

COURSE SYLLABUS



COURSE TITLE: ANTH-280: Anthropology of Death

CLASS SECTION: 001

TERM: F2021

COURSE CREDITS: 3

DELIVERY METHOD(S): F2F in class

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](#).

For COVID-19 information please visit <https://legacy.camosun.ca/covid19/index.html>.

Camosun College requires mandatory attendance for the first class meeting of each course. If you do not attend, and do not provide your instructor with a reasonable explanation in advance, you will be removed from the course and the space offered to the next waitlisted student.

INSTRUCTOR DETAILS

NAME: Nicole Kilburn

EMAIL: kilburn@camosun.bc.ca

OFFICE: Young 212A

HOURS: Tuesday 2:30-3:00pm, Wednesday 9:30am-12pm, Thursday 10:30-11:30am. Please note that I can accommodate virtual office hours on Wednesdays from 11-12 via D2L Collaborate, or by appointment as necessary.

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 also 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

There is no text or course pack to purchase from the bookstore for this course. Readings and other resources for this course are posted and linked directly from the course D2L page (the full bibliography is presented at the end of this course outline).

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	READINGS
Sept. 6-12	Module 1. Introduction to the course	Death and Society: A Marxist Approach Anthropology of Death, Annual Review of Anthropology
Sept. 13-19	Module 2 Defining death Part 1 of student questionnaire to be completed by September 14 at 11:59pm	Living Cadavers and the Calculation of Death

WEEK or DATE RANGE	ACTIVITY or TOPIC	READINGS
Sept. 20-26	Module 3. A cultural history of death and the afterlife	Hominin burial- Who First Buried the Dead?
Sept. 27-Oct. 3	Tues: Module 4 Cultural constructions of life and death Thurs: Orange Shirt Day, college is closed	Tibetans and Vultures Keep Ancient Burial rite Hunting the Ancestors, death and alliance in Wari cannibalism
Oct. 4-10	Tues: Module 4 Cultural constructions of life and death, cont... Thurs: Module 5 Rest in Pieces? The mechanics of remembrance Due October 10 by 11:59pm	The Cremated Catholic: the ends of a deceased Guatemalan
Oct. 11-17	Tues: Rest in Pieces, cont... (possibly a fieldtrip if Covid protocols allow) Thurs: Recap and review	No readings this week
Oct. 18-24	Tues: MIDTERM EXAM Thurs: Module 6 Death and the pet cemetery; animals in the afterlife Interactive poster project Outline due Oct. 24 by 11:59pm (submitted to D2L)	Victorian pet cemeteries: animals in the afterlife (podcast)
Oct. 25-31	Module 7 Grief and Mourning	Grief and a Headhunter's Rage Three Days of Weeping
Nov. 1-7	Module 8 Caring for the Ancestors (with an applied activity on Tues. Nov. 2)	Grave Vows Sweetening Death; Shifting landscapes of the role of food in grief and mourning
Nov. 8-14	Tues: Module 9 Necrogeography Thurs: Remembrance Day, college is closed Reflection on the rituals involving food and the ancestors Due November 14 by 11:59pm	Monuments, Landscape, and Memory Death in the Cathedral; mortuary practices in sports stadiums
Nov. 15-21	Module 10 Death and Identity	TBA
Nov. 22-28	Module 11 Economies of death Interactive poster project Final submission due on Thinglink Nov. 28 (submitted via email as a link)	Buying an Afterlife: Mapping the Social Impact of Religious Beliefs through Consumer Death Goods Money and Death: Funeral Business in Asante, Ghana
Nov. 29-Dec. 5	Tues: Module 12 Death and sustainability Thurs: Death Cafe	Back to the Land Let your Last Footprint Be a Green One
Dec. 6-12	Module 13 The future of death Part 2 of student questionnaire to be completed by December 10 at 11:59pm	The Last Days of Death
The final exam will be scheduled sometime during the college exam period. We should have the date by the end of October, please hold off on making holiday plans until the exam date has been confirmed.		

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 noticed is required. Deadlines scan be reviewed on the [CAL exams page](http://camosun.ca/services/accessible-learning/exams.html). <http://camosun.ca/services/accessible-learning/exams.html>

DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING
<p>Death and Dying Questionnaire Part 1 to be completed by September 14 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 6pm on September 14 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 6pm on December 10.</p>	<p>5%</p> <p>Each part is worth 2.5%, earned by completing the exercise.</p>
<p>Reflection on the rituals involving food and the ancestors Due November 14 by 11:59pm</p> <p>On Nov. 2 we will spend time in class considering elements of various cultural practices like Dias de los Muertos, All Souls Day and Pchum Ben (a Cambodian holiday) that involve food and the dead. We will explore the interface of food and remembrance to consider the functions of these practices and then students will write a 1-2 page reflection on this topic. More information is in the Assignments folder on D2L.</p>	<p>5%</p>
<p>The mechanics of remembrance Due October 10 by 11:59pm</p> <p>This 4-5 page paper will consider the concepts of “spontaneous shrines” and more permanent forms of memorials by combining personal observations with two articles provided.</p>	<p>10%</p>
<p>Interactive poster project Outline due Oct. 24 by 11:59pm (submitted to D2L) Final submission due on Thinglink Nov. 28 (submitted via email as a link)</p> <p>Using a free digital platform called Thinglink (with student accounts arranged by Nicole), students will generate interactive digital content on specific topics, either as solo projects or that can be incorporated into broader final products. A full description of this assignment and a list of topics to choose from is posted on D2L in the “Assignments” folder.</p>	<p>20%</p>

DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING
Midterm exam Tuesday , October 19 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.	30%
Final exam written during the college final exam period 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.	30%
**Please note that unless otherwise stated, assignments will be submitted via the Assignments folder in D2L.	TOTAL 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](#) policy for more information.
<http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.14.pdf>

COURSE GUIDELINES & EXPECTATIONS

Exams: Exams must be written at the scheduled times unless prior notice has been given to the instructor and approval received to write at a different time. If a student misses an exam due to illness, they must communicate with the instructor before the start of the exam and receive confirmation that a make-up exam can be provided. There will be no exceptions (this is college policy). Additional exams/assignments are not available to students in order to upgrade poor marks.

