



## Forensic History: Crimes, Frauds, and Scandals

*Elizabeth A. Murray*

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## Forensic History: Crimes, Frauds, and Scandals Elizabeth A. Murray

Modern history is filled with terrible crimes, baffling hoaxes, and seedy scandals. The infamous Jack the Ripper slayings. The alleged survival of Anastasia Romanov, the youngest daughter of the murdered Tsar. Seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong's public fall from grace. The Chicago Tylenol poisonings and the copycat crimes that followed. Step into the world of forensic science and study the most fascinating crimes and mysteries from the last two centuries in the 24 lectures of Forensic History: Crimes, Frauds, and Scandals . Professor Murray, a forensic anthropologist with nearly 30 years of experience in the field, has crafted lectures that are a remarkable blend of storytelling and science - a whirlwind tour that takes you from the gas-lit streets of Victorian London to small-town America. As you journey around the world and into the past, you'll re-examine modern history's great crimes and scandals using the tools and insights of forensic science. In doing so, you'll learn how cutting-edge advancements in science and technology are applied to investigations and how to evaluate evidence and think like a forensic scientist. Using her extensive background in the field and her skill at weaving riveting stories, Professor Murray invites you peer over the shoulders of investigators as they examine some of the most famous crimes in history, as well as cases that shed light on what happens when the justice system goes awry. Whether they're controversial or by-the-book, solved or unsolved, hot or cold, these cases are an opportunity to gain deeper insight into the historic and cutting-edge methods and tools forensic scientists use on the job. Having participated in hundreds of investigations in America and abroad, Professor Murray intersperses these historical examinations with some of her own, equally intriguing, personal experiences.

Please note there is a 293 page book included in this course so please do not Notobook again.

## Forensic History: Crimes, Frauds, and Scandals Details

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Author : Elizabeth A. Murray

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# From Reader Review Forensic History: Crimes, Frauds, and Scandals for online ebook

## Amy Sturgis says

I enjoyed these twenty-four audio lectures by Professor Elizabeth A. Murray very much. Previously for The Great Courses she has offered "Trails of Evidence: How Forensic Science Works," and that's the series you should get if you want a methodical tour through the field. "Forensic History" is not so clearly organized, and it's not a "Forensics 101" course; it's a series of stories about past and recent cases. With cases from history, Murray focuses first on forensic science at the time and then on how today's science might have cracked these unsolved mysteries. With recent cases, Murray explains how cutting-edge forensic science either solved the cases immediately or later overturned and changed the outcome of the cases.

Murray is a terrific storyteller, and this helped me to overcome the lack of chronological order in her lecture topics and the sometimes scattershot organization of her talks. Some topics proved more interesting than others. I was especially captivated by her discussion of genocide and how forensic anthropologists (and other forensic scientists) today are working on behalf of human rights against great odds and at considerable personal risk.

The lecture topics are as follows:

- 1 The Infamous Jack the Ripper
- 2 Analyzing the Black Dahlia Murder
- 3 Dissecting Hollywood Deaths
- 4 Decomposition and Confusing Interpretations
- 5 Lizzie Borden and the Menendez Brothers
- 6 The Tylenol Murders
- 7 Copycats and Hoaxes
- 8 Frauds and Forgeries
- 9 Blood Doping and Other Sports Scandals
- 10 Bad Boys of U.S. Politics
- 11 Criminals of the Wild, Wild West
- 12 Investigating Incredible Bank Heists
- 13 How Reliable Is Eyewitness Testimony?
- 14 The Truth behind False Confessions
- 15 Crooked Cops and Bad Convictions
- 16 Guilty until Proven Innocent
- 17 Political Assassinations
- 18 Mysteries of the Romanov Family
- 19 Forensics of Genocide
- 20 The Nazis and the Witch of Buchenwald
- 21 The Spies Have It
- 22 Motive and Kidnapping
- 23 Identification Matters
- 24 The Past, Present, and Future of Forensics

These lectures might have been more systematically organized, but they were incredibly interesting, entertaining, and instructive. I learned new information and appreciated Murray's personal experience and

insights into the field.

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### **Cloak88 says**

Fun and informative.

Forensic History is a collection of 24 30min lectures about the history of forensic sciences and how crimes are solved using them. Most lectures are at a case by case basis or on a single subject. The subjects themselves range from Jack the ripper to fingerprint analysis. The approach is a bit scattershot, but highly entertaining and full of anecdotes.

