weeks of the semester may be conducted outdoors on campus (weather permitting). As such, this course has a mobility requirement. If this poses a challenge for you, please email me and we can make alterations as necessary.

Given the importance of in-class activities, it is also essential that students are present in class, and that they arrive on time and ready to participate. If you need to be absent or arrive after the beginning of class for any reason, I ask that you **notify me ahead of time** so that arrangements can be made to access missed material or make up missed activities. **Students are expected to keep up with assigned readings, week by week, and show up to class ready to contribute to discussions and activities.** The nature of assignments, and the instructor's expectations for performance on assignments and in-class participation, will be discussed during our first meeting.

### **Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. Class participation – 15%, weekly in class
2. Laboratory/writing assignments – 40%, weekly
3. Midterm exam – 15%
4. Final poster presentation – 30%, December 3

### **Course Evaluation – Details**

#### **Class participation (15%), evaluated weekly in class**

Participation grades will be assigned based on participation in class activities and discussions. Attendance will be taken, but does not guarantee full participation marks. Grades will take into account the degree of preparation demonstrated by students, as well as willingness to participate in hands-on activities and seminar discussions to the best of students' abilities.

#### **Laboratory/writing assignments (40%), due weekly**

Short laboratory or writing assignments will be assigned weekly based on the in-class activity or discussion topic, and will be due at the beginning of the following week's class period. Each assignment will be worth 5% of the final grade, for a total of 40% from 8 assignments. Laboratory assignments will consist of materials completed as part of in-class hands-on activities; attendance in class is essential, and it is important that students notify me of any absences ahead of time in order to make alternative arrangements. Writing assignments will require students to write a half to one page (single spaced, one inch margins, 12-point font) response to an assigned question related to the week's discussion topic and/or readings. Expectations for all assignments will be clearly outlined in class one week before the due date.

#### **Midterm exam (15%), October 22**

A midterm exam will be held in class on October 22. This exam is designed to test students' knowledge of forensic archaeological approaches covered in the first half of the course, and will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions.

### **Final poster presentation (30%), December 3**

As a final project, students will prepare an academic poster and present it as part of a poster symposium held during the final class period. Poster topics will be discussed in class, and expectations for this assignment will be clearly outlined on Avenue to Learn. The grade for this assignment will be determined based on both the content, organization, and appearance of the poster, and the short presentation given during the symposium.

## **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

### **Week 1 (September 10)**

#### **What is forensic archaeology?**

Readings: Chapters 1 and 4, Dupras et al. 2016

### **Week 2 (September 17)**

#### **Locating evidence**

Readings: Chapters 2 and 5, Dupras et al. 2016

Notes: In-class activity

### **Week 3 (September 24)**

#### **Documenting surface finds**

Readings: Chapters 6 and 7, Dupras et al. 2016

Notes: Assignment 1 due (Locating evidence); In-class activity

### **Week 4 (October 1)**

#### **Recovering buried evidence**

Readings: Chapters 8 and 10, Dupras et al. 2016

Notes: Assignment 2 due (Documenting surface finds); In-class activity

### **Week 5 (October 8)**

#### **Reading Week!**

### **Week 6 (October 15)**

#### **Locating clandestine graves**

Readings: Congram, D. R. (2008). A clandestine burial in Costa Rica: Prospection and excavation. *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, 53, 793-796.

Davenport, A., & Harrison, K. (2011). Swinging the blue lamp: The forensic archaeology of contemporary child and animal burial in the UK. *Mortality*, 16, 176-190.

Notes: Assignment 3 due (Recovering buried evidence)

### **Week 7 (October 22)**

#### **Midterm Exam (2:30-3:30 pm); Taphonomy I: Interpreting animal scavenging**

Readings: None

Notes: MIDTERM EXAM

### **Week 8 (October 29)**

#### **Taphonomy II: Other postmortem alterations**

Readings: Pickering, T. R., & Carlson, K. J. (2004). Baboon taphonomy and its relevance to the investigation of large felid involvement in human forensic cases. *Forensic Science International*, 144, 37-44.

Haglund, W. D., & Sorg, M. H. (1997). Method and theory of forensic taphonomic research. In *Forensic taphonomy: The postmortem fate of human remains* (pp. 13-26). CRC Press.

Notes: Assignment 4 due (Taphonomy I); In-class activity

### **Week 9 (November 5)**

#### **Cremation**

Readings: Ubelaker, D. H. (2009). The forensic evaluation of burned skeletal remains: A synthesis. *Forensic Science International*, 183, 1-5.

Whyte, T. R. (2001). Distinguishing remains of human cremations from burned animal bones. *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 28, 437-448.

Notes: Assignment 5 due (Taphonomy II)

### **Week 10 (November 12)**

#### **Distinguishing non-forensic cases**

Readings: Duhig, C. (2003). Non-forensic remains: The use of forensic archaeology, anthropology and burial taphonomy. *Science & Justice*, 43, 211-214.

Cardoso, H. F. V., Puentes, K., Soares, A. M., Santos, A., & Magalhães, T. (2012). The value of radiocarbon analysis in determining the forensic interest of human skeletal remains found in unusual circumstances. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, 19, 97-100.

Notes: Assignment 6 due (Cremation)

### **Week 11 (November 19)**

#### **Identifying and excavating mass graves**

Readings: Haglund, W. D., Connor, M., & Scott, D. D. (2001). The archaeology of contemporary mass graves. *Historical Archaeology*, 35, 57-69.

Jankauskas, R., Barkus, A., Urbanavièius, V., & Garmus, A. (2005). Forensic archaeology in Lithuania: The Tuskulėnai mass grave. *Acta Medica Lituanica*, 12, 70-74.

Notes: Assignment 7 due (Distinguishing non-forensic cases); In-class activity

### **Week 12 (November 26)**

#### **Forensic archaeology on a global scale**

Readings: Crossland, Z. (2000). Buried lives: Forensic archaeology and the disappeared in Argentina. *Archaeological Dialogues*, 72, 146-159.

Blau, S., & Skinner, M. (2006). The use of forensic archaeology in the investigation of human rights abuse: Unearthing the past in East Timor. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 9, 449-463.

Notes: Assignment 8 due (Identifying and excavating mass graves)

### **Week 13 (December 3)**

#### **Final poster presentations**

Readings: None

Notes: Poster symposium

## **Course Policies**

### **Submission of Assignments**

All weekly assignments should be submitted as hard copies at the beginning of the class period. I will accept digital copies of late assignments via email as proof of completion, and a hard copy of the assignment must be provided in the next class period for grading. Final assignments should be submitted digitally via Avenue to Learn. If students encounter errors with submitting assignments, either in hard copy or on Avenue, they will be expected to notify me prior to the deadline.

### **Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

### **Late Assignments**

A penalty of **5% per day** will be applied to late assignments (that were not discussed with me at least one day prior to the deadline) for a **maximum of 4 days**, including weekends. After 4 days, assignments will no longer be accepted, and a grade of zero will be assigned.

### **Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

Students who will be absent from class or expect to miss work for any reason should notify me **prior to** the class time or deadline. Extensions may be granted for illness, provided students discuss this with me **at least one day** before the deadline. In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar, "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work." If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact the Associate Dean's office.

[http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=1698#Requests\\_for\\_Relief\\_for\\_Missed\\_Academic\\_Term\\_Work](http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=1698#Requests_for_Relief_for_Missed_Academic_Term_Work)

### **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.

### **Turnitin.com**

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty

will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## **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, located at [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

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.