Meaningful Mourning: Global Death Cultures

INSTRUCTOR
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Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Death is a constant, it touches every one of us at some point in our lives. For some, we observe death when losing those we love (and sometimes people we don’t care for) and for others it means staring our own mortality in the face. As a result, this unifying experience has inspired the living to create a plethora of practices and rituals. In this interdisciplinary course, we will examine the variety and vigor in which death is celebrated, honored, mourned, and prepared for across the globe. We’ll see how religion, geography, culture, history, and even diseases have shaped bereavement traditions. Beginning with past and present rituals of western civilization, we will demonstrate the richness and breadth of American cultures through such practices as spirit photos, caskets in horse drawn carriages, second lines, and more. Next, we will explore the traditions of European countries through time, from the ossuaries (or bone churches) to the Scandinavian Viking funerals and of course examining how historic plagues shaped tradition. Then, we will explore various Asian, African, and Latin American practices including sky burials, sacrifices, and el Día de Muertos, respectively. Lastly, we’ll close the semester on a somewhat lighter note looking at mythological narratives of death. From days-long festivals to weeks long fasting; from obscured mummies to paraded skeletons, we’ll explore the world and its customs through the final celebration of a life.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After completing this course, a successful student will be able to:

• Recognize differences in death customs and traditions in various regions
  — Identify perspectives and history that shape death rituals
• Summarize historical and current death practices in the U.S.
  — Explain when and why transitions occurred
• Explore the power of the celebration of death
• Evaluate the “norms” of death culture

REQUIRED TEXTS:

CANVAS PLATFORM
Class materials, homework assignments, discussion assignments, oral presentation, research paper, grades, and other information critical to your success in this course are located on Canvas. You can access the Canvas site for this course by logging in at http://info.canvas.colostate.edu/login.aspx.
# COURSE SCHEDULE: TOPICS, READINGS, AND OTHER MATERIALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1:</strong></td>
<td><em>Introductions, Course Overview, &amp; Death in Pop Culture</em>&lt;br&gt;1/23 Discussion: Common Portrayals, TV Shows, Clichés</td>
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<td><strong>Week 2:</strong></td>
<td><em>Relationship between Culture and Death</em>&lt;br&gt;1/28 Readings: <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 1 - Introduction&lt;br&gt;1/30 <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 9 - California Joshua Tree</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3:</strong></td>
<td><em>Historical &amp; Contemporary American Death Rituals</em>&lt;br&gt;2/4 Readings: <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 2 - Colorado Crestone&lt;br&gt;2/6 <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 5 - North Carolina Cullowhee</td>
<td><em>WED 2/6 ONLINE PICC EVALS DUE</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 4:</strong></td>
<td><em>European Death Traditions</em>&lt;br&gt;2/11 Readings: <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 6 - Spain Barcelona&lt;br&gt;2/13 <em>Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,</em> Chapter 1</td>
<td><em>WED 2/13 ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 5:</strong></td>
<td><em>Historic Plagues: How they Shaped Death Practices</em>&lt;br&gt;2/18 Readings: The Black Death&lt;br&gt;2/20 Select News Articles</td>
<td><em>WED 2/27 COMPARATIVE PAPER DUE</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 6:</strong></td>
<td><em>Practices in Asian Countries</em>&lt;br&gt;2/25 Readings: <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 3 - Indonesia South Sulawesi&lt;br&gt;2/27 <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 7 - Japan Tokyo</td>
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<td><strong>Week 7:</strong></td>
<td><em>Rituals in Various African Countries</em>&lt;br&gt;3/4 Readings: <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter&lt;br&gt;3/6 Turning of the Bones</td>
<td><em>WED 3/13 CREATIVE PAPER DUE</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 8:</strong></td>
<td><em>Latin American Celebrations</em>&lt;br&gt;3/11 Readings: <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 4 - Mexico Michoacan&lt;br&gt;3/13 <em>Here to Eternity,</em> Chapter 8 - Bolivia La Paz</td>
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<td><strong>Week 9:</strong></td>
<td><em>SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES</em>&lt;br&gt;3/18-3/22 Readings: (None)</td>
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<td><strong>Weeks 11 through 12:</strong></td>
<td><em>Formal Speeches and Presentations</em>&lt;br&gt;4/1-4/10 Readings: (Full sentences outlines will be due immediately after your scheduled presentation)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 13:</strong></td>
<td><em>Peer Reviews</em>&lt;br&gt;4/15 &amp; 4/17 Readings: Peer Papers (2 each)</td>
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<td><strong>Weeks 14:</strong></td>
<td><em>Mythology &amp; Death</em>&lt;br&gt;4/22 Readings: How to Send a Viking to Valhalla&lt;br&gt;4/24 Thanatos and Death</td>
<td><em>MON 4/22 PEER REVIEWS DUE</em></td>
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<td><strong>Week 15:</strong></td>
<td><em>Final Critical Analysis and Research Writing Projects</em>&lt;br&gt;5/6 &amp; 5/8 Readings: (None)</td>
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ASSIGNMENTS

Participation
Attendance: On time attendance is mandatory. Any absences must have prior approval by the instructor; unexcused absences receive 0 points for that time period.

