



## Forensic Anthropology

Physical Anthropology is the scientific study of human remains from human pre-history or ancient cultures. Forensic anthropologists apply the same investigative techniques to the recently deceased, most often the victims of homicides. When the victim cannot be identified, the forensic anthropologist studies the skeletal remains to establish the victim's gender, appearance, age, and state of health; the type of trauma the victim suffered; what the victim's face looked like; and how long the victim has been dead.

There are three main areas within the field. Forensic Osteology is the study of the skeleton. Forensic Archeology is the controlled collection of human remains. Forensic Taphonomy studies how the body changes after death.

Forensic anthropologists may use clay to reproduce the face, or they may use a computer to graphically reproduce it. They make casts of bones and preserve skeletal materials using commercial preservatives. They also rehydrate and preserve mummified or decayed soft tissues. Technology they use includes scanning electron microscopy, radiographic techniques, photo or video superimposition, and thin-sectioning of bone in order to study its microstructure.

Forensic anthropologists consult with forensic pathologists and coroners. While the forensic anthropologist cannot officially determine the cause of death, they are often called upon to provide information to help those that do.

Forensic anthropologists generally work with forensic pathologists, homicide investigators, and odontologists (forensic dentists). Some work for the U.S. government and the military, though most teach at universities or work in museums, and assist in legal investigations on a consultant basis. Most forensic anthropologists earn a Ph.D. in physical anthropology, with studies focusing on osteology (the study of bones) and forensics.