ANTH 2536 and 2537: Inequality and the Body in Archaeology and Bioarchaeology

Instructors
Dr. Jess Beck  
3135 WWPH  
Office Hours: W: 10-11am  
Email: jlb360@pitt.edu

Dr. Elizabeth Arkush  
3109 WWPH  
Office Hours: by appointment  
Email: arkush@pitt.edu

Course Description
This seminar uses a bioarchaeological lens to explore the ways in which social inequalities manifest in the human body, weaving together contributions from ethnography, material culture studies, and mortuary archaeology to ‘flesh out’ studies of human remains. We will examine how particular aspects of social identity (e.g. gender, childhood) amplify or diminish inequalities in different contexts. We will also read a range of case studies that illustrate how trajectories of increasing social inequality vary over time and space, examining how large-scale social processes (e.g. aggregation, warfare, colonialism) impact human bodies. Overall, the course will analyze how social inequalities become embodied in human skeletal remains while also being shaped by social, ecological, and economic factors.

Meeting Time and Place
Select Fridays, 12:00-3:00pm, Anthropology Lounge

Workshop
Students with no background in bioarchaeology are required to take an introductory workshop in the fall semester that will briefly address how bioarchaeologists assess age, sex, disease, and trauma in human skeletons.

Course Structure
This 3-credit course is divided between the Fall (1-cr) and Spring (2-cr) semesters, and students are expected to enroll for both semesters. The seminar will consist of monthly discussions organized around a central topic and associated assigned readings. Your participation is key for the success of this seminar, through careful consideration of the readings, development and submission of discussion questions in advance of seminar meetings, and contributions to class conversations about the assigned topics.

Grades
The grade for this course consists of three components:

1. Seminar Participation: Come to seminar prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion of the assigned readings.

2. Discussion Questions: Before each meeting you will submit four discussion questions. These can pertain to individual readings, or intersections between the readings, or relevant aspects of the broader meeting topic. If your question is selected, be prepared to develop and amplify your thoughts during seminar.
3. **Term Paper or Reading Response Papers:** In the spring semester you will be asked to submit *either*

(a) Two short response papers (4-5pp, double-spaced); submitted the Friday AFTER a meeting. Students can choose any two of the seminar topics to write their response papers on. These response papers will critically address the readings covered the week before and their relationship to the meeting topic. Please use your paper to develop *a coherent argument* based on some of the readings (and optionally, the discussion). Do not simply summarize or react to different readings in turn. (You do not need to use every assigned reading in your response paper.)

(b) One short research paper, at least 10 pages in length, that addresses a bioarchaeological topic of your choosing. This paper will be due on April 19, and you will be required to decide on a topic and discuss your idea with at least one of the professors by the February 10 meeting. We especially recommend that the bioarchaeologists enrolled in the seminar choose this option. Other students whose research would benefit from better familiarity with the bioarchaeology of their region, or bioarchaeology related to a particular theme, are also encouraged to write the paper.

The rest of the second semester grade will come from submission of discussion questions and seminar participation, as in the first semester. Please note that in consequence, participation will form a larger share of student grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANTH 2536/2537 TOPIC AND MEETING SCHEDULE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall 2016</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2: Introductory Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 9: Embodying Inequality: Bioarchaeological Approaches to Inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 23: Bioarchaeology Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 7: Engendering Disparity: Gender, Labor, and Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 4: The Age of Innocence? Childhood Identity and Experience from a Bioarchaeological Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2: Social Ills: Disease, Disability, and Inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2017</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 13: Seeds of Change: Agriculture, Sedentism, and Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 10: Colonial Contagion: Disease and Depopulation in the Americas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3: A Price to Pay: Sacrifice in Ancient States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7: The Body Politic: Post-Mortem Manipulation of the Deceased</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meeting 1  
September 16, 2016

Embodying Inequality: Bioarchaeological Approaches to Inequality

How do social inequalities become manifested in human bodies? This week’s readings examine the ‘embodiment’ of inequality in both past and present contexts, using examples drawn from epidemiology, medical anthropology, archaeology, and biological anthropology. Beginning with a focus on how contemporary social inequalities have led to disparities in individual health and well-being, we then explore how these processes can be assessed in the archaeological and skeletal records. The bioarchaeological readings emphasize the transition from the initial descriptive focus of skeletal analysis to the growing potential for bioarchaeologists to contribute to anthropological debates on power and inequality. Supplemental readings will prove useful to participants with limited previous bioarchaeological training as they provide additional historical and methodological context for the development of the field.

Readings (** =Not required for bioarchaeologists)

Krieger, Nancy, and George Davey Smith  
2004 “Bodies Count,” and Body Counts: Social Epidemiology and Embodying Inequality.  
_Epidemiologic Reviews_ 26: 92–103.

Farmer, Paul  

Goodman, Alan H.  

