

SPRING SPEAKER SERIES IN BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Historical Genetics: Insights from Ancient DNA about early Colonial America

Raquel Fleskes

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Thursday, April 2 3:30 pm
Brandywine 033

The interactions and relationships between European and African persons in colonial North America are often difficult to reconstruct due to legacies of inequality and enslavement. Biases in the documentary record towards white, elite-male perspectives often lack female and African voices, and limitations in archaeological and osteological methods can only indirectly shed light on lifeways and experience. Fleskes' research employs an interdisciplinary approach to the study of European colonization and the African diaspora in colonial North America by analyzing the genomes of colonial-era individuals and living descendants to characterize geographical ancestry and biological kinship. This information is interpreted within a framework of existing archaeological, osteological, and historical documentary information. Her integrates community engagement into her research to ethically engage colonial descendent communities as stakeholders in the production of knowledge.

Join this presentation to learn about how genomic studies are illuminating some of the untold migration histories of 17th century colonial era individuals and communities.



Raquel Fleskes is a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, specializing in molecular genetics. She is currently the Graduate Research Assistant at the University of Pennsylvania's Wolf Humanities Center for their forum on Kinship. From 2017-2018, she was a visiting researcher at the University of Tennessee's ancient DNA laboratory, studying the genomic diversity of early colonial populations in eastern North America.

Fleskes has conducted community-based DNA research on 36 African-descended remains in Charleston, South Carolina. She is currently working on understanding kinship and ancestry of 17th century Maryland and Delaware populations by analyzing the genomic diversity of archaeological individuals and descendent communities. She has received funding from the National Science Foundation and the National Geographic Society to support her research.

Upcoming talks in this series:

Anna Dhody, Curator of the Mutter Museum and Director of Mutter Research Institute - April 30, 3:30

Hosted by the WCU Department of Anthropology and Sociology and the Anthropology Club