

Kristina Zarenko

Anthropology

Tentative Title of Dissertation:

The Impacts of Migration and Racialization on Skeletal Manifestations of Disease in 19th and 20th Century St. Louis, Missouri

Dissertation Abstract:

My dissertation investigates the biological impacts of racialization migrants to late 19th and early 20th century St. Louis, Missouri. The process of racialization of the migrants by broader society, in which real or perceived physical differences contribute to the creation of racial categories, translated into different experiences of prejudice and inequality and therefore also variable risk of disease among different groups. I test this hypothesis by analyzing skeletal evidence of disease among German, Irish, and African American migrant groups in the Robert J. Terry Skeletal Collection. The Terry Collection is comprised of 1,726 documented low socioeconomic status individuals from historic St. Louis. By recording skeletal observations of vitamin D deficiency, trauma, dental disease, growth disruption, and tuberculosis and then contextualizing these data within their historical environment, I emphasize a more nuanced method to understanding the past by focusing on individual experiences. Little information in the historical literature exists relating these population movements around the turn of the century with racialization, health, and disease. My research employs osteology and paleopathology as well as history and ethics to provide a unique insight into this period in American history.