

Anthropology 4931
Death: A Social, Cultural, and Biological Perspective
T/Th 8:00-9:15am, 51/1210
Spring 2008

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COURSE SYLLABUS:

This document is the syllabus for *Death: A Social, Cultural, & Biological Perspective* (ANT4931). As such it is the controlling document for the class. Below you will find most of the information you need to successfully pass this course. **You are responsible** for knowing all the information presented in this document. **I will not accept any excuses** that involve you not reading this syllabus and understanding its contents.

COURSE PREREQUISITES: Background in anthropology or sociology and an intellectual interest in the explanation or interpretation of mortuary ritual, death and dying, end-of-life issues, and mourning and grieving behavior in human culture and society.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

As Benjamin Franklin noted, nothing is certain in this world but death and taxes. The primary goal of this course is to explore the social, cultural, and biological nature of human death and dying. Examples of topics that will be covered include: mortuary rituals and funerary behavior, the cultural construction of death, the effects of death on the social fabric, mourning and bereavement, hospice and end-of-life issues, and medical and ethical issues relating to death. Throughout the course, students will examine the fascinating variety of social and cultural responses to the biological fact of death. In doing so, they will be exposed to the Anthropological and Sociological literature that seeks to explain or interpret that tremendous variety. The course will be cross-cultural, holistic, and bio-cultural in its outlook and will require students to make conceptual connections between theoretical literature and empirical observations.

COURSE GOALS:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Discuss the social, cultural, & biological nature of death
- Describe the breadth of death related behavior exhibited by humans
- Engage in high-level, constructive and critical dialog regarding Anthropological and Sociological theories and concepts used to explain or interpret human behavior surrounding death and dying

COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE:

This course is accompanied and supported by a Blackboard website. Each student officially enrolled in the course will have access to this site. You will be required to retrieve readings from the Blackboard site, so it is extremely important that you know how to access the Blackboard site and familiarize yourself with its content.

COURSE READINGS:

There is no required text or textbook for this course. All required readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site as Adobe PDF files. Make sure the computer you are using to access the readings has the free Adobe PDF reader installed. Some of the files are large, so it is recommended that you use a high bandwidth connection to retrieve them. The readings are listed on the course schedule below and must be completed prior to the assigned due date (the Monday of the week for which they are assigned). Completing the required readings on time will significantly improve your chances of receiving a high grade in the course.

Suggested Reading Strategies:

- Always consider the historical and theoretical context of the author(s)
- Take note of the goals or purpose of everything you read
- Critically consider the perspective and bias of the author(s)

- Read with a dictionary....take notes....put things in your own words...cut through the jargon
- Write down questions that you might have or make note of passages that you don't understand
- Recognize that not everything that you will read is well-written and profoundly important...some of it is less relevant or important...consider how you can identify the author's most significant points
- The reading load for this course is extremely heavy....read smart, not hard...take in the whole reading and seriously assess what you need to get from every reading

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADE DETERMINANTS:

Final Grading Scheme:

<u>Criteria/Item</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Value per</u>	<u>Total value</u>
Reading Notes	10	6% each	60%
Quizzes	3	5% each	15%
Final Oral Exam	1	15% each	15%
Course Participation			<u>10%</u>
TOTAL			100%

Formal Reading Notes: Students are required to complete and turn in to the instructor written reading notes that provide a record of their understanding of ten (10) of the required course readings. Each reading note will constitute 6% of your final grade for a total of 60%. An Adobe PDF form to be used for these notes will be provided on the Blackboard site. Complete forms must be turned in on the Tuesday of the week for which the relevant reading is required. Only one form will be accepted from each student each week and no late forms will be accepted.

Quizzes: 3 unannounced quizzes will be administered throughout the semester. These quizzes will consist of questions that you will need to respond to in a short essay. Students will be allowed to utilize their texts and notes during these quizzes. Each quiz will be worth 5% of your final grade for a total of 15% of your final grade. No make-up quizzes will be given without either prior consent or appropriate justification. You must communicate to me your interest in taking a make-up within 2 days of the quiz date. If you request a make-up quiz, be prepared to provide me with documentation. Documentation must be dated, as well as relevant and specific to your excuse.

