

Anthropology of the Dead Body: The Corpse in Theory, Action, and Literature

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Undergraduate

Death and the dead body have come under an era of denial and invisibility, transforming society, science, and politics as we know it. The dead influence the way in which history is written, religion is practiced, health care is implemented, politics are performed, and life comes to an end. Needless to say, the dead body is an important site for critical anthropological analysis. This advanced undergraduate seminar draws upon current events, literature, and social theory to examine how culture, power, and knowledge are shaped by the human dead body. We will be examining feminist, post-colonial, and indigenous developments in Medical Anthropology, Archaeology, History, and Science, Technology, and Society Studies. In addition to close readings and group-led discussions, students will be writing two 15-page papers and posting a weekly one-page analysis and critique of the course readings. Our objective in this multidisciplinary seminar is to approach the dead as never *really* dead, but as reconstituted into multiple (and often conflicting) representations and spatiotemporal forms.

Books:

Verdery, Katherine. 1999. [The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change](#). New York: Columbia University Press.

Cohen, David William and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo. 1992. [Burying SM: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa](#).

Wagner, Sarah. 2008. [To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing](#). Berkeley: University California Press.

Weiss, Meira. 2002. [The Chosen Body: The Politics of the Body](#). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Week 1. Biopolitics: The Dead Body and the State

How do the dead animate the political?

Verdery, Katherine. 1999. Introduction: Corpses on the Move; Dead Bodies Animate the Study of Politics. In [The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change](#). New York: Columbia University Press. 1–22, 23–53.

Foucault, Michel. 2003. 17 March 1976. In [Society Must be Defended](#). New York: Picador. 239–263.

Luzzatto, Sergio. 2005. The Ox of the Nation. In [The Body of Il Duce: Mussolini's Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy](#). New York: Metropolitan Books. 53–80.

Taussig, Michael. 1993. Maleficium: State Fetishism. In [Fetishism as Cultural Discourse](#). Emily Apter and William Pietz, eds. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 217–250.

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Weeks 2, 3, and 4. Knowledge Production: The Dead Body as Witness

How do the dead produce knowledge about the past and past violence?

Crossland, Zoe. 2009. [Of Clues and Signs: The Dead Body and its Evidential Traces](#). *American Anthropologist* 111(1):69–80.

Weiss, Meira. 2002. Choosing the Body: Pregnancy, Birth, Military, War, and Death. In [The Chosen Body: The Politics of the Body](#). Stanford: Stanford University Press. 27–64.

Robben, Antonius. 2000. State Terror in the Netherworld: Disappearance and Reburial in Argentina. In [Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror](#). Jeffrey A. Sluka, ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 91–113.

Haraway, Donna. 1997. Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. In [Modest Witness@Second Millennium.FemaleMan Meets OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience](#). New York: Routledge. 22–48.

Klima, Alan. 2001. [The Telegraphic Abject: Buddhist Meditation and the Redemption of Mechanical Reproduction](#). *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43(3): 552–582.

Cohen, David William and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo. 1992. Introduction; and One Body, Two Funerals. In [Burying SM: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa](#). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann and London: James Currey.

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Week 5. Subjectivity: The Work of the Dead and Technologies of Care
How does technology alter the dead body?

Wagner, Sarah. 2008. Technology of Repair. In [To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing](#). Berkeley: University California Press. 245–265.

Puig de la Bellacasa, María. 2009. [Touching Technologies, Touching Visions: The Reclaiming of Sensorial Experience and the Politics of Speculative Thinking](#). Subjectivity 28:297–315.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1993 The Sweet Scent of Decomposition. In C. Rojek and B. Turner, eds, [Forget Baudrillard?](#) London: Routledge. 22–46.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. 2008. Burying: New Lessons Caring for the Dead. In [This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War](#). New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 61–101.

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Weeks 6 and 7. Medical Techniques: Dead Bodies on Display
What are the ethics on displaying/ritualizing the dead?

Bynum, Carolina. 1995. [Why All the Fuss About the Body: A Medievalist's Perspective](#). Critical Inquiry 22(1):1–33.

Walter, Tony. 2004. [Plastination for Display: A New Way to Dispose the Dead](#). Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 10: 603–627.

Roach, Mary. 2003. Remains of the Author: Will She or Won't She? In [Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers](#). New York: Norton & Company. 281–292.

TallBear, Kimberly. 2012. [An Indigenous Ontological Reading of Cryopreservation Practices and Ethics \(and Why I'd Rather Think about](#)

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[Pipestone](#)). Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco, November 20.

Swazey, Kelli. 2013. Life that Doesn't End with Death. [TED Talk](#).

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2001. [Ishi's Brain, Ishi's Ashes](#). Anthropology Today 17:12-18.

Skloot, Rebecca. The Storm; The HeLa Factory. In [The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks](#). New York: Crown Publishers. 87-104.

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Weeks 8 and 9. Human Technologies of the Corpse: Disposable Bodies?
Which corpses are let to die, and which become disposable?

Troyer, John. 2010. [Technologies of the HIV Corpse](#). Medical Anthropology 29(2): 129-149.

Manz, Beatriz. 1984. [Mayas Celebrated and Mayas Persecuted](#). Letter to the Editor, in response to Grace Glueck [Untouched Mayan Tomb is Discovered](#). New York Times. June 1.