A perfect collection for those interesting in forensic sciences, crime, or a ton of fun trivia information.

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### **Irena says**

I initially expected to find more in depth material on forensics in this course, but the content is in complete accordance with the title: Forensic History. Great Courses have another course on forensics by the same professor which is more about forensics proper (Trails of Evidence: How Forensic Science Works). Forensic History is full of fascinating stories about real cases which showcase the development of forensic science and demonstrate its different applications. Extremely interesting, delivered in concise and engaging form.

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### **Lyn says**

I'll just add to other reviewers that that the title is not about forensic history per se. It is a random collection of interesting crime stories that touch upon equally random scientific forensic techniques. There is no cohesive progression or order to the stories, so I don't think it really can be called "forensic history." It's mostly a collection of titillating "true crime" stories. Based on the title, I was expecting something more academic (and because it is The Teaching Company), but the random stories were interesting, so I'll give it three stars.

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### **Jim says**

These 24 Lectures are light on science; far more popularized & sensationalized than I was hoping for. I was familiar with most of her examples through other books, often in far better detail. She mentions some of the authors of these by name it often comes across as name dropping (my friend, so&so...) & then she omits others. For instance, while she mentions The University of Tennessee Anthropological Research Facility, AKA "The Body Farm" or "Death's Acre", she never mentions Bill Bass the creator of the facility & one of the early & leading forensic anthropologists. It made me wonder if there was some professional jealousy there.

**2 - Analyzing the Black Dahlia Murder -****3 - Dissecting Hollywood Deaths -**

I was not thrilled by these 3 lectures. I could have learned more faster reading a Wikipedia article & almost quit listening. If I don't comment on a lecture below, it's because it falls into this category.

**4 - Decomposition and Confusing Interpretations** - This kept me listening. She did a decent job discussing some of the issues, but it was covered better in Death's Acre: Inside the Legendary Forensic Lab the Body Farm Where the Dead Do Tell Tales.

**5 - Lizzie Borden and the Menendez Brothers -****6 - The Tylenol Murders -****7 - Copycats and Hoaxes -****8 - Frauds and Forgeries -****9 - Blood Doping and Other Sports Scandals -****10 - Bad Boys of U.S. Politics -****11 - Criminals of the Wild, Wild West -****12 - Investigating Incredible Bank Heists -**

**13 - How Reliable is Eyewitness Testimony?** - concentrated on one recent case, but that provided a very good example for many of the subtle issues with this, especially in our legal system.

**14 - The Truth behind False Confessions -****15 - Crooked Cops and Bad Convictions -****16 - Guilty until Proven Innocent -**

The above were biased. Certainly there have been abuses, but she is outraged that police are allowed to lie to suspects during questioning even as she points out how the legal limits were broken. She never points out how well this technique works in eliciting information & her declaration that she is sure most police do a fine job just comes off as mealy-mouthed. She mentions issues with fingerprints, but never got into the specifics. From one book, I was led to understand that comparisons are often subjective & the law isn't clear on what constitutes a 'match'. Just like in eyewitness accounts, even experts can be fooled into seeing what isn't there. She fails to mention this completely.

**17 - Political Assassinations**

**18 - Mysteries of the Romanov Family** - was covered far better in Dead Men Do Tell Tales: The Strange and Fascinating Cases of a Forensic Anthropologist. As she mentions, Maples was one of the investigators.

**19 - Forensics of Genocide** - Again, covered far better by Maples.

**20 - The Nazis and the Witch of Buchenwald -****21 - The Spies Have It -****22 - Motive and Kidnapping -****23 - Identification Matters -**

**24 - The Past, Present, and Future of Forensics** - she finally gets into a bit more of the science here, but it's still very light.

I would have liked these a LOT better if she had concentrated more on the science of forensics & how it has progressed within the lectures, but she skips all over in time for sensations. Over & over she mentions how a method wasn't available or had been refined, but is now. That's nice, but exactly what makes or made it available? What studies have been done on the accuracy &/or contamination of micro DNA samples? Just

how have computers helped with IAFIS? Has it caused issues? She finally answers this last a little in the last lecture, but still doesn't delve into the detail.

Worse, she never discusses or even mentions the economics of such methods in her examples. It's great that a test can figure out the DNA now from a few cells, but how expensive is that both in time & money? How often is it done? She's in the business, so I expected such answers from her.

