

**Anthropology 370**  
**Life and Death in Anthropological Perspective**  
**Fall 2015**

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Class: Wednesdays 5:35-8:35, RAB 204  
Department of Anthropology  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
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**Important Dates:**

9/24 (Friday) IRB Certification due  
9/30: Project Proposal Due  
10/28, 11/06, 11/13: Class Presentations  
11/25: In-the-News Essay Due (dropbox)  
12/02: Descriptive Essays Due (hard copy)  
12/02 & 12/09: Class Presentations  
12/21: Final Analytic Essay Due (hard copy)

**Course Description**

This course offers students an introduction to the various ways in which cultural, medical, religious, political, economic, and forensic anthropologists approach the study of issues pertaining life and death, and the transition between them. Students will be able to examine social relations, continuity and change as they manifest in various cultures across the world as they become familiar with the complexity of the issues and the ideas around them. Through this exploration of life and death, the course also provides an overview of ideas developed and deployed by anthropologists ranging from classic works by some of the discipline's founding figures to contemporary analyses and theories including biopolitics, social abandonment, and political neglect.

This class will contribute to medical anthropology offerings.

**Learning Objectives**

This course contributes to Rutgers' mission to provide its graduates with "the skills and knowledge to be responsible citizens and productive contributors to society in their workplaces and in their intellectual, cultural, and social endeavors." In that spirit, by the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Articulate what anthropology is, how it is practiced, and what are some of its major concerns and significant contributions are, particularly in relation to the study of life and end of life issues.
- Engage anthropological ideas critically, apply them to social situations, and employ them to develop new insights.
- Demonstrate a complex understanding of multicultural, historical, and sociopolitical aspects of the world in which we live.
- Develop complex ideas and communicate them effectively in written and spoken form.

**Class Format.**

This class is designed on the principles of engaged learning, and thus places great emphasis in each student's learning process and skill development. The regular format of a three-hour class is typically divided into two main sections. The first segment is lead by the instructor, and it focuses participatory lectures, group discussions, and short film critiques. The second segment is student-lead, and it may include class presentations and mock debates as well as activities related to the students' class projects.

The reading materials are drawn from anthropology and its sister disciplines (sociology, geography, history, etc.) as well as journalistic accounts and government records. The level of difficulty of these materials varies, but it is assumed that students will devote the necessary time needed to complete and understand the assigned readings.

Throughout the term, students will design and undertake a project related to the course. At the end of the semester students will produce two products: a "product" that summarizes their findings and is in a format friendly to a broader audience (e.g., video, pamphlet or booklet, a poster, chart, etc.) and final report with their findings and their reflections. Students will receive and provide peer feedback throughout the semester.

## Evaluation Criteria

### Grading Scale (based on 1000 points)

A: 900-1000 points, B+: 850-899, B: 800-849, C+: 750-799, C: 700-749, D: 600-699, F: 0-599

### Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Attendance & preparedness	40%	(400 points, regular quizzes, 2 worst scores dropped)
Participation	10%	(50 points)
"In the News" Analytic Essay	10%	(100 Points)
Student Project (40%)		
Rutgers IRB Certification	5%	(50 Points)
Project Proposal	5%	(50 Points)
Descriptive Narrative	10%	(100 Points)
Class Presentation	10%	(100 Points)
Final Project Analysis	10%	(100 Points)
Total Possible	100%	(1000 points).

## Assignments

**Attendance & Preparedness:** Every session will start with a short quiz based on the reading(s) assigned for that day. Your lowest or missing score(s) will be dropped. Quizzes account for 400 points or 40% of your grade so do the readings and be on time.

**Participation:** Students are expected to be active members of the class and stay for the entire duration of each session.

**"In-the-news" Analytic Essay:** Find and discuss a news item relevant to the course. Outline how anthropological research and analysis might help us understand that issue better or see it differently. You must raw on materials and ideas discussed in class. 1,500 words.