Discussion: Each class period will have a designated topic of discussion based upon prior readings and topics. All students are expected to engage in the conversation each session. Students must be respectful of each other’s self, opinions, and arguments. Critical analysis of the readings is highly encouraged. Each week individuals will be assigned as the next discussion facilitators. The facilitator(s) will be responsible for thoroughly assessing the readings and preparing questions and concepts to pose to the class. Maintaining class engagement and focus on the topic will be key to successful facilitation. The rest of the class is responsible for bringing at least two questions/comments/examples daily to assist in engagement. Weekly readings and additional information, if needed, will be available in Canvas.

PICC Evaluation: The Honors competencies self-assessment is due BEFORE the end of the fourth week of the semester. Honors seminars are intended to assist student competencies in critical thinking; creativity and problem solving; interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &/or cultural viewpoints and professionalism, interpersonal skills, & emotional intelligence. Students must include comments for all four categories for full credit.

This assignment addresses the University Honors Program competencies of critical thinking; creativity and problem solving; and professionalism, interpersonal skills, & emotional intelligence.

Writing Assignments
Three papers will be completed during the semester. Each paper will be 4-5 pages in length not including references, and adhere to proper formatting as outlined in class. Each paper will address a specific writing technique and theme. Students are to assess the readings and discussions in the context of historical and cultural situations. Illustrations/graphics/infographs and pictures are welcome to accompany any writing assignment, however must be included AFTER all text and pagination will NOT count towards the minimum paper length requirement. No less than 8 credible references should be used.

Neither improper citations nor plagiarism will not be tolerated, please see the Academic Integrity Policy below. The following are the topics of which your papers will be based; examples, rubrics, and announcements regarding each will be available in Canvas.

1. Analytical Paper – The importance & significance of death traditions
2. Comparative Paper – Contrasts & commonalities between distant cultures
3. Creative Paper – Analysis of a death rituals/cultures through creating your own desired rituals

This assignment addresses the University Honors Program competencies of critical thinking; creativity and problem solving; and interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &/or cultural viewpoints.
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Persuasive Research Paper
An argumentative or persuasive paper (8-10 pages or 2500 words, NOT including references) on one of the following prompts (or of a pre-approved topic).

- Does a focus on death deprive people of living?
- What tradition/custom/practice should not exist and why?
- Should death be celebrated or mourned?
- Should animals and/or artifacts be incorporated in death ceremonies/burials?
- Which society/country/region has the best death culture?

The paper needs to indicate a clear stance and incorporate resources such as discussion, the text book and other sources. A complete bibliography must be included and is not included in the page count. No less than 15 credible references should be used. A formal speech will accompany the paper.

*This assignment addresses the University Honors Program competencies of critical thinking and interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &/or cultural viewpoints.*

Formal Speech
Students give an extemporaneous persuasive speech 7-8 minutes in length on the topic of their persuasive research paper. The purpose of the speech is to persuade, not inform. Speeches must flow logically and be evidence-driven. A full sentence outline with complete bibliography is required.

*This assignment addresses the University Honors Program competencies of critical thinking; interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &/or cultural viewpoints; and professionalism, interpersonal skills, & emotional intelligence.*

Peer Review
Students must read and provide constructive criticism of two of their peers on one of the written assignments. A worksheet will be provided for guidance. Students must be civil, thoughtful, and thorough in their critiques. Upon receiving feedback from peers, students will incorporate comments to finesse and enhance their papers.