Has the system just been overwhelmed by new methods until they've become a way for the defense to cast reasonable doubt? All I really know is that several year old rape kits still haven't been processed in quite a few jurisdictions & are often tainted by the time anyone gets around to them.

Overall, this would be a good introductory course. While I hardly feel like an expert, it didn't get into specifics enough for me.

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### **J.V. Seem says**

I was very excited when I started this lecture series. True crime and crime-solving are such fascinating topics, and I expected to be hooked on this. Sadly not.

First of all, the individual lectures are really short. This wouldn't have mattered so much if not for the fact that the lecturer often discusses several cases in each, which means she barely scratches the surface in any of them, and doesn't have the chance to show that she possesses any particular knowledge.

This lecture also doesn't give you any faith in forensics; it actually discusses that surprisingly little, barely at all, considering that's what this series of lectures is supposedly about. She tells the stories of different cases, and then mentions the scientific methods used right at the end, almost like a PS or an aside.

What's strange is, she also chooses the most well-known cases of the world to talk about, and since she touches on them so lightly, she told me very few things I didn't already know. From Jack the Ripper to Lance Armstrong's drug scandal, that's all been hashed out before, and in the case of the latter, it's also plain, old-fashioned boring material.

Neither does the lecturer seem to be conducting these lectures in a very professional manner. She uses words like "loser" to describe individuals, and sometimes condemns others who have been acquitted of their alleged crimes. That's not your job, lady.

All in all, a very disappointing listen; a complete waste of time that I only finished out of spite, so I could write it this bad review. ...it's a no from me.

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### **Bettie? says**

Description: *Modern history is filled with terrible crimes, baffling hoaxes, and seedy scandals. The infamous Jack the Ripper slayings. The alleged survival of Anastasia Romanov, the youngest daughter of the murdered Tsar. Seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong's public fall from grace. The Chicago Tylenol*

*poisonings and the copycat crimes that followed.*

*These events have the power to captivate us with their mystery and shock us with views into the darkest parts of the human psyche. As a society, we seek resolution of these crimes and scandals, to bring their perpetrators to justice and hopefully prevent such events from occurring again.*

*Step into the world of forensic science and study the most fascinating historical crimes and mysteries from the last two centuries in Forensic History: Crimes, Frauds, and Scandals. Delivered by acclaimed Professor Elizabeth A. Murray of Mount St. Joseph University, a forensic anthropologist with nearly 30 years of experience in the field, these 24 lectures are a remarkable blend of storytelling and science—a whirlwind tour that takes you from the gas-lit streets of Victorian London to the mountains of Puerto Rico to small-town America. As you journey around the world and into the past, you'll re-examine modern history's great crimes and scandals using the tools and insights of forensic science. In doing so, you'll learn how cutting-edge advancements in science and technology are applied to investigations and how to evaluate evidence and think like a forensic scientist.*

Lecture 1: Jack the Ripper (1888)

Lecture 2: Analyzing The Black Dahlia Murder (1947)

Lecture 3: Dissecting Hollywood corpses: apparently three men who played superman went on to suffer unusual deaths.

George Reeves died at age 45 from a single gunshot, which remains a polarizing topic; the official finding was suicide, but some believe that he was murdered or the victim of an accidental shooting (1959)

The baby Kal-El: Quigley died at the age of fourteen after inhaling solvents (1991) Superman Curse is established.

Crane had been bludgeoned to death with a weapon that was never identified, though investigators believed it to be a camera tripod. An electrical cord had been tied around his neck.

Bruce Lee as sidekick (pun intended)'Kato' to the Green Hornet. Lee's iconic status and untimely demise (1973) fed many wild rumors and theories. These included murder involving the Triads and a supposed curse on him and his family. Bruce Lee Vs Chuck Norris (Way of the Dragon) Climactic Fight to Death

Brandon Lee died of a gunshot wound on March 31, 1993 at the filming studio in Wilmington, North Carolina, at the age of 28, after an accidental shooting on set of The Crow.

Lecture 4: Decomposition and Confusing Interpretations

Lecture 5: Lizzie Borden and the Menendez Brothers

Abby and Andrew Borden were murdered at their home on the morning of Thursday, August 4, 1892.

Lizzie Borden took an axe  
And gave her mother forty whacks.  
When she saw what she had done,  
She gave her father forty-one.

On August 20, 1989, Lyle and Erik were 21 and 18 years old, respectively.