Gonzalez-Ruibal, Alfredo. 2008. [Time to Destroy: An Archaeology of Supermodernity](#). Current Anthropology 49(2):247-279.

Cram, Shannon. Forthcoming. [Becoming Jane: The Making and Unmaking of Hanford's Nuclear Body](#). Environment and Planning D: Society and Space.

Lee, Jae Rhim. 2011. My Mushroom Burial Suit. [TED Talk](#).

Week 10: ???

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

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5. _____

Purpose of Course & Format

My role here is to guide our discussions and structure activities on the course material and help you develop your analytical writing skills. The course will consist of presentations, discussions, activities, writing workshops, and videos. Engaging with the material through participation is vital to your success in this course.

Grading

- **Attendance (2.5%):** Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class. You will be allowed two “freebie” days for which you will not be penalized for being absent. Beyond that, you will lose **1%** point for every section missed. Your grades are highly dependent on your presence, and will be a richer experience when all students are present.
 - *Absence* is defined as (1) an excused absence (e.g., being sick with a note from a doctor, religious observance), and (2) an unexcused absence (e.g., not showing up to section).
 - *Lateness* is defined as arriving more than 10 minutes after section starts. At Berkeley, courses usually start at 10 past the hour. If you plan to be later than this, need to leave early, or will have a scheduling conflict on a regular basis, please let me know ahead of time. Like with absences, you are allowed to be late twice and beyond that you will lose **0.5%** point every time you are late to section. If you do come late, it is your responsibility to make sure that I do not mark absent on the roster. Please do not disrupt the class--inform me that you were late at the end of class.
- **Participation (2.5%):** You are required to participate in section. Participation can take on many forms: coming to office hours, engaging in group discussion, or asking questions in class.
- **Précis (25%):** Each week, you will be required to post on bspace a one-page review of the course readings at least 24 hours before section. Your weekly précis should include a summary and discussion of readings focusing on (1) the primary argument, (2) the evidentiary basis of analysis, (3) the intellectual and disciplinary context, and (4) your critique. (See attached précis sample).
 - A *late assignment* is defined as turning in your précis less than 24 hours before section. You will lose **0.5%** point for turning in your précis late, and an additional **0.5%** point for not turning in a précis at all.
- **Two 15-page Papers (30% and 40%):** You will be required to turn in two papers based on the course readings and topics. You will be graded based

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on the following: a first draft of your paper, peer-review of another student's paper, and your final submission.

Grade Disputes

If you have a dispute about your attendance, participation, paper, or précis grade, you will be required to clearly write out each item you wish to dispute. Submit your dispute prior to meeting with me in person so that I can review the dispute and consider its merits.

Scheduling Conflicts

Please notify me by the end of **Week 1** if you have any known of potential scheduling conflicts (e.g., religious observances, graduate/medical school interviews, team activities). I will try my best to help you make accommodations.

Office Hours

Office hours is a time when you can talk to me outside of class about concerns or questions you may have about assigned readings, your writing development, or anything else related to the course. I am highly responsive to students who come to my office hours and will certainly take the time to assist you in whatever way I can. If something unforeseen happens during the semester—academically or personally—let me know immediately. I can be much more helpful if you don't wait until the end of the semester to talk to me.

Email Policy

It is in your best interest to ask your questions after class or during my office hours (or other scheduled appointment time). Save email for emergencies only (e.g., emailing me that you won't be coming to class due to a sudden illness, you have to cancel office hours). You will receive a more thorough explanation by asking me questions in person rather than through email as I cannot respond to emails with lengthy questions or requests to read and respond to chunks of your paper/précis. My responses will be limited to no more than a short paragraph (4–6 sentences max) and will be answered within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. If you have larger conceptual questions that will take time to review, please make use of office hours or bring these questions to section.

Laptops, Phones, and other Hand-Held Devices

This is a discussion section and you will not need to use any devices.

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Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

Any work submitted by you that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not been previously submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. You may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, websites, or other sources, but only with proper citation. Please see me if you are unclear proper citation and the expectations for completing an assignment.

Course Materials Note-Taking Policy

I encourage you to take notes from section and to share them among yourselves. However, you may not post notes or the materials I provide on any website, or disseminate them in any way without my prior, written permission. The same holds true for all course materials.

Disabled Students Program (DSP)

If you have an accommodation letter from DSP, please have it sent to me and/or Professor Cohen *no later than TWO weeks prior to the first midterm* so that we can make proper arrangements.

Campus Resources

Students with Disabilities:

If you need disability-related accommodations in this class, if you have emergency medical information you wish to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please inform me immediately in private, after class or during my office hours. For more information on services available to student with disabilities please visit the website or office of the Disabled Students' Program: <http://dsp.berkeley.edu/>.

Student Learning Center:

The Student Learning Center provides a variety of services for students to assist them with their coursework and assignments. Study groups, writing consultations and a variety of workshops are all available. Cesar Chavez Student Center, Lower Sproul Plaza <http://slc.berkeley.edu/general/index.htm>

Counseling and Psychological Services:

The Tang Center provides counseling and psychological services for students struggling with any number of concerns: adjusting to school, deciding on a career or major, dealing with family or relationship issues, coping with personal crises. If you're struggling, they're here to help. Tang Center, 2222 Bancroft Way <http://uhs.berkeley.edu/students/counseling/cps.shtml>