



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

## **COMMUNITY CLASSROOM**

### **Documenting Human Rights Abuses Through Forensic Anthropology**

May 18 – July 3, 2020

Course Instructor: Dr. Robin Reineke (rreineke@arizona.edu)

Course Coordinator: Dr. Amalia Mora (amaliacmora@arizona.edu)

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#### **Catalog Description**

Documenting Human Rights Abuses Through Forensic Anthropology will provide students with an understanding of what the field of forensic anthropology is, and how it can be applied in human rights investigations. The expertise of forensic anthropologists can be an invaluable asset in certain contexts, especially when combined with survivor testimony and strategic litigation. The history, current applications, and challenges of forensic anthropology in a human rights context will be discussed, with a special focus on a family-centered approach. Guest speakers will include practicing forensic anthropologists with experience in human rights contexts including Bosnia, Guatemala, South Africa, Argentina, and along the U.S.-Mexico border.

#### **Course Description**

This seven-week course will provide an in-depth look at the application of forensic anthropology following atrocity. The first week will introduce the discipline of forensic anthropology as a whole, and some of the core tenets of forensic ethics in human rights investigations. The next five weeks will include a focus on a particular historical context. Each of these historical chapters selected had a significant impact in the development of the field of humanitarian forensic anthropology: Argentina, Guatemala, the Former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and the U.S.-Mexico border. The final week will discuss the future of the field, and introduce some cutting-edge emerging forensic science and technology in humanitarian and human rights documentation. Guest speakers will include high-profile forensic anthropologists with

experience in such human rights contexts including Argentina, Guatemala, the former Yugoslavia, the U.S.-Mexico border, and others.

While the science and technology of forensic anthropology is uniquely capable of corroborating victim testimony, revealing systematic violence, and providing pathways for healing for post-conflict societies, it is not without complexity.

***Themes to be followed throughout will include:***

- How forensic teams strive to take a family-centered approach and the past tensions between forensic teams & local communities
- The tensions between values of humanitarian repair or “healing,” and legal or judiciary goals of accountability and justice
- Global inequalities and colonial problem of “science” and “scientists” handling bodies and revealing “truth,” while communities of victims are often actively silenced
- The logistical, political, and security challenges in forensic anthropologists in post-conflict contexts, and the need for improvisation, a locally-specific approach, and flexibility
- Forensic ethics and how forensic work can meaningfully engage in a social and political processes

**Learning objectives**

1. To come away with an understanding of the impact forensic anthropology has had on prosecuting human rights violations and supporting the demands of communities of mourners
2. To be able to apply a family- or victim-centered approach in any area of human rights work
3. To appreciate the complicated interplay between scientific “expertise” and local knowledge or lived experience
4. To be prepared in future human rights work in the event that the expertise of a forensic team is needed
5. To understand the ways in which the field is limited, and to appreciate the many ways of knowing and caring for the dead and how important care for the dead can be for societies to heal from violence and trauma

**Course Technology**

- We will use Zoom for any synchronous (live) sessions

- All Community Classroom participants will get access to the Community Classroom Forum with links to readings, films, discussion boards, etc.

### Content Warning and Community Standards

To ensure that our conversations with each other, with guests, and with our families and friends are productive and do not cause harm, I ask everyone in this online learning community to commit to the following:

1. **Respect for the dead and for the experiences of the families.** We will not use degrading language about the dead or their families. We will not share graphic images of the dead unless treated with respect, care, and justification. There needs to be a good reason for the use of such images. No matter our political opinion about the context under discussion, we will treat the dead and their families with equal respect and care.
2. **We are enduring a pandemic, be kind to yourself & others:** These are uniquely stressful times, and our first priority is our health and the wellbeing of our families. We will step up and step back as we need to, and communicate with the instructor should there be any need for more time on something. Please remember that you don't know what your classmate is going through, and there is a good chance they are solo-parenting or caring for an ill family member or dealing with serious financial challenges. Be patient.
3. **Listen actively & engage thoughtfully.** Respect others when they are talking or sharing in discussion boards. Try to start with a place of empathy and humanism when reading each other's comments, and reflect on the offering before responding. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas
4. **Be a part of fostering an inclusive space:** We will be anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-ageist, anti-ableist, and anti-homophobic. All humans are welcome, micro-aggressions are not!

### Changes to the Syllabus

This syllabus will be updated by the end of May to include readings and films for the last 4 weeks of class. Information contained in this course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

## Course Syllabus

### Documenting Human Rights Abuses Through Forensic Anthropology

Week One

May 18 - May 24, 2020

#### ***Introduction to the Course***

**Issues:** What the field of forensic anthropology is and the special insights it is able to offer about the recent past; the history of the field and traditional links with law enforcement and military; discussion of forensic ethics; many ways of caring for the dead; invisible disappearances and mass graves.

#### **Materials**

- Rosenblatt, Adam. 2015. Introduction to book, *Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science After Atrocity*, pages 1 – 37.
- Rosenblatt, Adam. 2019. The Danger of a Single Story About Forensic Humanitarianism. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*. Pages 75 – 77.
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). 2003. Introduction and Executive Summary from ICRC Report: The Missing and Their Families. Pages 1 – 17.
- Film: *Following Antigone* (2002). Argentina. 40 minutes

#### **Guest Speaker**

- On **Friday, May 22nd at 8:00am PST** Instead of a guest speaker this week, the instructor will host a synchronous video meeting to discuss some of the themes we will follow throughout the course.