*This assignment addresses the University Honors Program competencies of critical thinking and professionalism, interpersonal skills, & emotional intelligence*

EVALUATION SYSTEM

The assignments that are used to evaluate student learning are:

1. Peer review exercises (10% of grade). A thorough and thoughtful process of critiquing a classmate’s work.
2. Three smaller writing projects (30% of grade, 10% each). Writing assignments (4-5 pages each) will be essays that explore different themes and writing techniques.
3. One formal persuasive speech (15% of grade). A 7 to 8-minute extemporaneous informative speech to the class related to content that includes preparing a full sentence outline.
4. One longer argumentative paper (15% of grade).
5. Participation (10% of grade). This includes daily contribution to discussion and the PICC self-assessment.
6. Evaluation of your Recitation Session determined by your individual performance in your section (20%)
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GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation, Discussion, &amp; PICC Evaluation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Review (2 at 5% each)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Projects (3 at 10% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persuasive Paper (1)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Formal Speech Prez. with Full sentence Outline (1)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recitation Section Grade (Independent of Class Grade)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Grade distribution (plus/minus grades may be used):

- 90-100% A
- 80-89% B
- 70-79% C
- 60-69% D
- <60% F

Incomplete

The grade of “I” is a temporary grade awarded to indicate that for reasons beyond the student’s control or that the student could not have reasonably have anticipated, he/she could not complete the requirements for the course. When an instructor assigns an “I,” he/she shall specify in writing the requirements the student shall fulfill to complete the course. After one year, or at the end of the semester in which the student graduates (whichever comes first), an “incomplete” grade will automatically changed to an “F” grade unless the course has been completed and the grade change submitted. The student must be in good academic standing in the class in order to receive an incomplete. (CSU Faculty Council policy)

Late Assignments Policy

All assignments are due in class on the date due. Late assignments are not accepted unless there are genuine extenuating circumstances or other situations where arrangements have been made in advance.

Resources

The CSU Writing Center is an excellent resource to support the development of your writing skills throughout your college career. While students are not required to access services, you are strongly encouraged to seek consultation on your writing projects required for this course. In addition to contact information, there are useful resources available on their website: [http://writing.colostate.edu/](http://writing.colostate.edu/).

The Morgan Library reference librarians can direct you to books and articles for the research paper and the oral presentation. I recommend contacting Rob Sica, Social Sciences and Humanities Liaison, Morgan Library 154, rob.sica@colostate.edu, 970.491.1047.

Absence Policy

If you are ill or unable to attend class, you must contact the instructor in advance. It is your responsibility to contact a classmate to get information discussed in class. It is good practice to always have the phone number and email address of at least two students in your class. You can request this information from classmates and write it below.
Accommodations for disabilities
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires Colorado State University to provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking academic adjustment or accommodations must self-identify with the Student Disability Center. You may call for an appointment at: 491-6385 or stop in at the 801 Oval Drive in the TILT Building. After meeting with SDC staff, and based on their recommendations, students are encouraged to meet with their instructors to discuss their needs, and if applicable, any lab safety concerns related to their disabilities.

 Academic and Professional Honesty Policy
This course adheres to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Colorado State University General Catalog and the Student Conduct Code. Honors students enrolled in this course are held to high standards of integrity. Academic integrity is expected within all assignments for this course. Students will be required to make an honor pledge to complete this course. The honors pledge will be completed as a class. For more information about academic integrity, please visit: http://learning.colostate.edu/integrity/.

It is expected that students will use their own knowledge and skill for assignments unless directed to do otherwise. Incidents of cheating, plagiarism or knowingly providing false or incorrect information are considered serious and will be treated seriously. Consequences of these incidents are at the discretion of the faculty member involved and may consist of confiscation of assignments, an F grade, or reporting to the CSU Student Conduct office. It is expected that students will demonstrate concern for others, respect the confidentiality of information about, the property of and the decisions made by others.

 Reporting student disclosures of interpersonal violence
CSU’s Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Stalking, and Retaliation policy designates faculty and employees of the University as “Responsible Employees” (https://oeo.colostate.edu/title-ix-sexual-assault-sexual-violence-sexual-harassment/). This designation is consistent with federal law and guidance, and requires faculty to report information regarding students who may have experienced any form of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking or retaliation. This includes information shared with faculty in person, electronic communications or in class assignments. As “Responsible Employees,” faculty may refer students to campus resources (see below), together with informing the Office of Support and Safety Assessment to help ensure student safety and welfare. Information regarding sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking and retaliation is treated with the greatest degree of confidentiality possible while also ensuring student and campus safety.

