



Breakfast Seminar - 2016

BS6 Thomas Krauss Memorial Bitemark Breakfast — Forensic Anthropology: Science Into Fiction

Kathleen J. Reichs, PhD, UNC - Charlotte, Dept of Anthropology, Charlotte, NC 28223; and Laura C. Fulginiti, PhD, Forensic Science Center, 701 W Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007*

After attending this presentation, attendees will have a better understanding of the field of forensic anthropology and of the processes involved in creating fiction based on science. Emphasis will be on the writing of novels and screenplays.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing an overview of the field of forensic anthropology and will describe techniques used in creating plausible fiction based on scientific procedures and principles.

Forensic anthropology is a sub-specialty within physical anthropology that combines knowledge of the human skeleton with skills in various areas of forensic protocol, including the recovery and analysis of modern human remains. A fully accredited forensic anthropologist will be certified by the American Board of Forensic Anthropology (ABFA). This requires achievement of a PhD, successful completion of a certification exam, adherence to a set of ethical standards, and regular reporting on continuing education requirements.

The forensic anthropologist analyzes compromised human remains — the decomposed, mummified, mutilated, burned, dismembered, and skeletal. She addresses questions of identity, manner of death, time since death, and, in some cases, postmortem body treatment.

The forensic anthropologist may function in any of a variety of contexts, including, but not limited to, medical examiner and coroner offices, government laboratories, disaster recovery teams, human rights efforts, law enforcement agencies, and the military. The forensic anthropologist does not operate in a vacuum but works with specialists in many other areas, including forensic odontology.

Over the past two decades, the analysis of crime scenes and crime victims has caught the attention of the general public. Forensic science has exploded onto the stage of pop culture, and practitioners have been portrayed in books and on the large and small screens. Dr. Temperance Brennan is the protagonist in 18 novels and the main character in the longest-running scripted drama in the history of the Fox network. Each of the Temperance Brennan books and the Young Adult (YA) Virals books and each episode of the television series *Bones* takes the reader or viewer into a context in which forensic investigators work. Each highlights a different area of expertise within the forensic sciences.

This presentation will discuss the process of fictionalizing forensic science by drawing upon the speaker's experience as a forensic anthropologist, a writer, and a television producer. The writing of a novel will be compared to the writing of a screenplay.

Anthropology, Novels, Screenplays