Introduction to course:

I’m Dr. Phoebe Stubblefield, Assistant Professor at the University of North Dakota. I am a biological anthropologist who specializes in forensic anthropology, but I also conduct research in human skeletal biology and palaeoanthropology. Welcome to ANT 170 Introduction to Biological Anthropology. When I was an undergraduate at the University of California Santa Barbara, it was this course which first sparked my interest in anthropology. Many of you taking this course will be just like I was, curious about anthropology, wanting to answer questions about evolution and human evolution, wanting to know more about human biology and human variation. Some of you will want to satisfy a science general education requirement with a course to which you can definitely relate. Still others of you may have previous anthropology background and just want to broaden your knowledge of other anthropological disciplines and discoveries. All these goals will be met in this course, and perhaps some of you will be inspired to take other anthropology classes or seek a career in anthropology, as I ultimately did in becoming a forensic anthropologist. Welcome aboard!
Lesson to appear as text:

Lesson 1 What is Biological Anthropology
Chapter 1 Stanford et al.

Lesson Goals:
- Know definition of biological anthropology,
- its subfields,
- and its relationship to the other anthropological disciplines

What is Biological Anthropology?

Biological anthropology is an area of study or research which focuses mainly on one type of mammal. These mammals are called Primates; the group includes animals which have, among other characters, grasping hands (and feet) and vision with good depth perception. Look at your own hand and see a primate hand. If you have a pet dog or cat, notice how hard it is for a dog or cat to pick something up from the ground. HOW ’BOUT A VIDEO HERE OF A DOG PICKING UP A FRISBEE? ANYONE HAVE A DOG? While dogs interact with their environments with their mouths, primates (such as monkeys, apes, humans) tend to pick up objects with their hands before it reaches their mouths. We’ll explore more characters of primates in future lessons.

The discipline of biological anthropology is also called physical anthropology. The course you are taking, Introduction to Biological Anthropology, is known as Introduction to Physical Anthropology at other colleges and universities. Biological (or physical) anthropology encompasses several areas of study, or subfields, to address the kinds of information that can be learned about primates. These subfields include
- palaeoanthropology
  - the study of human evolution and prehistory
- primatology or primate behavior
  - the study of living or recently living nonhuman primate behavior and ecology ROLL OVER DEFINITION
- primate evolution
  - the study of nonhuman primate evolution
- human biology
  - the study of modern human biological variation and genetics
- skeletal biology/human osteology
  - the study of the form and functions of skeletal tissue, occasionally only human skeletal tissue (human osteology)
    - this area also has subfields
      - bioarchaeology
        - study of human osteology in a particular geographic region or cultural area
      - functional morphology
study of how the form of bone is affected by its functions in various vertebrates and primates

- forensic anthropology
  - the legal application of human osteology for human identification and trauma analysis

In the same way that biological anthropology has many subfields, it is also a part of the larger discipline called Anthropology. Traditionally in the United States anthropology has four subfields:

- cultural or social anthropology
- biological anthropology
- archaeology
- linguistics

These subfields have different areas of specialty. Cultural anthropologists study the various ways humans interact with or place barriers or filters between themselves and their environments, and how they pass this knowledge down to future generations. If the people practicing a culture no longer exist but have left material evidence of their existence, then the archaeologists will study that material evidence in order to reconstruct the culture. Linguists examine the languages that humans use today and in the past, especially to determine relationships between languages, describe how humans have migrated across the planet, and to understand how humans use language in ways unlike any other animal. Finally as we’ll see in this course, the biological anthropologists study humans and other primates as biological organisms interacting with their environments today and in the past.