University of Edinburgh
School of Social & Political Science
Social Anthropology
2015-2016

The Anthropology of Death
(SCAN10034)

Key Information

Course Organiser
Dr Dimitri Tsintjilonis
Email: D.Tsintjilonis@ed.ac.uk
Room 5.30
Chrystal MacMillan Building, George Square
Guidance & Feedback Hours: Tuesdays, 12.00 – 14.00

Location
Semester 2
Tuesdays, 14.10 – 16.00
Elliot Room, Minto House

Course Secretary
Ewen Miller
Email: Ewen.Miller@ed.ac.uk
Undergraduate Teaching Office, Ground Floor, Chrystal MacMillan Building

Assessment deadlines
- Short Essay: 12 noon Tuesday 9th February 2016
- Long Essay: 12 noon Tuesday 5th April 2016

Aims
Is death a universal of the human condition or a culturally bound habit of thought? Focusing on a variety of ethnographic contexts, the basic aim of this course is to explore some of the ways in which death has been (re)presented in order to be resisted or embraced. As this exploration revolves around the ‘discourse’ of anthropology, manifested in the changing theoretical attitudes towards the ethnography of mortuary rites, it also attempts to highlight a deeper affinity between the ‘reality’ of death and the anthropological quest for comparative knowledge.

Learning Outcomes
- Students will gain a clear understanding of the issues and debates that animate the anthropology of death.
- They will be able to appreciate that much of what we call ‘culture’ or ‘society’ is embodied in our response to death.
- They will be capable of utilizing a number of death ethnographies to engage critically with a variety of important comparative concepts (i.e., personhood, exchange, embodiment, self, etc.) and reflect on the project of anthropology as a whole.
- They will recognize the main differences and similarities between the various theoretical approaches to the comparative study of death and engage critically with them.
Teaching
The course will consist of a combination of lectures (including, perhaps, a few from guests), individual or group student presentations, and class discussions. Beyond the need to debate some of the central issues, the exact class format can be flexible (depending on student numbers and their interests). Students are encouraged to do their own bibliographical work and to follow up bibliographical references as appropriate. Apart from the main class on Tuesdays, there will be one seminar every week (G.01, 50 George Square, Wed 10.00 – 10.50 OR Room B.57, Old College, 11.10 – 12.00), starting in Week 2.

Lectures will be held in conjunction with postgraduates on their course 'Anthropology of Death' (PGSP11047).

Assessment
Students will be assessed by:

(i) A short essay (word-limit: 1500) due on Tuesday 9th February 2016; this carries a weighting of 20% towards the final overall mark for the course
(ii) A longer (word-limit: 2500) essay due on Tuesday 5th April 2016, this carries a weighting of 80% towards the final overall mark for the course

Short Essay Topic
According to Hertz, in what sense is death ‘the object of a collective representation’?

Long Essay Topics
Topics will be handed out in Week 5.

The following are some of the criteria through which the essays will be marked. However, it is important to note that the overall mark is a result of a holistic assessment of the assignment as a whole.

- Does the essay address the question with sufficient focus?
- Does the essay show a grasp of the relevant concepts and knowledge?
- Does the essay demonstrate a logical and effective pattern of argument?
- Does the essay support an argument with relevant examples?
- Does the essay demonstrate reflexivity and critical thinking in relation to arguments and evidence?
- Is the essay written clearly and convincingly?
- Is the essay adequately presented in terms of: correct referencing and quoting; spelling, grammar and style; layout and visual presentation?

Please refer to Appendix 1 for additional information about assessment and submission procedures.

Communications
You are strongly encouraged to use email for routine communication with lecturers. We shall also use email to communicate with you, e.g., to assign readings for the second hour of each class. All students are provided with email addresses on the university system, if you are not sure of your address, which is based on your matric number, check your EUCLID database entry using the Student Portal.