- Any student who may be the victim of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking or retaliation is encouraged to report to CSU through one or more of the following resources:
  - Emergency Response 911
  - Deputy Title IX Coordinator/Office of Support and Safety Assessment (970) 491-1350
  - Colorado State University Police Department (non-emergency) (970) 491-6425

 Competencies for Honors Students Exercise (“PICC” feedback)
The CSU University Honors Program has identified four general competencies that should be incorporated in each Honors seminar. These skills include (1) Professionalism, interpersonal skills, and emotional intelligence; (2) Interdisciplinary learning integrated with global and/or cultural viewpoints; (3) Critical thinking; and (4) Creativity and problem solving. This is a two-stage process. First, students complete a self-evaluation of these skills at the beginning of the semester. Second, at the end of the semester instructors will provide feedback for
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The feedback is part of the University Honors Program; it is for advising purposes only and is confidential. It is not part of a student’s grades or academic record. A standardized rubric is used to provide feedback for growth in these areas and to measure the Honors Programs progress in helping students to develop these skills through their academic career. The feedback categories and activities/assignments used to evaluate students are listed below and noted in the assignment descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Category (PICC)</th>
<th>Relevant Course Activities &amp; Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Professionalism, interpersonal skills, &amp; emotional intelligence: Acts ethically &amp; positively to foster a supportive instructional or work environment. Has the emotional intelligence (ability to perceive, evaluate, &amp; manage emotions) &amp; interpersonal skills to work effectively with others.</td>
<td>• Discussion leading&lt;br&gt;• Formal speech&lt;br&gt;• Peer review exercise&lt;br&gt;• Daily discussion, interactions, and participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &amp;/or cultural viewpoints: Integrates diverse knowledge, perspectives, &amp;/or skills into arguments &amp;/or strategies; is aware of and can clearly incorporate global &amp;/or cultural perspectives to an argument or issue.</td>
<td>• Daily discussions&lt;br&gt;• Comparative/Informative essays&lt;br&gt;• Group and individual presentations&lt;br&gt;• Final persuasive research paper and formal speech</td>
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<td>3. Critical thinking: Student advances a position with specific theses or hypotheses &amp; can conceptualize ideas or lines of thought. Conclusions and related outcomes acknowledge complexities of an issue (implications and consequences) and recognize differing points of view. Formulates &amp; develops claims with sufficient support, including reasoning, evidence, &amp; persuasive appeals, &amp; proper attribution where necessary. Uses written and oral communication effectively in persuasive arguments.</td>
<td>• Discussion leading&lt;br&gt;• Formal Speech&lt;br&gt;• Peer review exercise&lt;br&gt;• Writing assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Creativity &amp; problem solving: Creatively applies discipline-based and/or cross-discipline-based knowledge to discover and design a variety of forms often using a problem-solving strategy</td>
<td>• Discussion leading&lt;br&gt;• Writing assignments&lt;br&gt;• Peer review exercise&lt;br&gt;• Final research paper and formal speech</td>
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**Instructions for completing the student self-evaluation using online PICC form:**
1. Click this [link](#), or go to [honors.colostate.edu/picc](http://honors.colostate.edu/picc) in your web browser.
2. Log in with your eName and password.
3. Click on the blue “Create New” button at the top of the page to bring up the PICC Entry Form.
4. At the top of this new page is a link to the full PICC rubric, which you should review before completing the form.
5. The Assessment Type, Student, and Semester fields should be filled in for you.
6. Choose your instructor from the drop down menu.
7. Choose the course for which you are filling out this evaluation from the drop down menu.
8. Choose the level (B, D, P, and M, for basic, developing, proficient, and mature, respectively) for each of the four skill categories. Note that comments justifying why you chose this level are required.
9. If you have any general comments, add them to the general comments field. This field is optional.
10. Once you have checked to ensure the form is correct, click the ‘Submit’ button. All done!

If you have any questions or technical problems, email Honors Tech Support at [honorstechsupport@colostate.edu](mailto:honorstechsupport@colostate.edu)
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**PARTICIPATION GRADING RUBRIC**

Participation is graded on a scale from 0 (lowest) through 4 (highest), using the criteria below. The criteria focus on what you demonstrate and do not presume to guess at what you know but do not demonstrate. This is because what you offer to the class is what you and others learn from. I expect the average level of participation to satisfy the criteria for a "3".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>Absent.</td>
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| 1     | Present, not disruptive.  
       | Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much.  
       | Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion. |
| 2     | Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic case or reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them.  
       | Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the case or reading), without elaboration or very infrequently (perhaps once a class).  
       | Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on.  
       | Demonstrates sporadic involvement. |
| 3     | Demonstrates good preparation: knows case or reading facts well, has thought through implications of them.  
       | Offers interpretations and analysis of case material (more than just facts) to class.  
       | Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion.  
       | Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement. |
| 4     | Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed case exceptionally well, relating it to readings and other material (e.g., readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.).  
       | Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of case material, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further.  
       | Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.  
       | Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement. |