

Sharon DeWitte

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Research Interests:

I am a biological anthropologist with interests in human osteology, paleodemography, paleoepidemiology, and infectious and epidemic diseases. My current research primarily focuses on the mortality patterns and the demographic and health consequences of medieval plague in Europe, including the Black Death of 1347-1351. By applying hazards models to data from skeletal samples (including the remains of people who died during plague epidemics), I am interested in determining how biological factors (e.g. age, sex, and health status) and social factors (e.g. gender and socioeconomic status) influence an individual's risk of death during epidemics as devastating as the Black Death, how and why those risks change over time, and how disease epidemics affected demographic characteristics in past human populations. I have recently also applied similar models to collaborative investigations of the effect of Roman Conquest on health in Britain and the relationship between oral health and general health in past populations. I am also interested in the coevolution between humans and pathogens, and I am currently collaborating on a project that is using ancient DNA approaches to examine the identity and molecular evolution of the causative agent of medieval plague.



Recent Publications:

- in press Redfern RC and **DeWitte SN**. Status and health in Roman Dorset: the effect of status on risk of mortality in post-Conquest populations. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*.
- 2011 Redfern RC, and **DeWitte SN**. 2011. A new approach to the study of Romanization in Britain: a regional perspective of cultural change in late Iron Age and Roman Dorset using the Siler and Gompertz-Makeham models of mortality. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 144:269-285.
- 2010 **DeWitte SN**. Age patterns of mortality during the Black Death in London, A.D. 1349-1350. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 37:3394-3400.

- 2010 **DeWitte SN.** Sex differences in frailty in medieval England. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 143:285-297.
- 2010 **DeWitte SN** and Bekvalac J. Oral health and frailty in the medieval English cemetery of St. Mary Graces. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 142:341-354.
- 2009 **DeWitte SN.** The effect of sex on risk of mortality during the Black Death in London, A.D. 1349-1350. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 139:222-234.
- 2009 Gage TB, and **DeWitte SN.** What do we know about the agricultural demographic transition? *Current Anthropology* 50:649-655.
- 2008 **DeWitte SN,** and Wood JW. Selectivity of Black Death mortality with respect to pre-existing health. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 105:1436-1441.