This is the ONLY email address we shall use to communicate with you. Please note that we will NOT use ‘private’ email addresses. It is therefore essential that you check your university email regularly, preferably each day.
Lecture Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.01.2016</td>
<td>Introduction: Universals and ‘Cultural’ Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19.01.2016</td>
<td>Death and the Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26.01.2016</td>
<td>Death and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>02.02.2016</td>
<td>Death and the Cosmos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>09.02.2016</td>
<td>Dying persons, Grieving Selves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>23.02.2016</td>
<td>(In)dividual Bodies, (In)dividual Deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>01.03.2016</td>
<td>From Mor(t)ality to Immor(t)ality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>08.03.2016</td>
<td>Modern Lives, ‘Post-modern’ Deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.03.2016</td>
<td>Virtuous Lives, Virtual Deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.03.2016</td>
<td>Conclusion: Is death a ‘fiction’?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 – 19 February: Innovative Learning Week
Anthropology of Death Readings

All readings can be found in the Main Library (the Reserve Section, The Short Loan Section, and elsewhere). Those marked X are also available in the Library’s Offprint Collection. Everything else can be accessed electronically. Of course, it goes without saying, the various readings on this list are only my choices – you should feel free to develop your lists and discover your own ‘guiding threads’. Please don’t be put off by the size of the reading list! This is to act as a resource if you wish to explore a particular area yourself. Key readings are indicated for each week (*), but try not to restrict your attention to just these. It is important for you to find your own readings and follow that which is of interest to you.

1. Introduction: Universals and ‘Cultural’ Diversity

2. Death and the Self
Eliade, M. 1965 The myth of the eternal return. Princeton: Princeton University Press (Chapter 4) [X]

Ethnographies

For Discussion

3. Death and Society


**Ethnographies**


Okely, J. 1983 *The Traveller-Gypsies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Chapter 12) [X]


**For discussion**


4. Death and the Cosmos


Scubla, L. 2002 ‘Hocart and the royal road to anthropological understanding’. *Social Anthropology* 10(3): 359-376

**Ethnographies**


**For Discussion**


5. Dying Persons, Grieving Selves


*Rosaldo, R. 2004 ‘Grief and a headhunter’s rage: on the cultural force of emotions’, In A.G.M. Robben (ed.), *Death, Mourning, and Burial: a cross-cultural*
Rosenblatt, P.C. 1997 ‘Grief in small-scale societies’. In C. M. Parkes, P. Laungani and B. Young (eds), Death and Bereavement Across Cultures. London and New York: Routledge [X]

*Seremetakis, C.N. 1991 The last word: women, death, and divination in inner Mani. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (Chapter 1) [X]

**Ethnographies**

Conklin, B. 1995 “Thus Are Our Bodies Thus was Our Custom”: Mortuary Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society. American Ethnologist 22(1): 75-101


**For Discussion**


------Innovative Learning Week------

**6. (In)dividual Bodies, (In)dividual Deaths**


**Ethnographies**


**For Discussion**


**7. From Mor(t)ality to Immor(t)ality**


*Debord, G. 1990 Comments on the Society of the Spectacle. London: Verso (Chapters 1 & 2)[g. book]


**Ethnographies**

**For Discussion**


**Ethnographies**

**For Discussion**

9. Virtuous Lives, Virtual Deaths

**Ethnographies**
Meese, J et. al 2015 ‘Posthumous personhood and the affordances of digital media’. 

7
Stengs, I. 2009 ‘Death and disposal of the people’s singer’ *Mortality* 14(2): 102-118

For Discussion

10. Conclusion: Is death a ‘fiction’?
APPENDIX 1 – SUBMISSION & ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

Word Count Penalties

Short Essay:
Your short essay should be a maximum of 1500 words (excluding bibliography). Essays above 1500 words will be penalised using the Ordinary level criterion of 1 mark for every 20 words over length: anything between 1501 and 1520 words will lose one mark, between 1521 and 1540 two marks, and so on.

Long Essay:
Your long essay should be a maximum of 2500 words (excluding bibliography). Essays above 2500 words will be penalised using the Ordinary level criterion of 1 mark for every 20 words over length: anything between 2501 and 2520 words will lose one mark, between 2521 and 2540 two marks, and so on.