Final Oral Exam: During the final week of the semester, the class as a whole will engage in an oral exam in which each student will be asked a question regarding one topic that was discussed during the semester. Students will be given a short period to prepare their answer and will then be required to provide that answer to the class. The class will be provided with a list of all possible questions prior to the exam period. Each student's performance during this exam will count as 15% of their final grade.

Participation: Participation in class discussions, debates, and activities is required and will influence your grade. 10% of your final grade will be based upon your participation. Thus, lack of participation will negatively affect your grade. I will strive to create a class atmosphere that is congenial, enjoyable, and relaxed. However, I expect all students to treat each other and me with courtesy and respect. All reasonable opinions regarding course materials will be acceptable for discussion and comment. No opinions or speech which discriminates against or is derogatory towards others on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, or disability will be tolerated. Students expressing such opinions will be asked to leave the classroom immediately. I reserve the right to re-direct or curtail discussions that diverge from the course goals or lecture topic. I am happy to answer questions about the day's topics during class (though I may ask that you defer your question till a more appropriate part of the class period). You are also welcome to e-mail me questions.

Attendance: Attendance to class periods is not mandatory; however it is necessary for successful completion of the course. A great deal of the learning of this course will occur during class period discussions. These discussions will be the only way you can learn some of the important information you need to succeed in this course. If you must miss a class period, it is your responsibility to make sure you find out the information that you missed. I suggest you find a classmate at the beginning of the semester who is willing to share their notes with you if you do miss a class (and vice versa). Do not ask me to provide a copy of my lecture notes or slides. Late arrival to class is disruptive and impolite to both the other students and me. Therefore, I reserve the right to deduct points from your final grade and habitual tardiness will result in a lowered final grade.

Extra Credit: No extra credit projects will be available. The only way to receive a passing grade in this course is to complete the course requirements. Do not assume that you can "blow off" assignments and then expect me to

provide you with a way to improve your grade. Treat each assignment as though it will have an effect upon your final grade in the course (because it will).

Reading notes and quizzes, as well as the final oral exam, will be graded on a 10 point scale. Each student will also be given a grade (also on a 10 point scale) for their course participation. A Microsoft Excel™ grade calculator will be posted on Blackboard for student use. Final letter grades for the course will be based upon the following categories: 100-93 (A), 92-90 (A-), 89-87 (B+), 86-83 (B), 82-80 (B-), 79-77 (C+), 76-70 (C), 69-60 (D), ≤59 (F). I will not discuss individual grades via e-mail or the phone. You must see me in person to discuss the specifics of your grade.

Any student found engaging in academic misconduct (as defined by the University of North Florida) will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. The current student handbook contains a detailed discussion of the University's policy on academic misconduct. Violations of academic integrity include; cheating, fabrication or falsification of information or documents, plagiarism (presentation of another's work as one's own), abuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic misconduct. Students may be subject to any and all of the following; academic counseling, reprimand, a failing grade for the assignment that involved the misconduct, a failing grade for the course, and referral of the behavior to the Departmental Chair or appropriate Dean. The student handbook outlines procedures for students wishing to appeal the academic decisions of the Professor.

The United States government, the University of North Florida, and I are all committed to guaranteeing a learning environment in which reasonable accommodations are made for individuals with disabilities. In accordance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1999, any students in need of assistance or alternative learning arrangements are encouraged to contact either me or the University's Disabled Services Program office (located in Building 10, Room 1201, 620-2769 Voice/TDD, 620-3874 FAX, URL: <http://www.unf.edu/dept/disabled-services/>).

Video/Audio/Photographic Recording: All course lectures are the intellectual property of the course instructor. Unauthorized recording (audio, video, or photographic) of lectures is strictly prohibited and students who engage in such recording may be subject to legal action.

