

COURSE SYLLABUS



COURSE TITLE: ANTH-280: Anthropology of Death

CLASS SECTION: 001

TERM: F2023

COURSE CREDITS: 3

DELIVERY METHOD(S): Face to Face

Camosun College campuses are located on the traditional territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. We acknowledge their welcome and graciousness to the students who seek knowledge here.

Learn more about Camosun's [Territorial Acknowledgement](#).

INSTRUCTOR DETAILS

NAME: Nicole Kilburn

EMAIL: kilburn@camosun.ca

OFFICE: Y212A

HOURS: Monday 4:00-4:30pm, Tuesday 10:00-11:00am, Thursday 10:00-11:00am and 2:30-3:00pm and by appointment

As your course instructor, I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me. Camosun College is committed to identifying and removing institutional and social barriers that prevent access and impede success.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

Students, using an anthropological approach, will explore one of life's inevitabilities: death. While death is a biological reality, its definition and meaning are profoundly shaped by culture. We will survey a wide variety of funerary traditions to understand how these rituals help define death, guide the behaviour of those grieving, and structure the ongoing relations between the living and their dead. We will examine the similarities and differences in conceptions of the human body, death, and death rites in time and space, and consider our own cultural practices in cross-cultural perspective.

PREREQUISITE(S):

One of:

- C in ENGL 151
- C in ENGL 161
- C in ENGL 163
- C in ENGL 164

CO-REQUISITE(S):

Not Applicable

EXCLUSION(S):

Not Applicable

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES / OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course a student will be able to:

1. Explain death as both a biological and cultural phenomenon.
2. Describe how culture shapes the components of death rituals that are important for both the deceased and the bereaved.
3. Analyze examples of grief and mourning practices in a variety of cultural contexts.
4. Explore contemporary and emerging issues regarding death and dying.
5. Illustrate the economic dimension of death, both in terms of the modern death-care industry and the performance opportunities of funerals.
6. Reflect upon deep-seated perspectives on death through comparisons with other cultures.

A Cautionary Note: The subject matter of this course is potentially sensitive and painful. It requires a willingness to explore your own ideas and emotions surrounding death, something that we do not have much experience or guidance with in North American culture. Death is an intense topic, and may be stressful to think about in a classroom setting. You may find yourself unexpectedly triggered by content that we cover. Please think carefully about this and look after yourself. Former students have told me that content in this class is both personally helpful and extremely challenging; if you do not think that you can handle this type of material in an academic setting, this may not be the class for you at this time. While choosing to not participate in some components of the course is an option, all students are still expected to complete the course and be evaluated on the content. If you find that content is triggering you over the course of the semester, please know that I am happy to listen/ talk to all students in office hours. While I am not a trained counsellor, I have expertise as a human being and am not afraid of a few tears. However, I highly recommend the services of Camosun's excellent counselling department (<http://camosun.ca/services/counselling-centre/personal.html>), which is a service covered by your student fees.

REQUIRED MATERIALS & RECOMMENDED PREPARATION / INFORMATION

Weekly readings and other materials are posted on D2L. Content is organized in topic-specific folders that go live about 10 days before the content will be covered in class. I have one folder with all the readings for the entire semester in case you want to get a head start on some of this material.

COURSE SCHEDULE, TOPICS, AND ASSOCIATED PREPARATION / ACTIVITY / EVALUATION

The following schedule and course components are subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