Lecture 6: Chicago Tylenol murders (1982): a series of poisoning deaths resulting from drug tampering.

Lecture 7: Copycats and Hoaxes

Piltdown Man: a paleoanthropological hoax in which bone fragments were presented as the fossilised remains of a previously unknown early human. (1912)

John Stonehouse faked his own death (1974)

Lecture 8: Frauds and Forgeries

Elmyr de Hory - in 1976, de Hory committed suicide before facing extradition to France to face fraud charges.

Irving admitted that his book was a hoax. Time magazine dubbed him “Con Man of the Year.”

Lecture 9: Blood Doping and Other Sports Scandals. [What a topical subject.]

Lecture 10: Bad Boys of US Politics

Warren G Harding

Lecture 11: Criminals of the Wild, Wild West

Lecture 12: Investigating Incredible Banks Heists

Lecture 13: How Reliable is Eyewitness Testimony

Lecture 14: The Truth Behind False Confessions

Lecture 15: Crooked Cops and Bad Convictions

Lecture 16: Innocent until Proven Guilty

Lecture 17: Political Assassinations

Lecture 18: The Romanov family mysteries

Lecture 19: Forensics of Genocide

Armenian genocide: Centenary of massacre of 1.5 million by Ottoman Turks

Lecture 20: The Nazis and the Witch of Buchenwald

Lecture 21: The Spies Have It

Lecture 22: Motive and Kidnapping

Lecture 23: Identification Matters

Lecture 24: The Past, Present, and Future of Forensics

There is nothing here I would call scholastic, the delivery is as shallow news stories read from an armchair. Interesting enough as a general history yet I wanted to be taught something. If you are interested in forensic science at work then I can recommend FutureLearn for their forensic courses they put on a couple of times a year. The last one was Val McDermid in connection with Dundee uni and was very good.

My TTCs:

4\* History of Science 1700 - 1900

5\* A History of England from the Tudors to the Stuarts

TR Secrets of Sleep

TR Turning Points in Modern History

TR Apocalypse

4\* Myth in Human History

3\* A History of Russia

TR The Classics

5\* London

4\* Re-thinking Our Past

4\* The Vikings

5\* Lost Worlds of South America

3\* Rome and the Barbarians

TR Living the French Revolution and the Age of Napoleon

OH History of Science: Antiquity to 1700

TR Albert Einstein: Physicist, Philosopher, Humanitarian

TR Will to Power: The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche

5\* From Monet To Van Gogh: A History Of Impressionism

5\* History of the English language

TR The Late Middle Ages

3\* Great American Music: Broadway Musicals  
5\* Classics of Russian Literature  
5\* Lost Worlds of South America  
2\* The Skeptic's Guide to the Great Books  
2\* Thomas Aquinas  
CR Forensic History

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### **Graeme Roberts says**

Forensic History: Crimes, Frauds, and Scandals was somewhat disappointing, and a betrayal of the high quality standards of *The Teaching Company*, which usually presents excellent lectures by distinguished professors and scholars.

Elizabeth A. Murray is a forensic anthropologist. I mistakenly expected more forensic science, and was disappointed that the cases often simply involved banal retelling of what happened, without much scientific insight. It felt like a protracted bus tour of American crime, with occasional violence or prurience (like the Black Dahlia murder in Los Angeles). Ms. Murray's prose is serviceable but inelegant; as tour guide her delivery is flat and midwestern. Too much pedestrian retelling of the facts and too little real scholarship on altogether too many cases.

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### **Demelza says**

#### **This was a really fun Great Course to listen to. It was super informative, 4 stars.**

I listened to this on audiobook and thought Murray did an excellent job of recalling the cases she had worked on. I'm crazy picky about audiobook narrators but Murray was clear and easy to follow.

I really enjoyed this book because of the variety that it gave me. There were discussions of crimes I'd known about before, e.g. The Black Dahlia, Jack the Ripper and cases like in the cold case chapter that I'd never heard of in all my true crime podcast listening!

Each chapter was well laid out and I didn't get lost in any forensic science jargon along the way, which is so important when someone is introducing or discussing a new field to someone jargon must be avoided or at least well explained!!

I definitely can see myself purchasing more Great Courses audiobooks in the future and even re-listening to this in the future.

The only thing that made this a 4 star instead of a 5 star was that some of the chapters were not as gripping as others. This may be due to personal preference I'm not sure, nonetheless some were harder to get through even if they are all only half an hour.