COURSE LAB ASSISTANT:

An advanced Anthropology major, who has already completed this course, will act as laboratory assistant for the class. The lab assistant is there to assist you in all aspects of this course. If you have questions about course information, seminar topics, the readings, quizzes, the final oral exam, or anthropology in general, you are strongly encouraged to ask the lab assistant. If you need advice about preparing assignments or studying for quizzes/exams you should feel free to contact the lab assistant as she has already successfully passed this course. The lab assistant will be holding office hours (as noted above) or can be reached via e-mail. Please identify yourself as a student of this class when communicating with the lab assistant. Additionally, the lab assistant will be leading classroom discussions and working in concert with the professor to lead class.

While the lab assistant will be assisting with the course, all official grading of enrolled students will be completed by the professor and the lab assistant will not have access to student grades. Additionally, although the lab assistant is an extremely important resource for students, you should not hesitate to see or speak with (or e-mail) the professor for assistance, advice, or for consultation about your grade.

E-MAIL:

E-mail is often the best method for communicating with me and I encourage you to e-mail me whenever you may have a question, concern, or comment. E-mailing me is also an excellent way for you to make sure I remember something. (I will often ask students to e-mail me so that I have a tangible reminder of what I might need to do to assist them.) Please make sure you identify yourself (full name) and which of my courses you are taking. If I do not know who you are, then I can not assist you. Make sure your return e-mail address is correct and operational. If my reply bounces, I will not try again. Use proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, complete sentences, etc. DO NOT use text-messaging abbreviations. If I can not understand your message, then I can not assist you. If you are writing an e-mail longer than a paragraph or two, then consider speaking to me in person. I respond to all e-mails as quickly as possible. In some cases this may take a day or two. Do not assume that I received your message unless you receive a reply back from me. Please do not forget that UNF e-mail is a public form a communication. As such, I do not discuss the specifics of anyone's grades via e-mail.

CELL PHONES, PAGERS, & OTHER WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES: All such devices must be turned off during class periods. Consistent disregard of this course rule will result in a lowered course participation grade.

Students who require an exception to this rule may discuss the situation with me. Anyone caught using any of these items during a quiz will be treated as if they are cheating.

OFFICE HOURS: My office hours are listed above. If you need to meet with me and can not meet during these times, please contact me. I am happy to arrange a time to meet that is convenient for both of us. Please take advantage of my office hours to come see me and discuss questions or concerns you might have. If you are interested in majoring or minoring in Anthropology, my office hours are a good time to discuss this with me. It is sometimes necessary for me to cancel my scheduled office hours. If so, I will do my best to make sure I make this announcement in class. If I am not in my office during scheduled office hours, or am busy with other students, please e-mail me so that I can arrange a time for us to meet. Your time is valuable and your questions and concerns are important to me. I am committed to making sure I am available to offer any help that I can. *If you wish to discuss the specifics of your grade, you must meet with me personally. I will not discuss your grades with you via e-mail or the phone.*

Tips for Successfully Completing this Course: (1) complete the required readings, (2) complete and hand in the ten required formal reading notes, (3) attend all class periods and participate in classroom discussions.

COURSE SCHEDULE (This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.):