WEEK or DATE RANGE	ACTIVITY or TOPIC	OTHER NOTES: These are the weekly articles to read. Please note that there is also D2L content curated for each topic.
1 Sept. 4-10	Introduction to the course; what are we getting ourselves into? Part 1 of the questionnaire due by September 10 at 11:59pm	Death and Society: A Marxist Approach Anthropology of Death, Annual Review of Anthropology
2 Sept. 11-17	How to define death; let us count the ways! Term project topic choices communicated to Nicole by Sept. 12 (with fieldtrip waiver)	Living Cadavers and the Calculation of Death
3 Sept. 18-24	A cultural history of death and the afterlife Cultural constructions of life and death	Hominin burial- Who First Buried the Dead?
4 Sept. 25- Oct. 1	Cultural constructions of life and death, cont...	Tibetans and Vultures Keep Ancient Burial Rite Hunting the Ancestors, death and alliance in Wari cannibalism
5 Oct. 2-8	Rest in Pieces? (some time to review and prep for the midterm in Thursday's class) Term project proposal due by Oct. 5	The Cremated Catholic: the ends of a deceased Guatemalan
6 Oct. 9-15	Tuesday: MIDTERM EXAM Thursday: introduction to Part 2 of the course and the term project Treatment of the body essay due by Oct. 15	
7 Oct. 16-22	Grief, Mourning and Remembrance Tuesday: Van Gennep's Rites of Passage Good Deaths, Bad Deaths, Loving Ancestors and Restless Ghosts.	Rites of Passage (by Gregory Forth) Grief and a Headhunter's Rage Three Days of Weeping
8 Oct. 23-29	Tuesday: time to work on the term project with team members Caring for the Ancestors Print materials for term project submitted by Oct. 29	
9 Oct. 30- Nov. 5	Content to be determined based on the term project. RBCM pop up Saturday, November 4 from 1-3pm (with set up ahead of time)	

WEEK or DATE RANGE	ACTIVITY or TOPIC	OTHER NOTES: These are the weekly articles to read. Please note that there is also D2L content curated for each topic.
10 Nov. 6-12	T: fieldtrip to Harling Point and Ross Bay TH: Necrogeography	Monuments, Landscape, and Memory Death in the Cathedral; mortuary practices in sports stadiums
11 Nov. 13-19	Ethics, Body Donation and the Use of Bodies after Death Thurs: Zoom discussion with Jackie Dent	Plastination for Display
12 Nov. 20-26	Economics of Death Cemetery Assignment due by 11:59pm on November 23	Buying an Afterlife: Mapping the Social Impact of Religious Beliefs through Consumer Death Goods Money and Death: Funeral Business in Asante, Ghana
13 Nov. 27-Dec. 3	Tues: Death and Identity Thurs: Death and sustainability	Reading about identity TBA Back to the Land Let your Last Footprint Be a Green One
14 Dec. 4-10	The Future of Death Part 2 of the questionnaire due by December 10 at 11:59pm	The Last Days of Death
Please note that the final exam will be during the college's final exam period. Do not make work or travel plans until the exam date is announced, which should be by mid October.		

Students registered with the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) who complete quizzes, tests, and exams with academic accommodations have booking procedures and deadlines with CAL where advanced notice is required (2 weeks). Deadlines can be reviewed on the [CAL exams page](http://camosun.ca/services/accessible-learning/exams.html). <http://camosun.ca/services/accessible-learning/exams.html> As your instructor I must have a letter from CAL to direct these accommodations, and welcome a conversation with students so that I can help wherever possible. CAL is increasingly busy so book your midterm NOW and your final exam as soon as the date is announced; it is not fair to CAL to expect last minute accommodations.

Exams must be written at the designated times. In an extreme circumstance where this is not possible, the instructor must be contacted AHEAD of the exam. [Rescheduled Exams](#) will be arranged through the Assessments center, follow the above link for more information.

DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING
<p>Death and Dying Questionnaire Part 1 to be completed by September 10 at 11:59pm, Part 2 to be completed by December 10 at 11:59pm</p> <p>This class is an academic exploration of death, but also an intensely personal one. In the first week of class I would like you to complete a confidential questionnaire that will help you start to think about some key issues that will arise throughout the course. You will submit this via D2L by 11:59pm on September 10 please. I will not provide feedback or ask you anything related to what you put in the questionnaire unless you bring it up, this is a document to get you thinking about some key questions and for me to gauge where people are it as we get started in the class. Please retain the electronic copy of the questionnaire; in the last week of class you will be asked to revisit the document to consider how your answers and overall perspectives may have changed over the course of the semester. You will add to your answers in italics text below the original text and resubmit to D2L by 11:59pm on December 10.</p>	<p>5%</p> <p>Each part is worth 2.5%, earned by completing the exercise.</p>
<p>Treatment of the Body essay Due by 11:59pm by October 15 at 11:59pm via D2L</p> <p>Students will write a short, organized essay on the following, using material from class: The treatment of the body after death is highly symbolic, and represents important concepts of both life and death. Consider this thesis statement by comparing and contrasting Tibetan sky burials, Hindu cremation, Wari mortuary cannibalism and the importance of preserving the body in a Catholic context. How do these practices communicate key social values and perspectives? As you wrap up your paper, apply this idea to one novel form of body disposal presented in the D2L folder (such as shooting cremains into space, or turning remains into something like a death diamond, or a guitar).</p> <p>This essay will be no more than 5 pages long, double spaced. Please use the APA style to cite the readings and resources from class.</p>	<p>5%</p>

DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING
<p>Loving Ancestors and Restless Ghosts; a term project collaboration with the RBCM</p> <p>Top 3 topic choices communicated by September 12 Project proposal due by October 5 Print materials due by October 29 (to be printed by the college) Full project due November 4 (at our pop up exhibit, or for a solo paper, by 11:59pm via D2L)</p> <p>We are lucky to partner with the RBCM again this year to share some of our course content with the public. This term project is inspired by the Angkor exhibit that is currently showing at the museum, but is a broader exploration of the concept of relationships with the dead.</p> <p>As a group, our class will bring a pop up exhibit to the RBCM on Saturday November 4. The timing falls just after a number of ancestor veneration celebrations, from Cambodian Pchum Ben to Dias de los Muertos and Catholic All Saints Day (not to mention Halloween!), which all fall in late October and early November this year. With some guidance from a variety of community members, we will create interesting, accessible and maybe even interactive exhibit components to share these various examples of ancestor veneration and relationships that survive beyond ones last breath.</p> <p>There is much more information on D2L, including a list of the topics. Students will select the top 3 topic that they would be interested in working on and share these with me so that I can organize groups. Please share your ranked choices by Sept. 12; my preference is via D2L along with your fieldtrip waiver (so you don't forget to do this). If you prefer to do a solo paper, please indicate this by Sept. 12, along with your topic choice (from the same list as the group topics).</p>	<p>30% (this includes the proposal, which is worth 5%)</p>
<p>Van Gennep's Rites of Passage in the context of death and bereavement</p> <p>Completed in class and submitted to D2L by 11:59pm Oct. 19</p> <p>Students will come to class on October 17 having read Gregory Forth's overview of Van Gennep's 1908 book Rites of Passage, a work that has been influential in anthropology (and other disciplines). While Van Gennep considers all rites of passage, the three stages that are outlined are particularly appropriate in the context of death, a rite of passage for both the deceased and the bereaved. Students will participate in group discussion in class to distill the key elements of Van Gennep's ideas and write accessible summaries of each stage, with examples from class. These summaries will be submitted to D2L by 11:59pm on October 19 (this work should basically be completed in class in groups, and each group will submit one summary).</p>	<p>2%</p>

DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING
<p>Cemetery Assignment Due via D2L by 11:59pm on November 23</p> <p>For this exercise you will record 10 different grave markers in Ross Bay cemetery, one of Canada's oldest and largest surviving Victorian cemeteries (that is still in use today!) and use resources provided to decode the symbols represented in this landscape and provide a short overall analysis. More information, reference resources and recording forms are provided on D2L.</p> <p>We will be visiting this cemetery as part of a fieldtrip on November 7. If there is a personal reason why you cannot interact with this cultural landscape please come and talk to me ASAP about an alternative assignment.</p>	8%
<p>Midterm exam Tuesday , October 10 in class</p> <p>This exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and long answer responses drawing from material covered in class, the readings, and other assigned resources. It will be written on computers.</p>	25%
<p>Final exam Written during the college final exam period</p> <p>This exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and long answer responses drawing from material covered in class, the readings, and other assigned resources. The final exam is not cumulative, but will consider reoccurring themes that weave their way through the entire course. This exam will be written on computers.</p>	25%
	100%

