

The purpose of the Osteoarchaeology Laboratory is to provide an introduction to the analysis of the kinds of osteological remains that commonly occur in archaeological contexts. Vertebrates, principally mammals -- including humans, are considered, and the level of instruction assumes little prior acquaintance with vertebrate skeletons. The course begins with an overview of the animal skeleton and of bone as a structural and biological material. This is followed by formal comparative osteology using modern comparative specimens, proceeding from the head through the axial skeleton to the limbs and extremities. Discussion of methods and problems of characterization and interpretation of vertebrate faunal assemblages runs throughout the course. Lectures and discussions deal with aspects of terminology, morphology, function, skeletal development and variation, and taphonomy, while the labs use skeletal materials to demonstrate major differences in bone morphology. Throughout, emphasis is put on features that are useful for characterizing archaeofaunal assemblages, which are often fragmentary and differentially preserved. Mid-term, each student is provided with a faunal collection from an archaeological site to record, analyze, and write-up by the end of the semester, at which time students will have become attuned to the special nature of archaeofaunal collections and the kinds of expertise that are necessary to analyze them. Students should be able to sort a bone collection into the different skeletal parts and by major taxonomic groupings and know how to use a comparative collection to make more detailed identifications. In addition, students will have learned how to determine sex and approximate age at death of an individual from skeletal remains, to evaluate taphonomic features, and to report the results of an analysis.

Course format: On Wednesdays, there are lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and quizzes. Lectures and discussions may require completion of a few selected readings before a specific class. On days that there are quizzes scheduled, the class will start with the quiz. In addition, students will need to spend additional time with the lab and project materials -- **at least** three hours per week. Until October 31 (the date of the last quiz), the Zooarchaeology Laboratory will be open on the afternoons of Fridays and Mondays for supervised study of materials for the quiz. Ajita Patel will demonstrate and help you learn the material during those days. Once bone collections have been assigned, time slots will be made available on an individual basis for working with that material. The lab is NOT OPEN on Tuesdays or on Wednesday mornings until after October 31. When there is a quiz, you will be asked to wait outside the lab at the beginning of class time until all members of the class have assembled.

A COURSE SYLLABUS IS AVAILABLE UNDER "Files" ON THIS WEBSITE

CLASS MEETS IN THE ZOOARCHAEOLOGY LABORATORY, 3RD FLOOR, PEABODY MUSEUM, ON WEDNESDAYS FROM 3:00 - 5:45 PM, WITH AN ADDITIONAL 3 HOUR LAB ON FRIDAYS AND/OR MONDAYS.