COURSE OUTLINE
JUST 370 – FORENSIC TAPHONOMY

Prepared By: Carrie B. LeGarde
**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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objective</th>
<th>Institutional SLO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Define forensic anthropology, archaeology, and taphonomy.</td>
<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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<td>b. Describe human skeletal biology.</td>
<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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<td>c. Identify human skeletal elements.</td>
<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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<td>3. Prof. Competence</td>
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<td>d. Demonstrate an understanding of taphonomic processes.</td>
<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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<td>e. Estimate the postmortem interval.</td>
<td>2. Crit. Thinking</td>
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K. **TEXTS:**
L. REFERENCES:

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