If you have a concern about a grade you have received for an evaluation, please come and see me as soon as possible. Refer to the [Grade Review and Appeals](http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.14.pdf) policy for more information.
<http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.14.pdf>

COURSE GUIDELINES & EXPECTATIONS

Assignments

Please make sure that assignments are submitted properly via D2L instead of emailed to me. Things get misplaced very easily in my inbox, and it is harder for me to provide feedback and tie grades into the gradebook if files are not submitted through D2L. Please submit as a Word document or PDF, other formats often will not open for me.

It is important that assignments be submitted on time. Five percent of the total mark will be deducted for **every day** an assignment is late (yes, even weekends); while this may not seem like many marks, remember that 5% is the difference of a letter grade, and this adds up quickly. This is an unfortunate way to lose marks, and can be avoided by not procrastinating and staying organized in terms of time management. Unless there are exceptional circumstances that are discussed with me before the deadline, no exceptions will be made. (Accepting extra work shifts is not an exceptional circumstance!)

Academic Integrity and AI

Please make sure you are familiar with Camosun's academic honesty policy, which is posted on D2L. Misrepresentation and plagiarism are serious forms of academic misconduct. ANYTHING you use from another resource must be properly cited. Please know that I am VERY aware of the powers of AI to do your work for you. These assignments are all designed to encourage YOU to do the work, and the learning. Currently, Camosun does not have a policy governing AI-use. How it

may or may not be used in courses is up to the discretion of the instructor. My position at this point is that students may use AI tools such as Grammarly to assist them with writing mechanics but are prohibited from using AI tools such as Chat-GPT to create content for assignments or exams. Ultimately cheating only cheats you from learning the skills that you are in post-secondary courses to acquire and hone. I am required to report all instances of academic dishonesty to the dean of the school, without exception.

Here are some things you can expect from me:

- Barring exceptional circumstance, I will be present and on time for every class.
- I will be prepared and organized for class.
- I will approach all students and conversations with compassion and respect.
- I will respond to emails within 2 days. Please do not expect a reply on the weekend as I am trying to have a healthier work-life balance.
- I will get assignments marked, with helpful, constructive feedback, within 2 weeks. I aim for 10 days, but sometimes this is not possible.

Here are some things I expect from students:

- Please come to class ready to get the most out of our time together. This means coming on time, with a sense of what we will be covering (I recommend doing the readings ahead of the week's content so that you can ask questions).
- Please stay engaged in class by leaving phones in bags.
- Students are expected to engage in respectful dialogue at all times as they bring diverse thoughts, perspectives and questions to a lively discussion where disagreements may surface but mutual respect must prevail. I will not tolerate behaviour that belittles or makes others feel uncomfortable.

SCHOOL OR DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

Grading: Camosun's grading policy is outlined here: <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.5.pdf> . Below is how the University of Victoria defines each grade, which I think is a useful way of calibrating expectations and understanding what each letter grade means.

Percentage	Grade	Description	Grade Point Equivalency
90-100	A+	Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectations and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.	9
85-89	A		8
80-84	A-		7
77-79	B+	Very good, good, and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other areas.	6
73-76	B		5
70-72	B-		4
65-69	C+	Satisfactory or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject material.	3
60-64	C		2
50-59	D	Minimum level of achievement for which credit is granted; a course with a "D" grade cannot be used as a prerequisite.	1
0-49	F	Minimum level has not been achieved.	0

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

Enrolment at Camosun assumes that the student will become a responsible member of the College community. As such, each student will display a positive work ethic, assist in the preservation of College property, and assume responsibility for

their education by researching academic requirements and policies; demonstrating courtesy and respect toward others; and respecting expectations concerning attendance, assignments, deadlines, and appointments.

SUPPORTS AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

Camosun College offers a number of services to help you succeed in and out of the classroom. For a detailed overview of the supports and services visit <http://camosun.ca/students/>.