### Class Project:

Students will propose and undertake a small ethnographic project through which they learn about cultural expectations and norms related to an important rite of passage from a family member or some other adult with whom they already have rapport. The project should be based on conversations and interviews. No participant-observation is required. However, if participant-observation becomes an option, students must check with the instructor prior to the activity. The class project will be graded in via four main assignments:

**IRB Certification:** Complete the online training, take the quiz, and turn in a copy of your certification letter via dropbox.

**Project Proposal:** A one-page description of your project including a clear statement regarding your main objective and subject(s).

**Descriptive Narrative of Rite:** Drawing from the data collected, students are expected to write an ethnographic description of the rite as explained by their informant (s).

**Class Presentation:** Offer a concise presentation of your findings and offer a preliminary analysis.

**Final Analytic Report:** As the course final, students are expected to write a short analytic essay (1000 words plus bibliography) in which they examine their project's findings and juxtapose them to the ideas and/or texts discussed in class.

**Late Assignments** will incur a 10% deduction per day.

## EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

**Class Conduct.** Students are expected to be a good citizen and active member of the class. Participation includes both actively listening and speaking. There will be no tolerance for violent, disrespectful, disruptive or unlawful behavior. Please see the University Code of Student Conduct available at <http://judicialaffairs.rutgers.edu>.

**Attendance, Absences, and Extraordinary Situations.** Students are expected to come to every class and stay for its entire duration. Students who must miss more than one class for justifiable reasons must see me in advance to negotiate alternative assignment (typically a 6-7 page essay on the readings for that week). Justifiable absences include those due to religious observance, participation in university-sponsored events or activities such as intercollegiate athletics, or documented chronic illness. A note from the Office of the Dean of Students may be requested in order to negotiate alternative assignments.

It is the student's responsibility to alert the instructor in advance about any specific issues, events or religious observances that might affect his/her attendance and/or class performance. The possibility of alternative assessments or assignments will be discussed and negotiated on a case-by-case basis preferably in advance.

The University has a **Self-Reporting Absence System** and encourages students to use it. In general, if you miss more than two classes and you feel we need to negotiate a plan of action to remedy your absences, you must come see me during office hours. Please remember that the class is designed to give you some flexibility.

**Assignments.** All assignments must be on time. Acceptable font types must resemble Times New Roman point 12 in size and legibility, display normal spacing between characters and double spaces between lines. Any citation style (MLA, Chicago, etc.) must be used. Assignments should be organized, edited, and proofread before submission. Students are encouraged to consult with the Writing Center (<http://wp.rutgers.edu/>) for additional help. Unless otherwise arranged or stated, electronic submissions are not be accepted.

**Academic Integrity & Plagiarism.** At the most basic level, students are expected not to cheat, lie, steal, or sabotage their learning and the learning of others. They are also expected not to aid and abet anyone who engages in any or all of these practices. In case of violations, the University's established course of action will be followed without hesitation. Students should consult and become familiar with Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

**Technology & Class Obstructions.** Cell phones, tablets, computers, and other personal gadgets are distracting to the user and, more importantly, to others around him or her. Hence, their use in the classroom is generally considered to be obstructive and disruptive to learning and academic progress, and because of this, it could also constitute a violation to the University's Policy of Academic Integrity and the Student Code of Conduct Section 10(K). Therefore,

- Cell phones must be silenced and put away during class.
- Students may not text, place, or take phone calls during class.
- Laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other gadgets must be put away during lectures, student presentations, films, etc, *unless* otherwise indicated.
- Students who require especial accommodations or anticipate having to respond to urgent calls must notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make special arrangements. Granted privileges will be revoked if personal devices are used for non specified purposes.
- The use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), videogames, shopping sites, and email is not allowed during class time.
- Students who fail to comply with these stipulations will be asked to leave class for the rest of the period.
- Devices may be used freely during class breaks.

