

International workshop

Between Techniques, Politics, and Memory: The Identification of Dead Bodies of Violence (19th–21th Century)

22-23 January 2026
Maison Française d'Oxford
2-10 Norham Road Oxford

Workshop organized as part of the research project '**Mass death, Science and Medicine: Mass Death, Science and Medicine: Handling the Corpses of War in Modern Europe (1850-1960)**' funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and based at the University of Geneva.

Organisation: Taline Garibian (University of Geneva) & Benoît Pouget (Sciences Po Aix, Mesopolhis)

This workshop aims to bring together researchers with an interest in past and present practices of identification in the context of mass violence. Participants from various backgrounds (e.g. history, anthropology, forensics, and humanitarian action) will discuss both historical approaches to identification and current issues. In particular, the workshop will explore how identification has become a key aspect of managing dead bodies in post-conflict settings and the technical, political, and memorial questions this raises.

PROGRAMME

Thursday 22 January

14.00-14.30 INTRODUCTION

14.30-15.45 BIOMETRICS AND ANTHROPOMETRY

Chair: Erica Charters (University of Oxford)

Benoît Pouget (Sciences Po Aix, Mesopolhis)

Anthropometry and Identification: The Origins of Forensic Anthropology

Pascal Adalian (University of Aix-Marseille, ADES)

Identification and Forensic Anthropology: from Technical Issues to Socio-political Challenges

Mareile Kaufmann (University of Oslo)

Biometrics in the Face of Death. The Changing Scopes of Facial Recognition and Dead Body Identification

15.45-17.00 IDENTIFICATION ON THE BATTLEFIELDS

Chair: Jeong-Ran Kim (University of Oxford)

Linda Ratschiller (University of Geneva)

Custodians of Identity: Medical Experts and the Emergence of Identification Procedures in Nineteenth Century Warfare (1850s–1870s)

Victoria Abrahamyan (University of Geneva)

Identifying the Fallen of the Great War: Allied Experience on the Western Front

17.00-17.30 BREAK

17.30-19.00 KEYNOTE

Chair: Taline Garibian (University of Geneva)

Paco Ferrandiz (Spanish National Research Council)

An uncanny forensic lab: the search for the disappeared in the Valley of Cuelgamuros

Friday 23 January

8.45-9.15 COFFEE

9.15-10.30 THE DEAD OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Chair: Benoit Pouget (Sciences Po Aix, Mesopolhis)

Laura Tradii (University of Kent)

Mobility and Malpractice – Exhuming and Identifying the Wehrmacht dead in the German Democratic Republic (1945-1990)

Taline Garibian (University of Geneva)

Naming as a Process: Administrative and Memorial Practices of Identification in Post-War France

10.30-11.00 COFFEE BREAK

11.00-12.15 MEMORIALISATION

Chair: Mark Harrison (University of Oxford)

Jeanne Teboul (University of Strasbourg)

“Names behind numbers”. From identification to memorialization of the 86 Jewish victims of a Nazi crime (Alsace, 1943)

Halina Suwalowska (University of Oxford)

Resting in Display: Ethical Dilemmas and Identification of Human Remains in Museums

12.15 CONCLUSIVE REMARKS: Elisabeth Anstett (CNRS, ADES)

13.15 Lunch at MFO