You will not be penalised for submitting work below the word limit. However, you should note that shorter essays are unlikely to achieve the required depth and that this will be reflected in your mark.

ELMA: Submission and return of coursework

Coursework is submitted online using our electronic submission system, ELMA. You will not be required to submit a paper copy of your work.

Marked coursework, grades and feedback will be returned to you via ELMA. You will not receive a paper copy of your marked coursework or feedback.

For information, help and advice on submitting coursework and accessing feedback, please see the ELMA wiki at: https://wwwwiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SPSITWiki/ELMA

Further detailed guidance on the essay deadline and a link to the wiki and submission page will be available on the course Learn page. The wiki is the primary source of information on how to submit your work correctly and provides advice on approved file formats, uploading cover sheets and how to name your files correctly.

When you submit your work electronically, you will be asked to tick a box confirming that your work complies with university regulations on plagiarism. This confirms that the work you have submitted is your own.

Occasionally, there can be technical problems with a submission. We request that you monitor your university student email account in the 24 hours following the deadline for submitting your work. If there are any problems with your submission the course secretary will email you at this stage.

We undertake to return all coursework within 15 working days of submission. This time is needed for marking, moderation, second marking and input of results. If there are any unanticipated delays, it is the course organiser’s responsibility to inform you of the reasons.

All our coursework is assessed anonymously to ensure fairness: to facilitate this process put your Examination number (on your student card), not your name or student number, on your coursework or cover sheet.

Important note to students

To ensure your coursework is submitted successfully, students should aim to upload their submissions at least 1 hour before the deadline.
Students are responsible for ensuring they have sufficient internet access and connection to submit their course work electronically. Technical difficulties and poor internet connection are not acceptable reasons for submitting work late.

You should monitor your university student email account in the 24 hours following the deadline for submitting your work. If there are any problems with your submission the course secretary will email you at this stage.

**Return of Feedback:**
Feedback for coursework will be returned online via ELMA the following dates:

- Short Essay = Tuesday, 1 March, 2016
- Long Essay = Tuesday, 26 April, 2016

**The Operation of Lateness Penalties**
Unlike in Years 1 and 2, **NO EXTENSIONS ARE GRANTED WITH RESPECT TO THE SUBMISSION DEADLINES FOR ANY ASSESSED WORK AT HONOURS LEVEL.**

Managing deadlines is a basic life-skill that you are expected to have acquired by the time you reach Honours. Timely submission of all assessed items (coursework, essays, project reports, etc.) is a vitally important responsibility at this stage in your university career. Unexcused lateness can put at risk your prospects of proceeding to Senior Honours and can damage your final degree grade.

If you miss the submission deadline for any piece of assessed work 5 marks will be deducted for each calendar day that work is late, up to a maximum of five calendar days (25 marks). Thereafter, a mark of zero will be recorded. There is no grace period for lateness and penalties begin to apply immediately following the deadline. For example, if the deadline is Tuesday at 12 noon, work submitted on Tuesday at 12.01pm will be marked as one day late, work submitted at 12.01pm on Wednesday will be marked as two days late, and so on.

Failure to submit an item of assessed work will result in a mark of zero, with potentially very serious consequences for your overall degree class, or no degree at all. It is therefore always in your interest to submit work, even if very late.

Please be aware that all work submitted is returned to students with a provisional mark and without applicable penalties in the first instance. The mark you receive on ELMA is therefore subject to change following the consideration of the Lateness Penalty Waiver Panel (please see below for further information) and the Board of Examiners.

**How to Submit a Lateness Penalty Waiver Form (LPW)**
If there are extenuating circumstances beyond your control which make it essential for you to submit work after the deadline you must fill in a ‘Lateness Penalty Waiver’ (LPW) form to state the reason for your lateness. This is a request for any applicable penalties to be removed and will be considered by the Lateness Penalty Waiver Panel.