**Email Protocol.** Students are encouraged to contact the professor in person during office hours, before or after class in lieu of using email. Students should consult this syllabus and Sakai for answers first, and be proper in their correspondence if they decide to use email. All email must be labeled "Anthro 250" and be followed by a descriptive subject headline

**Disabilities.** Students who need or think they might need special accommodations are especially encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services at [dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu), (732) 932-2848. Students may contact the instructor personally or have ODS contact her. The instructor will make every effort to follow their recommendations.

## Required Texts & Other Materials

Articles and links to other readings will be available on Sakai.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1: Introduction

9/02. Course Introduction & syllabus overview

### Week 2: Life, Death & Anthropology

9/09

- Fabian, Johannes. (1973) "How others die: Reflections on the Anthropology of Death" (49-61)  
Palgi, Phyllis and Henry Abramovitch. (1984) "Death: A Cross-Cultural Perspective." Annual Review of Anthropology. 13: 385-414.  
Kaufman, Sharon and Lynn Morgan. "The Anthropology of the Beginnings and Ends of Life." Annual Review of Anthropology. 34:317-333  
Boas, Franz. "The Origin of Death." The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 30, No. 118 (Oct. - Dec., 1917), pp. 486-491

### Week 3: Early Anthropological Approaches

9/16

- Ariès, Philippe. (2004) "The Hour of Our Death." *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. Malen, MA: Blackwell, pp. 40-48  
Kroeber, A. L. (1927) Disposal of the Dead Disposal of the Dead. American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jul., 1927), pp. 308-315.  
Malinowski, Bronislaw "Death and the reintegration of the group." Magic Science and Religion. 29-34  
Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. Structure and Function in Primitive Society. "Introduction," (1-14).

### Week 4: Death, Ritual & Society

9/23

- Van Gennep, Arnold. 1960. "Funerals." In *The Rites of Passage*. 146-165.  
Bloch, Maurice. 1982. "Death, women and power." In *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. M. Bloch and J. Parry, eds. 211-230.  
Catedra, Maria. 1992 "Kinds of Death and the House." In *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. Malen, MA: Blackwell, pp 77-90.  
Durkheim, Emile. "The Social Element of Suicide." *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. pp. 297-325.

### Week 5: Grief & Mourning

\*\*\* Project Proposal Due \*\*\*

9/30

- Rosaldo, Renato "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage." In *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (1993 [1989]), pp. 1-21.  
Scheper-Huges, Nancy. "Death Without Weeping." In *Death Mourning and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. (2004) pp 179-193.  
Sharp, Lesley A. 2007. *Bodies, Commodities, and Biotechnologies: Death, Mourning, and Scientific Desire in the Realm of Human Organ Transfer*. New York: Columbia University Press. (Chapter 1. The Good Death: Managing and Memorializing the Dead).

### Week 6: The Missing

10/07

- Kaplan, Danny. 2008. "Commemorating a suspended death: Missing soldiers and national solidarity in Israel." *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 35(3): pp. 413-427.

Robben, Antonius C. G. M. 2000. "State Terror in the Netherworld: Disappearance and Reburial in Argentina." In *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror*. 91-113.

**Week 7. The Social Life of Human Remains.**

10/14

- Watson, James. 1982. "Of Flesh and Bones: The Management of Death Pollution in Cantonese Society." In *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. M. Bloch and J. Parry, eds. 155-186.
- Segal, Daniel. 1988. "A Patient So Dead: American Medical students and their Cadavers." *Anthropological Quarterly*. 61(1):17-25.
- Roach, Mary. *Stiff*. Selections TBA
- Margaret Lock. 1997, "Displacing Suffering: The Reconstruction of Death in North America and Japan." In *Social Suffering*. A. Kleinman, V. Das, and M. Lock, eds. 207-244.