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 is a documented medical reason there will be no exceptions made.

Course Engagement: The topics in the course can be controversial. Students are expected to engage in respectful dialogue at all times as they bring diverse thoughts and perspectives to a lively discussion, where disagreements may surface.

SCHOOL OR DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

There is no specific additional information to add at this time.

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.

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](#) (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>.

Grading Policy

Please visit <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.5.pdf> for further details about grading.

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.

Mandatory Attendance for First Class Meeting of Each Course

Camosun College requires mandatory attendance for the first class meeting of each course. If you do not attend, and do not provide your instructor with a reasonable reason in advance, you will be removed from the course and the space offered to the next waitlisted student. For more information, please see the "Attendance" section under "Registration Policies and Procedures" (<http://camosun.ca/learn/calendar/current/procedures.html>) and the Grading Policy at <http://camosun.ca/about/policies/education-academic/e-1-programming-and-instruction/e-1.5.pdf>.

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.

F2021 Course reading and resource bibliography

Adramovich, Henry

2015 Anthropology of Death, Annual Review of Anthropology. IN: *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 2nd edition, volume 5 edited by James D. Wright pp.870-873. Elsevier Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.12052-5>.

Brandes, Stanley

2001 The Cremated Catholic: the ends of a deceased Guatemalan. *Body and Society* 7(2-3): 111-120.

Bush, Rose

2019 *Vultures of Tibet*. Video. From the Woods Production Co. New York. Accessed via the web https://aeon.co/videos/to-tibetan-buddhists-sky-burials-are-sacred-to-tourists-theyre-a-morbid-curious?utm_source=Aeon+Newsletter&utm_campaign=c216196bdb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_02_25_12_50&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_411a82e59d-c216196bdb-70694633

Cann, Candi

2017 Buying an Afterlife: Mapping the Social Impact of Religious Beliefs through Consumer Death Goods. *Religions* 8(167).

2018 Sweetening Death: Shifting Landscapes of the Role of Food in Grief and Mourning. IN: *Dying to Eat: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Food, Death, and the Afterlife* edited by Candi Cann pp. 55-86. University of Kentucky Press.

Conklin, Beth

2018 (1993) Hunting the Ancestors: Death and Alliance in Wari' Cannibalism. IN: *Death, Mourning and Burial: A Cross Cultural Reader*, second edition, edited by A. Robben pp. 211-216. John Wiley and Sons: Oxford.

de Jong, L.

2019 Monuments, Landscape and Memory; the emergence of Tower Tombs in Tadmor-Palmyra. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 62(1): 30-52. University of London.

de Ruiter, Darryl

2017 Did Homo naledi Deliberately dispose of their dead? TEDxTAMU talk accessed via the web at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxcrg1jHKWA>

Faison, Seth

1999 Lirong Journal; Tibetans, and Vultures, Keep Ancient Burial Rite. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/07/03/world/lirong-journal-tibetans-and-vultures-keep-ancient-burial-rite.html>

Harari, Yuval Noah

2016 The Last Days of Death; the looming struggle for eternal youth. Excerpt from *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* by Yuval Noah Harari published as an open essay <http://openthemagazine.com/article/essay/the-last-days-of-death>

History Extra podcast

2021 Victorian pet cemeteries: animals and the afterlife. February 11. Immediate Media.

Locke, Margaret

2004 Living Cadavers and the Calculation of Death. *Body and Society* 10 (2-3): 135-152.

Lull, Vicente

2000 Death and Society: A Marxist Approach. *Antiquity* 74: 576-580.

Madison, Paige

2017 Hominin Burial-Who first Buried the Dead?. Retrieved from <https://aeon.co/essays/why-we-should-bury-the-idea-that-human-rituals-are-unique>

(optional, if you have already read Grave Vows and want something more)

Martin, Diana

1991 Chinese Ghost Marriage. *JASO Occasional Papers* 8, edited by H. Baker and S. Feuchtwang pp. 25-43. University of Oxford: Oxford.

Mayer, Andre

2016 *Back to the Land*. CBC May 16, 2018. <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/death-burial-green-recycling>

Rosaldo, Renato

1993 Introduction: Grief and a Headhunter's Rage. IN: *Culture and Truth: the remaking of social analysis* by Renato Rosaldo, pp. 167-178. Beacon Press: Boston.

Rumble, Hannah

2016 Let your Last Footprint be a Green One. *Anthropology and Aging*, 37 (1): 41-45.

Sahvit, Vered

2017 *What happens to our digital remains when we die?* TEDxWhite City talk accessed via the web at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFPkEIGUofc>

Schwartz, Lucas J.

2010 Grave Vows: A Cross-Cultural Examination of the Varying forms of Ghost Marriage among Five Societies. *Nebraska Anthropologist*. 60. Accessed from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebanthro/60>

Shepard, Glenn H. Jr.

2002 Three Days for Weeping: Dreams, Emotions, and Death in the Peruvian Amazon. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 16 (2): 200-229

Swazey, Kelli

2013 *Life that doesn't end with death*. TED Talk access on the web at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCRC5_0kfiw

Vaczi, Mariann

2014 Death in the Cathedral; Mortuary practices in sports stadiums. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 20: 635-652.