**Larsen, Clark Spencer  

Torres-Rouff, Christina  

Supplemental readings (optional)

Armelagos, George J.  
Buikstra, Jane E.

Knudson, Kelly J., and Christopher M. Stojanowski
Meeting 2
October 7, 2016

Engendering Disparity: Gender, Labor, and Violence

In their response to “An Anthropology of Structural Violence” (Farmer 2004), Phillipe Bourgois and Nancy Scheper-Hughes write "Farmer's model of structural violence is a vivid reminder that most violent acts are not deviant. They are defined as moral in the service of conventional norms and material interests"(317). Using case studies from the Andes, the American Southwest, and elsewhere, we examine the ways in which violence can be normalized and used to reinforce existing social orders, framing such research within broader explorations of gender theory and evolutionary perspectives on human behavior. In particular, this week’s readings explore the how gender is constructed through physical action on the body, through both violence and habitual labor patterns.

Readings
Perry, Elizabeth M., and Rosemary A. Joyce.

Stone, Pamela K.

Peterson, Jane D.

Novak SA, Hatch MA.

Martin, Debra L, Ryan P. Harrod, and Misty Fields

Tung, Tiffiny
**Supplemental Readings** (**) = strongly recommended if you have not read it before)

**Walker, Phillip L.**

Walker, Phillip L., and Della Collins Cook

Hollimon, Sandra E.

Redfern Rebecca
Meeting 3
November 4, 2016

The Age of Innocence? Childhood Identity and Experience from a Bioarchaeological Perspective

In 2002, Lawrence Hirschfeld facetiously asked “Why Don’t Anthropologists Like Children?” Despite his tongue-in-cheek title, Hirschfeld’s paper underscores a real disciplinary issue – the absence of explicit considerations of children and childhood from much anthropological writing. Given its ability to estimate the developmental age of individuals, the field of bioarchaeology provides a unique perspective when it comes to identifying children in the past. This week’s readings illustrate how archaeologists and bioarchaeologists can unpack aspects of age and identity through evidence from material culture, grave goods, and human skeletons. These case studies also illuminate how different cultural conceptions of childhood can affect the lived experience of children, particularly when it comes to access to allocation of subsistence resources, economic contributions, and mortuary treatment.

Readings

Kamp, Kathryn A.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy

Waterman, Anna J., and Jonathan T. Thomas

Moore, Alison

Liston, Maria A., and Susan I. Rotroff

Newman, Sophie L., and Rebecca L. Gowland
Supplemental Readings

Hirschfeld, Lawrence A.

Halcrow, Siân E., and Nancy Tayles.

Perry, Megan A.

Tung, Tiffiny A., and Kelly J. Knudson
Meeting 4  
December 2, 2016

Social Ills: Disease, Disability, and Inequality

In 1991, Katherine Dettwyler questioned “[w]hy should the discovery of individuals with "severe" physical impairments, as reflected in skeletal and fossil evidence, invite speculation about the thought patterns of prehistoric populations and judgments about the moral rightness of past behavior” (1991:376)? Despite such skepticism, recent years have seen an increasing number of osteological and archaeological studies of disability and illness in the past. Much of this research has been categorized under the umbrella of “the bioarchaeology of care.” This week’s readings explore the strengths and weaknesses of bioarchaeological approaches to illness and disability in the past. A range of case studies from Indus Age South Asia, medieval Poland, Late Period New Mexico, and ancient Central and South America are used to illustrate both osteobiographical methods and the ways in which definitions of disease and disability vary across space and over time.

Readings

Dettwyler, Katherine A.  

Southwell-Wright, William  

Shay, Talia  

Robbins Schug, Gwen  

Matczak, Magdalena D., and Tomasz Kozlowski  

Hawkey, Diane E.  
Rodríguez, Carlos A., Carolina Isaza, and Harry Pachajoa

**Supplemental Readings**

Roberts, Charlotte

Sontag, Susan

Tilley, Lorna

Marsteller, Sara J., Christina Torres-Rouff, and Kelly J. Knudson
Meeting 5  
January 13, 2017

**Seeds of Change: Agriculture, Sedentism, and Health**

The development of agriculture and sedentism – often, but not always linked - have long been recognized as fundamentally important transformations in human history. The transition to farming is a particularly important topic to skeletal analysis as it marks the beginning of a movement beyond paleopathological studies to investigate questions of deep anthropological importance. Following the publication of *Paleopathology at the Origins of Agriculture* (1984), bioarchaeological analysis has become one of the most insightful methods for investigating this subsistence transition due to its ability to weave together the results of assessments of age, sex, health, and isotopic analyses of diet and mobility. Bioarchaeology also contributes to a more recent focus on the demographic dynamics of the Neolithic. This week we will trace bioarchaeological approaches to agriculture and sedentism from their paleopathological beginnings in the mid-1980s, addressing a range of case studies including the Middle Woodland in the American Midwest, Neolithic Turkey, and the Early Neolithic of the Czech Republic.

