



UNC CHARLOTTE  
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Center for Professional & Applied Ethics

**MARCH 19**  
**11:30am - 12:45pm**

**CONE 113**

**Please RSVP:**

<https://forms.gle/7tmnCOLTrYMV8rJw8>



**ELIZABETH JONES**

# **Ancient DNA: The History of a Celebrity Science**

**ABSTRACT:** The search for DNA from fossils—a practice known worldwide as “Ancient DNA Research”—is a fast-paced, high-impact, and high-profile science. Researchers have recovered genetic material from woolly mammoths to ancient humans and Neanderthals in an attempt to refine or even rewrite our understanding of evolutionary history. The discipline also captures public curiosity because of hype, inspired by both media reports and scientific research, that DNA may one day be used to bring extinct species, such as dinosaurs, back to life. Drawing on archival material and original interviews with over 50 scientists, I examine ancient DNA research's disciplinary development from the 1980s to today. First, I argue it evolved into a discipline under the influence of intense public interest and extreme media exposure as it coincided with and was catalyzed into the media spotlight by the book and movie *Jurassic Park*. Second, I argue it evolved into a “celebrity science,” a new concept and framework for understanding the practice of science in light of the science communication movement and in a world of modern media.

**BIO:** Elizabeth Jones is a Science Historian with a Ph.D. in Science and Technology Studies from University College London. She holds a M.A. in the History and Philosophy of Science from Florida State University and dual-degrees in History and Philosophy from North Carolina State University. Jones' research specializes in the contemporary history of paleontology, ancient DNA research, and de-extinction research. Her research overlaps with work in communication studies, media studies, and celebrity studies. Currently, Jones is a Postdoctoral Research Scholar working on an NSF grant studying data ethics in citizen science at North Carolina State University. She is writing her first book, *Ancient DNA: The History and Celebrity of a Science*, under contract with Yale University Press.