

**Columbia University Arts and Sciences**  
**EEEEB Code of Conduct for Interacting with Human Remains**

The study of human skeletal remains requires sensitivity, respect, and contextual awareness. It is essential that we do not exotify or objectify these remains. At all times, remember that these are the remnants of once living, breathing humans. They deserve dignity and respect.

All students involved in the study of human skeletal remains, whether in a course or informal research settings, must agree to abide by the stipulations in this protocol. ANY breach of this code of conduct, as determined by a Columbia University faculty member, can result in dismissal from the course and/or the student receiving a failing grade. Those not taking a formal course will be precluded from future access and study.

Inappropriate behavior and insensitive comments can have dramatic effect on other students in the course and on campus, on your professor, collaborators, and on the reputation of the field of study, and on the university. Critically, such behaviors may also effect the remains themselves, as in some belief systems, disrespect to the body may cause a spiritual insult to the individual. As a result, this protocol/code of conduct requires appropriate behavior during class time, during non-class time, and even after the class is completed.

Anyone handling human skeletal remains must first complete a training session involving relevant readings and discussion of the complex ethical issues regarding the study of human remains. Consideration of these important concerns will continue at relevant junctures in both courses and lab settings. Following the initial training, students must review and sign the following protocol:

1. *Respect*: I will treat all human remains that I encounter, in any form (skeletal, casts, models, photographs, etc.) with the utmost respect. This includes careful handling, language used, and overall approach, and attitude. I understand that working with and learning from human remains is a privilege, it is not a right.

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

2. *Handling*: I will handle all skeletal human remains gently, carefully, and in compliance with the specific directions set by the instructor. As part of this care and respect, I will make sure to always place remains on a neoprene-covered table.

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

3. *Accidental Damage*: I understand that even with maximum care in handling any human remains, accidents happen. If I unintentionally damage any human remains during class or lab, I will notify my instructor immediately.

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

4. *Photographs/Videos*: I agree that under no circumstances will I take photographs/videos of any of the human skeletal remains in this lab. I understand that sketches solely related to class and directed by my instructor are permitted with two provisos. First, they are permissible only on designated individuals. Second, I may not publish or share these in any way including email, social media, or other venues without written permission from the instructor.

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

5. *Social Media*: I understand that I cannot post on social media about my work with human remains unless specifically authorized by my instructor. I agree that this is a matter of protecting their privacy, and as such, part of our overall respect for these individuals.

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

6. *Use of Information Outside of the Classroom*: I understand that I cannot use case- or site-specific information and data obtained from human remains or archaeological sites in any form outside of this class unless authorized by my instructor.

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

7. *Food & Drink*: I understand that food and beverages (other than water) are not allowed near the skeletal remains nor on the same table as remains. This is a matter of both respect for and protection of the remains in our care.

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

8. *Responsibility for your peers*: I agree that if I observe one of my peers violating any aspect of this code of conduct that I will notify the instructor immediately.

Initials\_\_\_\_\_

Student name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Student signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_