**Readings**

Cohen, Mark Nathan  

Cohen, Mark Nathan and George J. Armelagos  

Larsen, Clark Spencer  

Bocquet-Appel, Jean-Pierre and Stephen Naji  

Buikstra, Jane E., Lyle W. Konigsberg, and Jill Bullington  

Larsen, Clark S., et al.  
Zvelebil, Marek, and Paul Pettitt

**Supplemental readings (optional)**

Bellwood, Peter and Marc Oxenham

Collins Cook, D.

Ambrose, Stanley H., Jane Buikstra, and Harold W. Krueger
Meeting 7
March 3, 2017

Colonial Contagion: Disease and Depopulation in the Americas

Readings

Alchon, Susan

Archer, Seth
2016  Colonialism and Other Afflictions: Rethinking Native American Health History, History Compass 14(10), 511–21.

Larsen, Clark Spencer, et al.

Klaus, Haagen D., and Manuel E. Tam

Hutchinson, Dale L.

Warrick, Gary

Hutchinson, Dale L., and Jeffrey M. Mitchem

Supplemental readings (optional)

Larsen, Clark Spencer

Ramenofsky, Ann F., Alicia K. Wilbur, and Anne C. Stone
Jones, David S.  

Livi-Bacci, Massimo.  
Meeting 7
March 3, 2017

A Price to Pay: Sacrifice in Ancient States

Human sacrifice is a practice preserved in the archaeological record of many ancient states, evidenced in texts, iconography, and human skeletal remains. While sacrifice has traditionally been treated in anthropology as a ritual behavior that creates or reaffirms a relationship between humans and gods – beings who were believed to be dependent on each other (Trigger 2003:473-484), the practice also has simultaneous political and economic implications in early states, not least in reinforcing the role of rulers or priests as performers of sacrifice and defining certain kinds of people as sacrifice victims. These implications and functions might change over time; as Roderick Campbell underscores, even within a given region, sacrifice “…is not a stable, unitary thing then but has undergone transformation in content and form” (2012: 306). Bioarchaeology can potentially shed light on key questions about human sacrifice: the identities of the victims, the possible meanings and audiences for sacrificial practices, and shifts over time. This week’s readings draw from a wide variety of geographic and temporal contexts, including Shang China, Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, and pre-Columbian Mexico, Peru, and southeastern North America. These authors explore multiple dimensions of sacrifice, stressing its importance for understanding status, class, warfare, and politics in early states.

Readings

Campbell, Roderick

Baadsgaard, Aubrey, Janet Monge, and Richard L. Zettler

White, Christine D., Michael W. Spence, Fred J. Longstaffe, Hillary Stuart-Williams, and Kimberley R. Law

Ximena Chavez Balderas
Verano, John  
2008 Commonality and Diversity in Moche Human Sacrifice. In The Art and Archaeology of the Moche, pp. 195-213. Austin: University of Texas

Klaus, Haagen D., Jorge Centurión, and Manuel Curo  

Ambrose, Stanley H., Jane Buikstra, and Harold W. Krueger  

Supplemental Readings

Trigger, Bruce G.  

Watts, Joseph, Oliver Sheehan, Quentin D. Atkinson, Joseph Bulbulia, and Russell D. Gray.  

Duncan, William N.  
Meeting 8  
April 7, 2017

The Body Politic: Post-Mortem Manipulation of the Deceased

In this meeting, we will move beyond primary burials to focus on the post-mortem manipulation of dead bodies. We begin by exploring the theoretical underpinnings of what Katherine Verdery terms “dead-body politics,” and consider recent bioarchaeological approaches to “post-mortem agency.” The case-studies which follow can be divided into two categories. The readings by Tung and Kuijt focus on the manipulation of specific parts of dead bodies in order to achieve political or ideological ends. The reading by Hutchinson and Aragon explores the ways in which continuous interaction with the dead has the potential to structure and transform the organization of living society.

Finally, we will dedicate the last half-hour or so of the seminar to a more general discussion of the ways in which bioarchaeology, mortuary archaeology, and other archaeological lines of evidence can be used to approach the difficult problem of reconstructing inequality in the past. The last reading by Quinn and Beck ties together many of the topics covered thus far in seminar, and serves as a jumping-off point for that discussion.

Readings
Arnold, Bettina  

Verdery, Katherine  

Tung, Tiffiny  

Kuijt, Ian  

Hutchinson, Dale L., and Lorraine V. Aragon  

Quinn, Colin and Jess Beck  
Supplemental readings (optional)*

Lillios, Katina T.

Geary, Patrick

Conklin, Beth A.
1995 “Thus are our Bodies, Thus was our Custom”: Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society. *American Ethnologist* 22(1): 75-101.