

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Human Skeletal Anatomy Laboratory Manual and Workbook*

REFERENCE: Fairgrieve SI, Oost TS. Human skeletal anatomy laboratory manual and workbook. Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 2001, 166 pp.

Courses in human osteology and skeletal biology vary widely in scope and focus from institution to institution. Course content depends on the specific goals of the instructor, the degree program and topical concentration of the department, and associated courses taught within the curriculum. Therefore, no text in skeletal anatomy perfectly suits the needs of every instructor. The alternative is multiple texts, usually some combination of Bass (1987), White and Folkens (2000), Steele and Bramblett (1988), or Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994).

Scott Fairgrieve and Tracy Oost have provided us with the best alternative to multiple texts—a laboratory manual and workbook that, when used in conjunction with a single text, provides the instructor with a structured format for skeletal anatomy labs, including testing exercises, lists of important terms, and a guide to “laboratory research reports.” Similar to other laboratory workbooks, such as Wolfe and Lieberman’s (1990) *Physical Anthropology Laboratory Textbook*, this lab manual was designed over several years around a specific course, in this case, Laurentian University’s course in Human Skeletal Biology. These types of courses necessarily have a strong laboratory component. However, up to now, we are not aware of the existence of a laboratory workbook dedicated exclusively to coursework in human osteology. The text is similar in approach to Bass’ manual. The authors take a regional approach, but cleverly introduce the less complicated bones first. The text begins with a survey of both microscopic and macroscopic bone structure, and then switches to gross morphological anatomy of skeletal elements. Each lab assignment, broken into modules of increasing difficulty, has a “stated purpose with clear instructions of expectations and learning objectives”. Instructors are invited to utilize as much or as little of the manual as required. In fact, this type of flexibility is central to the appeal of this workbook. The general layout permits the instructor to move around in the manual, using chapters out of sequence.

Strong points of the volume include a sound introduction to bone histology and morphology that provides a good foundation for those unfamiliar with osteology. The discussion at the beginning of each section is helpful in orienting the student to key topics, particularly the chapters on teeth and non-metric variation. An attractive feature is the testing component, which includes fill-in-the-

blank and multiple-choice sections useful in testing the students’ knowledge of bone morphology. Overall, the organization of the chapters and tables found within is well done.

As mentioned above, no text is perfectly suited for every professor. Therefore, any negative comments about the book reflect shortcomings from the standpoint of the specific goals of our own course in human osteology. Features we consider unsuited to our needs may well be viewed as an integral component by another instructor. Our course in human osteology concentrates on skeletal morphology and recognition of bone fragments—a saleable skill for students doing research or fieldwork in bioarchaeology, human variation and forensic identification. That being said, we found several of the research report topics at the end of each chapter to be superfluous. Siding is based on whole bones and usually uses only one feature. In the long bones, this feature is generally found on the proximal end. The text also fails to discuss how to side hand bones or most of the bones of the feet.

Laboratory workbooks and course packets are meant to be used as supplemental materials in a laboratory environment. Obviously, some sacrifices must be made in terms of density and print quality. However, we were disappointed by the quality of the photo reproductions. The photographs appear to be slightly washed out, grainy and pixilated. We suspect the problem may be related to the preliminary printing process. Charles C. Thomas is an outstanding publisher, certainly known to everyone familiar with the body of forensic anthropology literature (including co-author Fairgrieve’s *Forensic Osteological Analysis*, 1999). We expect that the first printing of the text will resolve this minor complaint. At any rate, we find that many students may prefer line drawings to photographs when first introduced to skeletal material—even to Pieter Folkens’ remarkable photographs in *Human Osteology* (2000). In this text, the line drawings of non-metric variation (courtesy of J.E. Molto) in chapter 8 are excellent.

While the book is a bit too elementary to stand alone as a text for college-level study in osteology, it will excel in its intended role as a supplement to one of the more comprehensive texts. The price of \$32.95 seems reasonable provided the print quality improves. We both agree that *Human Skeletal Anatomy Laboratory Manual and Workbook* is a welcome addition to a growing body of texts and teaching adjuncts dedicated to the study of human osteology and osteometry.

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