#### **Overall, great narration and super interesting cases I hadn't come across before.**

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## **Travis says**

If you want a very detailed description and explanation of these cases then the course isn't for you. If you aren't familiar with a lot of the cases and a briefer explanation, or kind of introduction to them is fine then give it a listen. I wasn't that familiar and really enjoyed it.

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## **Brad says**

This book reviews how forensic scientists approach crimes of all types and ages - from murders in the 1800s to cybercrime of the modern era. It's split into 24 "lectures", one for each type of crime. I wasn't sure what to expect when I started the book - I suppose I thought it would only focus on detailed forensic evidence in murders, but instead, it was a less detailed survey of forensic approaches for different situations given through dozens of examples, often from famous crimes.

The narrator is a forensic scientist who prepared all the lectures and teaches based on real cases. Those elements make this book "stick." The murders and heists really happened, and she talks about the real details. It's not sensationalized by the media or fictionalized by TV. There's no bombast - just the facts, ma'am. And, as a result, some of the topics she reviews are gruesome and difficult to hear. Unfortunately, they are all true based on the actions of fellow humans.

I listen to audiobooks while driving - usually in 20-30 minute spurts. With so many 30 minute lectures, I sometimes got confused from one story to the next - whereas in one long novel, I do better at maintaining the storyline.

All in all, yes, I recommend this one. It's not a sensationalized look at policework. I wouldn't be ready to take a final, either. I listened to be informed and have a nonfictional look at the work of scientists who have a tough job. It definitely delivered.

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## **Clare says**

Last year I listened to a book by Molly Lefebure who was the mortuary assistant to Professor Paul Simpson, the first Home Office appointed forensic pathologist in London in 1942. I enjoyed reading about early forensics which is why I ordered this book.

Forensic History was split into 24 half hour lectures. The main problem was Dr Murray spoke about many different cases within each 30 minute lecture. It may have been better if she stuck with one case in each lecture. Not all the lectures were based in true crime, so I was more interested in some lectures more than others.

My favourites were:

Jack The Ripper  
Analysing the Black Dahlia murder  
Dissecting Hollywood corpses  
Lizzie Borden and the Menendez murders

Chicago Tynelol murders  
How reliable Is eyewitness testimony  
The truth behind false confessions  
The Nazis and the witch of Buchenwald  
The Romanof family mystery

For me I was interested in how the criminals were caught using forensics, and was pleased she did not go heavily into the science aspect.

This was a fun informative read for true crime fans

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### **Petra CigareX says**

No stone unturned in this comprehensive treatise on forensics. It's very interesting, lots of cases to illustrate different aspects of forensics. The author has an excellent way of imparting detailed scientific knowledge and makes you feel you really learned a lot.

It's really a series of lectures, good for half hour commutes. Since I live on a tiny island and going from nearly the top of the mountain down to sea level where my shop is takes only 8 mins, each lecture went on for days. Sometimes when a book is very good, as this one was, that's an advantage.

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### **Alex Shrugged says**

I really wanted to like these lectures. Perhaps my expectations were too high. I was hoping for a more detailed forensic analysis from the point of view of scientific progress. While there was some of that, it was mostly a recounting of various crimes in graphic detail and generally how they caught the perpetrators or determined that a person was wrongly convicted.

I remember most of these crimes when they happened. For the older crimes, I've read about them in other works. For me, this ended up being a listing of crimes, with very little added to my knowledge base. These lectures were just skimming over the basic info.

Any modesty issues? Well... the same issues that one would have listening to a news report about a terrible rape or murder. The first crime was described was the Jack the Ripper serial murders. He murdered prostitutes in exceptionally ugly ways. I almost gave up on these lectures because the subject was so horrible, but once I got past that lecture the other ones were tolerable. (Tolerable, meaning I didn't want to hurl immediately.)

I doubt I will listen to this series of lectures again. Not worth my time.

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## **Kirsti says**

I saw this and thought, "I have to get it because it has all my favorite words in the title."

These are short lectures that briefly touch on how science and technology help us understand more about murders, poisonings, frauds, forgeries, genocides, and other crimes and scandals. Some of these are cases that Murray has worked on, while others are famous cases of the past (Lizzie Borden, various bank robberies, etc.).

Because these lectures are for entertainment only, they give limited information rather than exploring any one issue in depth.

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