#### **Deeper Dive (optional additional resources)**

- See Community Classroom Forum for additional readings, films, podcasts, and online materials

Week Two

May 25- May 31, 2020

#### ***Argentina***

**Issues:** As we learn about the history in Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s, we will discuss themes such as the family-centered approach taken by the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, tensions between families and

courts, and the complicated questions that arise when some families do not want exhumations.

### **Materials**

- Doretti, Mercedes and Fondebrider, Luis. (2001). Science and Human Rights. Chapter in *Archeologies of the Contemporary Past*. Pages 139 – 144.
- Doretti, Mercedes and Burrell, Jennifer. (2007). Gray Spaces and Endless Negotiations: Forensic Anthropology and Human Rights. In *Anthropology Put to Work*. Pages 45 – 64.
- Film: *Our Disappeared/Nuestro Desaparecidos*. (2008). Documentary film. 1 hr 39 min.

### **Guest Speaker**

- We will hear from MacArthur Genius Award-winning forensic anthropologist and my friend, Mercedes Doretti. Mercedes will join us either Thursday, May 28th or Friday May 29th, **to be announced**.
- Please read as much as you can about Mercedes under the "Getting to Know our Guest Speaker" module for Week 2 in the Community Classroom Forum.

### **Deeper Dive (optional additional resources)**

- See the Community Classroom Forum for additional readings, films, podcasts, and online materials

Week Three  
June 1- June 7, 2020

### ***Guatemala***

**Issues:** In this second historical week, we will turn to the history of Guatemala's Civil War, and the work of forensic anthropologists to hold perpetrators accountable and support the families demands for truth about their missing and murdered loved ones. We will discuss trials where forensic anthropology is called to testify, the impact of impunity on society, and local interpretations of "identification" and ownership of remains.

## Materials

- Snow, Peccerelli et al (2008). Hidden in Plain Sight: X.X. Burials and the Desaparecidos in the Department of Guatemala, 1977–1986. In *Statistical Methods for Human Rights*. Pages 89 – 116.
- Manz, Oglesby, Olson, Sanford, Snow, Walsh-Haney. (2013). Sí Hubo Genocidio: Anthropologists and the Genocide Trial of Guatemala’s Ríos Montt. *American Anthropologist*, pages 558 – 662.
- Henderson, Erica; Nolin, Catherine; Peccerelli, Fredy. (2014). Dignifying a Bare Life and Making Place through Exhumation: Cobán CREOMPAZ Former Military Garrison, Guatemala. *Journal of Latin American Geography*. Pages 97 – 113.
- Sanford, Victoria. (2003). Chapter nine from *Buried Secrets*. Pages 232 – 247.
- Sanford, Victoria. (2008). From Genocide to Femicide: Impunity and Human Rights in Twenty-First Century Guatemala. In *Journal of Human Rights*. Pages 104 – 120.
- Film: *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (2011). Produced by Pamela Yates. 1 hr 43 min.

## Guest Speaker

- We will meet Fredy Peccerelli, forensic anthropologist and founder of the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Team (FAFG). **Thursday June 4th at 10am PST.**
- Please read as much as you can about Fredy under the “Getting to Know our Guest Speaker” module for Week 3 in the Community Classroom Forum.

## Deeper Dive (optional additional resources)

- See the Community Classroom Forum for additional readings, films, podcasts, and online materials

Week Four

June 8 - June 14, 2020

***Former Yugoslavia***

Issues: **TBA**

**Materials: TBA**

**Guest Speaker:**

- We will meet Admir Jugo, forensic anthropologist who worked on exhumations and examinations following the violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Exact day and time TBA, Either ***Either Thursday, June 11th or Friday June 12th***
- Please read as much as you can about Admir under the "Getting to Know our Guest Speaker" module for Week 4 in the Community Classroom Forum

**Deeper Dive (optional additional resources)**

- See the Community Classroom Forum for additional readings, films, podcasts, and online materials

Week Five

June 15- June 21, 2020

***Rwanda***

Issues: **TBA**

**Materials: TBA**

**Guest Speaker**

- We will meet Dr. Adam Rosenblatt, human rights scholar and author of Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science After Atrocity. ***Friday, June 19th or Friday June 12th, hour TBA.***
- Please read as much as you can about Dr. Rosenblatt under the "Getting to Know our Guest Speaker" module for Week 5 in the Community Classroom Forum

**Deeper Dive (optional additional resources)**

- See the Community Classroom Forum for additional readings, films, podcasts, and online materials

Week Six  
June 22 - June 28, 2020  
***U.S.-Mexico Border***

Issues: **TBA**

Materials: **TBA**

Guest Speaker: **TBA**

- *This week we will have two guest speaker sessions, one with the Colibrí Center for Human Rights Family Network, and one with Dr. Bruce Anderson*
  - Earlier in the week Colibrí's Family Network Director, Perla Torres, will visit with us. Perla plans to bring a member of the family network. **Either Wednesday, June 24<sup>th</sup> or Thursday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, TBA.**
  - On Friday, we will meet Dr. Bruce Anderson, forensic anthropologist at the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner, **Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup> exact time TBA.**
- Please read as much as you can about Dr. Anderson and the Family Network under the "Getting to Know our Guest Speaker" module for Week 6 in the Community Classroom Forum.

**Deeper Dive (optional additional resources)**

- See the Community Classroom Forum for additional readings, films, podcasts, and online materials
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Week Seven  
June 29 - July 3, 2020

***Futures***

Issues: **TBA**

Materials: **TBA**

Guest Speaker: **TBA**

**Deeper Dive (optional additional resources)**

- See the Community Classroom Forum for additional readings, films, podcasts, and online materials