Week	Date	Topic	Required Readings
week 1	8-Jan	Introduction	
	10-Jan	What is Death?	Veatch 1972; <i>President's Commission</i> 1981; Russell 1957
week 2	15-Jan	Decomposition	Kastenbaum 2007, Chapter 3; Mims 1998, Chapter 2
	17-Jan	Body ID & Autopsy	Galloway et al. 1989; Mims 1998, Chapter 5; Weiss-Krejci 2005;
week 3	22-Jan	Burial I	Raineville 1999; Guillen 2005; Beck 2005
	24-Jan	Burial II	Malville 2005; McNeill 2005
week 4	29-Jan	Mummification	Mims 1998, Chapter 12; Kroeber 1927
	31-Jan	Other Corpse Disposals	Binford 1971
week 5	5-Feb	Uses of Corpses	Rakita & Buikstra 2005a; Buikstra 1995
	7-Feb	Basics of Funerary Behavior	McGuire 1988; van Gennep 1908; Hertz 1907
week 6	12-Feb	Cultural Construction of Death	Metcalf & Huntington 1991, Chapter 4; Rakita & Buikstra 2005b
	14-Feb	Mortuary Rituals I	Morris 1991; Glazier 1984; Feeley-Harnik 1984
week 7	19-Feb	Mortuary Rituals II	Aries 1977; Geertz 1973
	21-Feb	Ancestor Cults & Worship	Cannon 1989, 2005
week 8	26-Feb	Changing Funeral Behavior I	Conklin 1995; Oakdale 2005
	28-Feb	Changing Funeral Behavior II	Bloch & Parry 1982
week 9	4-Mar	Cannibalism	Watson 1982; Crowder 2000
	6-Mar	Fertility, Sacrifice, & Renewal	Riley 1983; Brandes 1997
week 10	11-Mar	Death & Society	Mitford 1998, Chapter 2 & 3
	13-Mar	Mortuary Industry I	Mitford 1998, Chapter 5 & 6
week 11	18-Mar	Spring Break	
	20-Mar	Spring Break	
week 12	25-Mar	Mortuary Industry II	Simon et al. 1980; Greeley & Hout 1999
	27-Mar	Wills & Inheritance	Idler & Kasl 1992; Freud 1917
week 13	1-Apr	Death & Religion	Wilkinson 2000; Garrard 2000
	3-Apr	Mourning	Ryan 2000; Mitford 1998, Chapter 8
week 14	8-Apr	Palliative Care & Hospice	Bradbury 2001; Eyre 2001
	10-Apr	Memorialization	Kushner & Sterk 2005; Emanuel 1999
week 15	15-Apr	Mass Disaster & Genocide	Shay 1985; Bradbury 1996
	17-Apr	Suicide & Euthanasia	
week 16	22-Apr	Final Oral Exams	
	24-Apr	Final Oral Exams	
Finals Week		Final Oral Exams	

COURSE READINGS

- Aries, P.
1987 [1977] *The Hour of Our Death*. Penguin, London.
- Beck, L. A.
2005 Secondary Burial Practices in Hohokam Cremations. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, edited by G. F. M. Rakita, J. E. Buikstra, L. A. Beck and S. R. Williams, pp. 150-154. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Binford, L. R.
1971 Mortuary Practices: Their Study and Their Potential. In *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*, edited by J. A. Brown, pp. 6-29. Society for American Archaeology, Washington, D.C.
- Bloch, M. and J. Parry
1982 Introduction to Death & the Regeneration of Life. In *Death & the Regeneration of Life*, edited by M. Bloch and J. Parry, pp. 1-44. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bradbury, M.
1996 Representations of 'Good' and 'Bad' Death Among Deathworkers and the Bereaved. In *Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Death, Dying and Disposal*, edited by G. Howarth and P. C. Jupp, pp. 84-95. St. Martin's Press, New York.

2001 Forget Me Not: Memorialization in Cemeteries and Crematoria. In *Grief, Mourning, and Death Ritual*, edited by J. Hockey, J. Katz and N. Small, pp. 218-225. Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Brandes, S.
1997 Sugar, Colonialism, & Death: On the Origins of Mexico's Day of the Dead. *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 39(2):270-299.
- Buikstra, J. E.
1995 Tombs for the Living...or...for the Dead: The Osmore Ancestors. In *Tombs for the Living: Andean Mortuary Practices*, edited by T. D. Dillehay. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Washington, D.C.
- Cannon, A.
1989 The Historical Dimension in Mortuary Expressions of Status and Sentiment. *Current Anthropology* 30(4):437-458.

2005 Gender and Agency in Mortuary Fashion. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, edited by G. F. M. Rakita, J. E. Buikstra, L. A. Beck and S. R. Williams, pp. 41-65. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Conklin, B. A.
1995 "Thus Are Our Bodies, Thus Was Our Custom": Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society. *American Ethnologist* 22(1):75-101.
- Crowder, L. S.
2000 Chinese Funeral in San Francisco Chinatown: American Chinese Expressions in Mortuary Ritual Performance. *The Journal of American Folklore* 113(450):451-463.
- Emanuel, E. J.
1999 What is the Great Benefit of Legalizing Euthanasia or Physician-Assisted Suicide? *Ethics* 109(3):629-642.
- Eyre, A.
2001 Post-Disaster Rituals. In *Grief, Mourning, and Death Ritual*, edited by J. Hockey, J. Katz and N. Small, pp. 256-266. Open University Press, Buckingham.

