

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
CANTON, NEW YORK**



**COURSE OUTLINE
JUST 370 – FORENSIC TAPHONOMY**

Prepared By: Carrie B. LeGarde

**SCHOOL OF SCIENCE, HEALTH, AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT
May 2016**

JUST 370 – FORENSIC TAPHONOMY

- A. **TITLE:** Forensic Taphonomy
- B. **COURSE NUMBER:** JUST 370
- C. **CREDIT HOURS:** 3
- D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:** No
- E. **COURSE LENGTH:** 15 weeks
- F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:** Spring
- G. **HOURS OF LECTURE, LABORATORY, RECITATION, TUTORIAL, ACTIVITY:**
3 lecture hours per week
- H. **CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** This course is an introduction to forensic taphonomy, including an overview of forensic anthropology and archaeology. The course provides a history of forensic anthropology, archaeology, and taphonomy, as well as current challenges and future directions. Specific topics to be covered include human osteology and the biological profile, taphonomic processes, and the postmortem interval.
- I. **PRE-REQUISITES/CO-REQUISITES:** Completion of 45 credit hours or permission of instructor.
- J. **GOALS (STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES):**
By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

<u>Course Objective</u>	<u>Institutional SLO</u>
a. Define forensic anthropology, archaeology, and taphonomy.	2. Crit. Thinking
b. Describe human skeletal biology.	2. Crit. Thinking
c. Identify human skeletal elements.	2. Crit. Thinking 3. Prof. Competence
d. Demonstrate an understanding of taphonomic processes.	2. Crit. Thinking
e. Estimate the postmortem interval.	2. Crit. Thinking

- K. **TEXTS:**
Tersigni-Tarrant, M.A. & Shirley, N.R. (Eds). 2013. *Forensic Anthropology: An Introduction*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
Pokines, J. & Symes, S. A. (Eds). 2013. *Manual of Forensic Taphonomy*. New York, NY: CRC Press.

L. REFERENCES:

- Christensen, A.M., Passalacqua, N.V., & Bartelink, E.J. (Eds). 2014. *Forensic Anthropology: Current Methods and Practice*. San Diego, CA: Elsevier Inc.
- Dirkmaat, D. 2012. *A Companion to Forensic Anthropology*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell.
- Haglund, W. D. & Sorg, M. H. 1997. *Forensic Taphonomy: The Postmortem Fate of Human Remains*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Haglund, W. D. & Sorg, M. H. (Eds). 2001. *Advances in Forensic Taphonomy: Method, Theory, and Archaeological Perspectives*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

M. EQUIPMENT: None

N. GRADING METHOD: A-F

O. MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:

- Practical Exercises
- Quizzes
- Exams

P. DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE:

- I. Introduction to taphonomy
 - a. Definitions of taphonomy
 - b. History of forensic archaeology and taphonomy
 - c. Link between forensic anthropology and taphonomy
- II. History of forensic anthropology
 - a. Development of the field of forensic anthropology
 - b. Forensic anthropology research facilities
- III. Human osteology
 - a. Skeletal biology
 - b. Anatomical terminology
 - c. Bone identification
 - d. Dentition
- IV. Overview of determining the biological profile
 - a. Sex estimation
 - b. Age estimation
 - c. Ancestry Estimation
 - d. Stature estimation
 - e. Trauma
- V. Forensic archaeology and taphonomy
 - a. Archaeological methods and theory
- VI. Taphonomic processes
 - a. Varying burial environments
 - b. Animal scavenging and transport
 - c. Fluvial and human transport
 - d. Cultural modifications
 - e. Marine environments
 - f. Subaerial weathering
 - g. Thermal alteration
- VII. The postmortem interval
 - a. Estimating time and circumstances since death
 - b. Confounding variables

- VIII. Processing and inventory of remains
 - a. Effects of recovery methods
- IX. Personal Identification
 - a. Skeletal variation
 - b. DNA survivability in skeletal remains
- X. Forensic anthropology and taphonomy today
 - a. Human rights and mass disasters
 - b. Current research and challenges
 - c. Future directions

Q. **LABORATORY OUTLINE:** n/a