Trauma Analysis in Forensic Anthropology

Wednesday, October 18, 12:00 p.m. East Hall Room 1232

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Abstract
A forensic anthropologist must be well-versed in the analysis of blunt, sharp, and projectile trauma, as well as the determination of whether that trauma occurred ante-, peri-, or post-mortem. Trauma analysis in forensic anthropology is also governed by the requirements of the legal system, which specify that evidence presented in court must reflect the results of peer-reviewed published studies, the accuracy of the determination, and the degree of confidence of the expert witness. Unfortunately, the majority of literature relating to bone trauma from medical and forensic anthropological perspectives does not conform to legal guidelines, and thus its presentation in court is problematic at best. Robustly designed experiments are needed in order to provide appropriate parameters for the interpretation of bone trauma within the legal system.

Biography
Tal Simmons received her A.B. in Anthropology from Bryn Mawr College, her M.A. in Paleopathology and Funerary Archaeology from the University of Sheffield, and her Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Tennessee. Simmons is a professor and Chair of the Department of Forensic Science at Virginia Commonwealth University. Prior to arriving at VCU in January 2015, she worked in the U.K. for 11 years, where she was the course Leader for the MSc Forensic Anthropology in the School of Forensic and Investigative Sciences at the University of Central Lancashire (2004-2014) and held the post of Reader in Forensic Anthropology and Archaeology. Her research focus is experimental forensic taphonomy and concerns the rate and pattern of decomposition as well as the analysis of trauma.