Academic Advising	http://camosun.ca/advising
Accessible Learning	http://camosun.ca/accessible-learning
Counselling	http://camosun.ca/counselling
Career Services	http://camosun.ca/coop
Financial Aid and Awards	http://camosun.ca/financialaid
Help Centres (Math/English/Science)	http://camosun.ca/help-centres
Indigenous Student Support	http://camosun.ca/indigenous
International Student Support	http://camosun.ca/international/
Learning Skills	http://camosun.ca/learningskills
Library	http://camosun.ca/services/library/
Office of Student Support	http://camosun.ca/oss
Ombudsperson	http://camosun.ca/ombuds
Registration	http://camosun.ca/registration
Technology Support	http://camosun.ca/its
Writing Centre	http://camosun.ca/writing-centre

If you have a mental health concern, please contact Counselling to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. Counselling sessions are available at both campuses during business hours. If you need urgent support after-hours, please contact the Vancouver Island Crisis Line at 1-888-494-3888 or call 911.

COLLEGE-WIDE POLICIES, PROCEDURES, REQUIREMENTS, AND STANDARDS

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The College is committed to providing appropriate and reasonable academic accommodations to students with disabilities (i.e. physical, depression, learning, etc). If you have a disability, the [Centre for Accessible Learning](http://camosun.ca/services/accessible-learning/) (CAL) can help you document your needs, and where disability-related barriers to access in your courses exist, create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through CAL, you can ensure you have the appropriate academic accommodations you need without disclosing your diagnosis or condition to course instructors. Please visit the CAL website for contacts and to learn how to get started: <http://camosun.ca/services/accessible-learning/>

Academic Integrity

Please visit <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.13.pdf> for policy regarding academic expectations and details for addressing and resolving matters of academic misconduct.

Academic Progress

Please visit <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.1.pdf> for further details on how Camosun College monitors students' academic progress and what steps can be taken if a student is at risk of not meeting the College's academic progress standards.

Course Withdrawals Policy

Please visit <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-2-student-services-and-support/e-2.2.pdf> for further details about course withdrawals. For deadline for fees, course drop dates, and tuition refund, please visit <http://camosun.ca/learn/fees/#deadlines>.

Grade Review and Appeals

Please visit <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.14.pdf> for policy relating to requests for review and appeal of grades.

Medical / Compassionate Withdrawals

Students who are incapacitated and unable to complete or succeed in their studies by virtue of serious and demonstrated exceptional circumstances may be eligible for a medical/compassionate withdrawal. Please visit <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-2-student-services-and-support/e-2.8.pdf> to learn more about the process involved in a medical/compassionate withdrawal.

Sexual Violence and Misconduct

Camosun is committed to creating a campus culture of safety, respect, and consent. Camosun's Office of Student Support is responsible for offering support to students impacted by sexual violence. Regardless of when or where the sexual violence or misconduct occurred, students can access support at Camosun. The Office of Student Support will make sure students have a safe and private place to talk and will help them understand what supports are available and their options for next steps. The Office of Student Support respects a student's right to choose what is right for them. For more information see Camosun's Sexualized Violence and Misconduct Policy: <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-2-student-services-and-support/e-2.9.pdf> and camosun.ca/sexual-violence. To contact the Office of Student Support: oss@camosun.ca or by phone: 250-370-3046 or 250-3703841

Student Misconduct (Non-Academic)

Camosun College is committed to building the academic competency of all students, seeks to empower students to become agents of their own learning, and promotes academic belonging for everyone. Camosun also expects that all students to conduct themselves in a manner that contributes to a positive, supportive, and safe learning environment. Please review Camosun College's Student Misconduct Policy at <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-2-student-services-and-support/e-2.5.pdf> to understand the College's expectations of academic integrity and student behavioural conduct.

Changes to this syllabus: Every effort has been made to ensure that information in this syllabus is accurate at the time of publication. The College reserves the right to change courses if it becomes necessary so that

course content remains relevant. In such cases, the instructor will give the students clear and timely notice of the changes.