**Week 8: Between Life and Death: Organ Transplants**

10/21

- Sharp, Lesley A. 2006. *"We are the dead men: Mind Over Matter." Strange Harvest: Organ Transplants, Denatured Bodies, and the Transformed Self*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pp. 42-100
- Lock, Margaret. 2002. *Twice Dead: Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Selections TBA
- Wailoo, Keith, Julie Livingston and Peter Guranaccia. 2004. "Chronicles of an accidental death" In *A death Retold: Jessica Santillan, the Bungled Transplant, and Paradoxes of Medical Citizenship*. 1-18.
- Interview with Nancy Schepper Hughes. "Dispelling the Myth: The Reality of Organs Trafficking." [http://www.threemonkeysonline.com/threemonkey\\_article\\_organ\\_trafficking\\_interview\\_nancy\\_schepper-hughes.htm](http://www.threemonkeysonline.com/threemonkey_article_organ_trafficking_interview_nancy_schepper-hughes.htm).

**Week 9: Living with Death \*\*\* Class Presentations \*\*\***

10/28

- Petryna, Adriana. Ch. 1 "Life Politics After Chernobyl." 2002 *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 1-32.
- Fassin, Didier. 2008. *The Politics of Death: Race, War, Biopower, and AIDS in the Post-Apartheid*. 151-165.
- Biehl, Joao 2005 "Vita." *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 35-66.

**Week 10: Biopolitics, Biopower and the Politics of Life \*\*\* Class Presentations \*\*\***

11/04

- Foucault, Michel. *The birth of biopolitics: lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*
- Foucault, Michel. "Biopower." In *The Foucault Reader*. P. Rabinow, ed.

**Week 11: Life, Death, & The Neoliberal Nation-State \*\*\* Class Presentations \*\*\***

11/11

- Membe, Achille. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture: Documentary on 9/11 and its aftermath*
- Comaroff, Jean 2007 *Beyond Bare Life: AIDS, (Bio)Politics, and the Neoliberal Order*. *Public Culture* 19(1):197-219.
- Butler, Judith. 2004. "Violence, Mourning, Politics" *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso. pp. 19-49

**Week 12: Applying Anthropology: Deaths on the U.S.-Mexico Border, Forensic Approaches, Cultural Concerns & the World of Policy Recommendations**

11/18

- Sanford, Victoria. 2008. On the Frontlines: Forensic Anthropology. In *A Companion to Latin American Anthropology*. D. Poole, ed. Malden, MA: Oxford. 484-501.
- Anderson, Bruce E., Bruce O. Parks. 2008. "Symposium on Border Crosser Deaths: Introduction." *Journal of Forensic Science*. 53(1):6-7
- Anderson, Bruce E. 2008. "Identifying the Dead: Methods Utilized by the Pima County (Arizona) Office of the Medical Examiner for Undocumented Border Crossers 2001-2006." *Journal of Forensic Science*. 53(1):8-15.
- Hinkes, Madeleine. 2008. Migrant Deaths Along the California-Mexico Border: An Anthropological Perspective." *Journal of Forensic Science*. 53(1):16-20.
- Fulginiti, Laura C. "Fatal Footsteps: Murder of Undocumented Border Crossers in Maricopa County, Arizona." *Journal of Forensic Science*. 53(1):41-45.
- Baker, Lori E. and Erich J. Baker. 2008. "Reuniting Families: An Online Database to Aid in the Identification of Undocumented Immigrant Remains." *Journal of Forensic Science*. 53(1):50-53.

**Week 13**

**\*\*\* "In-the-News Analytic Essay" Due (via dropbox)\*\*\***

11/25 – Individual Consultations on Class Projects

**Week 14. 12/02:**

**\*\*\* Descriptive Ethnographic Essays Due\*\*\***

Class Presentations

**Week 15. 12/09**

Class Presentations

**Finals Due: December 21 by 4:00 p.m.**

Please take essays in hard copy to the Anthropology Department's Front Desk (Ruth Adams Bldg. 306)