

Department of Anthropology

ANTHRO 2238B: Reading Life and Death Through the Human Body

BRIEF COURSE OUTLINE

Winter 2026

Date: June 19, 2025

Instructor and course information:

Instructor: Dr. Andrea Waters-Rist

Method of delivery: in person

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: None.

Prerequisites: None.

Please ensure you have the correct requisites by checking [the Academic Calendar](#).

Course Description:

This course explores the enormous amount of information that becomes stored in our bodily tissues throughout life; information that can then be used to tell a lot about a person's life, and in some cases, their death. Did you know your teeth may contain a record of the diseases you experienced as a child? Or that the sport you play may cause distinctive changes to your bones? Or that chemical markers contained in all of our body tissues can reveal if and where you've moved during your life? DNA further contains a remarkable amount of information about, for example, genetic conditions and biological ancestry. Put this together and we can learn a great deal about a person, whether alive or dead, useful in a range of disciplines such as forensics, archaeology and anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, and the medical sciences.

In order to appeal to all these disciplines this course will explore the information contained in the human body in three contexts: Living Individuals, Recently Deceased Individuals, with a focus on forensic applications, and Long-Ago Deceased Individuals, with a focus on archaeological applications. By beginning with living individuals and moving backwards in time to the fossilized remains of our species, students will see how the loss of various tissues impacts the amount of information we are able to recover. Yet, even with just a lone tooth or small bone fragment, even without DNA, what we can discern is a testament to decades of rigorous, multidisciplinary, and innovative research that should inspire students to ask questions and develop research that pushes the boundaries of knowledge within their own discipline.

Whether you are training to become a biological anthropologist, sociologist, medical clinician, forensic specialist, historian, or biochemist, this course will teach you to look at the body as a valuable source of information in a variety of ways.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL Brightspace site before the first day of class.

Course Materials:

1. Flesh and Bone: An Introduction to Forensic Anthropology, 3rd edition. Myrian Nafte. 2016. Carolina Academic Press: Durham, North Carolina. This book will be available for purchase at Western's Bookstore and a new copy is expected to cost between \$60.00 to \$65.00. Used copies may be available at a lower price and less expensive options may exist at other stores. Students need to purchase this edition (3rd edition). Older editions will not be sufficient.

2. Journal articles and book chapters via the course's on-line Brightspace site Course Readings tool on the course's Brightspace site. Registered students will be able to access these course readings before the first day of class.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following:

2 Quizzes (2 x 10%)	20%
2 Assignments (2 x 20%)	40%
Final Exam (multiple choice)	40%

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