- Feeley-Harnik, G.
1984 The Political Economy of Death: Communication and Change in Malagasy Colonial History. *American Ethnologist*:1-19.
- Freud, S.
1989 [1917] Mourning and Melancholia. In *The Freud Reader*, edited by G. Peter, pp. 584-589. Norton, New York.
- Galloway, A., W. H. Birkby, A. M. Jones, T. E. Henry and B. O. Parks
1989 Decay Rates of Human Remains in an Arid Environment. *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 34(3):607-616.
- Garrard, E.
2000 Palliative Care and the Ethics of Resource Allocation. In *Death, Dying, and Bereavement*, edited by D. Dickenson, M. Johnson and J. S. Katz, pp. 303-308. Second ed. Open University / Sage Publication, London.
- Geertz, C.
1973 Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example. In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, pp. 142-169. Basic Books, New York.
- Glazier, J.
1984 Mbeere Ancestors and the Domestication of Death. *Man* 19(New Series):133-148.
- Greeley, A. M. and M. Hout
1999 Americans' Increasing Belief in Life after Death: Religious Competition and Acculturation. *American Sociological Review* 64(6):813-835.
- Guillen, S.
2005 Mummies, Cults, and Ancestors: The Chinchorro Mummies of the South Central Andes. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, edited by G. F. M. Rakita, J. E. Buikstra, L. A. Beck and S. R. Williams, pp. 142-149. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Hertz, R.
1960 [1907] *Death and the Right Hand: A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death*. The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois.
- Idler, E. and S. Kasl
1992 Religion, Disability, Depression, and the Timing of Death. *The American Journal of Sociology* 97(4):1052-1079.
- Kastenbaum, R. J.
2007 *Death, Society, and Human Experience*. Pearson Education, Boston.
- Kroeber, A. L.
1927 Disposal of the Dead. *AA* 29:308-315.
- Kushner, H. I. and C. E. Sterk
2005 The Limits of Social Capital: Durkheim, Suicide, and Social Cohesion. *American Journal of Public Health* 95(7):1139-1143.
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2005 Mortuary Practices and Ritual Use of Human Bone in Tibet. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, edited by G. F. M. Rakita, J. E. Buikstra, L. A. Beck and S. R. Williams, pp. 190-204. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
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1988 Dialogues with the Dead: Ideology and the Cemetery. In *The Recovery of Meaning*, edited by M. P. Leone and P. B. Potter, pp. 435-480. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

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2005 Putting the Dead to Work: An Examination of the Uses of Human Bone in Prehistoric Guam. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, edited by G. F. M. Rakita, J. E. Buikstra, L. A. Beck and S. R. Williams, pp. 305-315. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
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- President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research
1981 *Defining Death: Medical, Legal and Ethical Issues in the Determination of Death*. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C.
- Rainville, L.
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- Rakita, G. F. M. and J. E. Buikstra
2005a Introduction to *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, edited by G. F. M. Rakita, J. E. Buikstra, L. A. Beck and S. R. Williams, pp. 1-11. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

2005b Corrupting Flesh: Reexamining Hertz's Perspective on Mummification and Cremation. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*, edited by G. F. M. Rakita, J. E. Buikstra, L. A. Beck and S. R. Williams, pp. 97-106. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
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1957 Do We Survive Death? In *Why I Am Not a Christian*. George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.
- Ryan, C. J.
2000 Betting Your Life: An Argument Against Certain Advance Directives. In *Death, Dying, and Bereavement*, edited by D. Dickenson, M. Johnson and J. S. Katz, pp. 290-298. Second ed. Open University / Sage Publication, London.
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1985 Differential Treatment of Deviancy at Death as Revealed in Anthropological and Archaeological Materials. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 4:221-241.
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1980 Public Versus Statutory Choice of Heirs: A Study of Public Attitudes about Property Distribution at Death. *Social Forces* 58(4):1263-1271.

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1982 Of Flesh & Bones: the Management of Death Pollution in Cantonese Society. In *Death & the Regeneration of Life*, edited by M. Bloch and J. Parry, pp. 155-186. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
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