Before submitting an LPW, please consider carefully whether your circumstances are (or were) significant enough to justify the lateness. Such circumstances should be serious and exceptional (e.g. not a common cold or a heavy workload). Computer failures are not regarded as justifiable reason for late submission. You are expected to regularly back-up your work and allow sufficient time for uploading it to ELMA.

You should submit the LPW form and supply an expected date of submission as soon as you are able to do so, and preferably before the deadline. Depending on the
circumstances, supporting documentation may be required, so please be prepared to provide this where possible.

LPW forms can be found in a folder outside your SSO’s office, on online at:

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/undergraduate_courses/assessment_and_regulations/coursework_requirements/coursework_requirements_honours

Forms should be returned by email or, if possible, in person to your SSO. They will sign the form to indicate receipt and will be able to advise you if you would like further guidance or support.

Please Note: Signing the LPW form by either your SSO or Personal Tutor only indicates acknowledgment of the request, not the waiving of lateness penalties. Final decisions on all marks rest with Examination Boards.

There is a dedicated SSO for students in each subject area in SPS. To find out who your SSO is, and how to contact them, please find your home subject area on the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Name of SSO</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>Alex Solomon</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Alex.Solomon@ed.ac.uk">Alex.Solomon@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>(0131) 650 4253</td>
<td>Room 1.05, CMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relations</td>
<td>Rebecca Shade</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Rebecca.Shade@ed.ac.uk">Rebecca.Shade@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>(0131) 651 3896</td>
<td>Room 1.05, CMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Anthropology</td>
<td>Vanessa Feldberg</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Vanessa.Feldberg@ed.ac.uk">Vanessa.Feldberg@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>(0131) 650 3933</td>
<td>Room 1.04, CMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Policy</td>
<td>Louise Angus</td>
<td><a href="mailto:L.Angus@ed.ac.uk">L.Angus@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>(0131) 650 3923</td>
<td>Room 1.08, CMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Jane Marshall</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jane.Marshall@ed.ac.uk">Jane.Marshall@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>(0131) 650 3912</td>
<td>Room 1.07, CMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Karen Dargo</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Karen.Dargo@ed.ac.uk">Karen.Dargo@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>(0131) 651 1306</td>
<td>Room 1.03, CMB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
<td>Sue Renton</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Sue.Renton@ed.ac.uk">Sue.Renton@ed.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>(0131) 650 6958</td>
<td>Room 1.09, CMB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are a student from another School, you should submit your LPW to the SSO for the subject area of the course, Vanessa Feldberg.

**Plagiarism Guidance for Students: Avoiding Plagiarism:**
Material you submit for assessment, such as your essays, must be your own work. You can, and should, draw upon published work, ideas from lectures and class discussions, and (if appropriate) even upon discussions with other students, but you must always make clear that you are doing so. **Passing off anyone else’s work** (including another student’s work or material from the Web or a published author) **as your own is plagiarism** and will be punished severely.
When you upload your work to ELMA you will be asked to check a box to confirm the work is your own. ELMA automatically runs all submissions through ‘Turnitin’, our plagiarism detection software, and compares every essay against a constantly-updated database, which highlights all plagiarised work. Assessed work that contains plagiarised material will be awarded a mark of zero, and serious cases of plagiarism will also be reported to the College Academic Misconduct officer. In either case, the actions taken will be noted permanently on the student’s record.

For further details on plagiarism see the Academic Services’ website:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/students/undergraduate/discipline/plagiarism

Data Protection Guidance for Students:
In most circumstances, students are responsible for ensuring that their work with information about living, identifiable individuals complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The document, Personal Data Processed by Students, provides an explanation of why this is the case. It can be found, with advice on data protection compliance and ethical best practice in the handling of information about living, identifiable individuals, on the Records Management section of the University website at:

http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/records-management-section/data-protection/guidance-policies/dpforstudents
APPENDIX 2 – GENERAL INFORMATION

Students with Disabilities

The School welcomes disabled students with disabilities (including those with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia) and is working to make all its courses as accessible as possible. If you have a disability special needs which means that you may require adjustments to be made to ensure access to lectures, seminars or exams, or any other aspect of your studies, you can discuss these with your Student Support Officer or Personal Tutor who will advise on the appropriate procedures.

You can also contact the Student Disability Service, based on the University of Edinburgh, Third Floor, Main Library. You can find their details as well as information on all of the support they can offer at: http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service

Learning Resources for Undergraduates:
The Study Development Team at the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) provides resources and workshops aimed at helping all students to enhance their learning skills and develop effective study techniques. Resources and workshops cover a range of topics, such as managing your own learning, reading, note making, essay and report writing, exam preparation and exam techniques.

The study development resources are housed on 'LearnBetter' (undergraduate), part of Learn, the University's virtual learning environment. Follow the link from the IAD Study Development web page to enrol: www.ed.ac.uk/iad/undergraduates

Workshops are interactive: they will give you the chance to take part in activities, have discussions, exchange strategies, share ideas and ask questions. They are 90 minutes long and held on Wednesday afternoons at 1.30pm or 3.30pm. The schedule is available from the IAD Undergraduate web page (see above).

Workshops are open to all undergraduates but you need to book in advance, using the MyEd booking system. Each workshop opens for booking 2 weeks before the date of the workshop itself. If you book and then cannot attend, please cancel in advance through MyEd so that another student can have your place. (To be fair to all students, anyone who persistently books on workshops and fails to attend may be barred from signing up for future events).

Study Development Advisors are also available for an individual consultation if you have specific questions about your own approach to studying, working more effectively, strategies for improving your learning and your academic work. Please note, however, that Study Development Advisors are not subject specialists so they cannot comment on the content of your work. They also do not check or proof read students’ work.

To make an appointment with a Study Development Advisor, email: iad.study@ed.ac.uk

(For support with English Language, you should contact the English Language Teaching Centre).

Discussing Sensitive Topics:
The discipline of Social Anthropology addresses a number of topics that some might find sensitive or, in some cases, distressing. You should read this handbook carefully and if there are any topics that you may feel distressed by you should seek advice from the course convenor and/or your Personal Tutor.

13
For more general issues you may consider seeking the advice of the Student Counselling Service, [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-counselling)

Guide to Using LEARN for Online Seminar Sign-Up

The following is a guide to using LEARN to sign up for your seminar. If you have any problems using the LEARN sign up, please contact the course secretary by email ([Ewen.Miller@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Ewen.Miller@ed.ac.uk)).

Seminar sign up will open on Tuesday, 12 January, after the first lecture has taken place, and will close at 12 noon on the Friday of Week 1 (15 January).

**Step 1 – Accessing LEARN course pages**

Access to LEARN is through the MyEd Portal. You will have been given a log-in and password during Freshers’ Week. Once you are logged into MyEd, you should see a tab called ‘Courses’ which will list the active LEARN pages for your courses under ‘myLEARN’.

**Step 2 – Welcome to LEARN**

Once you have clicked on the relevant course from the list, you will see the Course Content page. There will be icons for the different resources available, including one called ‘Seminar Sign Up’. Please take note of any instructions there.

**Step 3 – Signing up for your seminar**

Clicking on Seminar Sign Up will take you to the sign up page where all the available seminar groups are listed along with the running time and location.

Once you have selected the group you would like to attend, click on the ‘Sign up’ button. A confirmation screen will display.

**IMPORTANT:** If you change your mind after having chosen a seminar you cannot go back and change it and you will need to email the course secretary. Reassignments once seminars are full or after the sign-up period has closed will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

Seminars have restricted numbers and it is important to sign up as soon as possible. The seminar sign up will only be available until 12 noon on the Friday of Week 1 (15 January) so that everyone is registered to a group ahead of seminars commencing in Week 2. If you have not yet signed up for a seminar by this time you will be automatically assigned to a group which you will be expected to attend.

**External Examiner**

The External Examiner for the Social Anthropology Honours programme is:

Dr Adam Reed  
Senior Lecturer  
Department of Social Anthropology  
University of St Andrews