

SOCA2022: Grave matters: anthropology of death and dying

Callaghan and Online
Semester 2 - 2024



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

The School of Humanities, Creative Industries and Social Sciences is committed to providing an inclusive environment in which all cultures are accorded respect and all students and staff are expected to act with honesty, fairness, trustworthiness and accountability in dealings with others. The School recognises and respects the unique histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their unbroken relationship with the lands and the waters of Australia over millennia, and the validity of Aboriginal ways of knowing. We are dedicated to reconciliation and to offering opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access and succeed in higher education.

OVERVIEW

Course Description

The anthropology of death is a capacious field that link together broad debates of violence, suffering, power, socio-environmental relations, medicine, faith, gender, race, modernity, secularity, and many more. Death and dying are universal experiences that are shared by all that live. As a cultural universal, it presents a unique lens to interrogate the human experience and the core question of anthropology, namely 'what does it mean to be human'? Through the study of death and dying, we can get insight into diverse aspects of cultural knowledge and practice as these manifests in rituals, rites of passage, symbols and taboos. In this course, we will look at how death and dying form part of everyday life, culture and sociality, how belief in the afterlife, connections to spirits and notions of an-other create boundaries of belonging, exclusion and inclusion, engagement with our environment and 'nature', memory and memorialising. We will look at death and dying beyond trauma and discord, and, through interrogating mythologies and notions of ghosts and monsters, vampires and zombies, instead see how end of life forms part of living.

Academic Progress Requirements

Nil

Assumed Knowledge Contact Hours

SOCA1020 What is Anthropology?

Callaghan Lecture

Face to Face On Campus

1 hour(s) per week(s) for 12 week(s) starting Week 1

Tutorial

Face to Face On Campus

1 hour(s) per week(s) for 12 week(s)

Online Lecture

Online

1 hour(s) per week(s) for 12 week(s)

Tutorial

Online

1 hour(s) per week(s) for 12 week(s)

COURSE OUTLINE

www.newcastle.edu.au

CRICOS Provider 00109J

Unit Weighting 10
Workload Students are required to spend on average 120-140 hours of effort (contact and non-contact) including assessments per 10 unit course.

CONTACTS

Course Coordinator **Callaghan and Online**
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Consultation: Consultations available via email.

Teaching Staff Other teaching staff will be advised on the course Canvas site.

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SYLLABUS

Course Content Mythologies of death: Indigenous and non-Indigenous myths and rituals; the undead. Politics of death and extinction: globalisation; hidden deaths; massacres; euthanasia; the right to live, the right to die; extinction debates. Social death: precarious lives. Memory and memorialising: understanding our present through our relationship to the dead; the stories of the dead.

Course Learning Outcomes **On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:**

1. Examine how death and dying forms part of and informs everyday life, cultural practice, and knowledge.
2. Contribute to contemporary debates about life and death.
3. Critically analyse how the politics of death form part of their own lives and culture.
4. Interpret death and dying as a socio-cultural phenomenon.
5. Appraise the role of ethnographic research methods and apply ethnographic research skills in the study of living cultures.

Course Materials All course materials, listed below, are available on Canvas.

SCHEDULE

Week	Week Begins	Topic	Learning Activity	Assessment Due
1	22 Jul	Introduction: Why Grave Matters?		
2	29 Jul	Mythologies of Death: Rituals	Smith 2018; Evans-Pritchard 1949	
3	5 Aug	Mythologies of Death:	Musharbash 2014; Bubandt	

		Monsters	2012	
4	12 Aug	Mythologies of Death: Afterlife	Hales 2019; Gould, Kohn & Gibbs 2018.	Assessment 1: 13 August, 11.59pm
5	19 Aug	Politics: Extinction and the Nonhuman	Van Dooren & Rose 2017; García 2019; Sodikoff 2012	
Recess				
6	2 Sep	Politics: Untimely Deaths and Erasure	Mulder 2020; Gomez-Temesi 2018	Assessment 2: 3 September, 11.59pm
7	9 Sep	Precarity: Sociality and Marginality	Biehl 2005	
8	16 Sep	Precarity: Materiality and Governmentality	De León 2015; Wagner 2008	
9	23 Sep	Precarity: Survival	Bauman 1992; Koksvik & Richard 2023	Assessment 3: 24 September, 11.59pm
Recess				
10	7 Oct	Memory: Memorialising	Vevaina 2023; Podcast	
11	14 Oct	Memory: Representation and Resistance	Peers 2009; Chao 2023	
12	21 Oct	Memory: Día de los Muertos	Sunnucks 2016; Podcast NPR	
13	28 Oct			Assessment 4: 29 October, 11.59pm
Exams				
Exams				

ASSESSMENTS

This course has 4 assessments. Each assessment is described in more detail in the sections below.

	Assessment Name	Due Date	Involvement	Weighting	Learning Outcomes
1	Executive summary (250 words) and oral presentation	13 August, 11.59pm	Individual	10%	3, 5
2	Field Report	3 September, 11.59pm	Individual	20%	1, 3, 5
3	Major Project	24 September, 11.59pm	Individual	40%	2, 3, 4
4	Ethnographic essay (2000 words)	29 October, 11.59pm	Individual	30%	1, 2, 4

Late Submissions

The mark for an assessment item submitted after the designated time on the due date, without an approved extension of time, will be reduced by 10% of the possible maximum mark for that assessment item for each day or part day that the assessment item is late. Note: this applies equally to week and weekend days.

Assessment 1 - Executive summary (250 words) and oral presentation

Assessment Type Description

Presentation

Students will choose one of the themes or concepts from Weeks 2, 3, or 4 and then find a news story, podcast, or documentary that touches on the chosen theme. Students will prepare and deliver an in-class (Callaghan students) or recorded (online students) presentation that introduces the story and analyses it through an anthropological lens that draws on the student's chosen theme or concept. In addition to the presentation, students will submit a 250-word executive summary that analyses the story using themes and theories from class.

Weighting

10%

Length

250 words

Due Date

13 August, 11.59pm

Submission Method

Online – Turnitin via Canvas

Assessment Criteria

Additional information is provided on Canvas.

Return Method

Online

Feedback Provided

Returned work

Opportunity to Reattempt Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

Assessment 2 - Field Report

Assessment Type Written Assignment
Description Students will write an op-ed that responds to a current issue, and which relates to the course materials and discussions. Students will choose a current news item relating to the course and write an op-ed that builds an argument and seeks to persuade the public to support the student's position on the issue. While this is an opinion piece, students must ground their argument in evidence and research. The op-ed should seek to persuade readers by drawing on course materials and additional, supplementary research. Additional information on format at parameters will be covered in class and on Canvas.

Weighting 20%
Length 700 words
Due Date 3 September, 11.59pm
Submission Method Online – Turnitin via Canvas
Assessment Criteria Additional information is provided on Canvas.
Return Method Online
Feedback Provided Returned work
Opportunity to Reattempt Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

Assessment 3 - Major Project

Assessment Type Project
Description Graves in the everyday - students will identify a memorial marker in their community (gravestone, memorial plaque, ghost bike, mural, etc.). Students will visit the memorial to observe and analyse the marker, by taking note of its form, function, embedded meanings, and the way community members interact with it. What or who is being remembered? How does the form of the memorial shape ways of remembering? What forms of politics and/or rituals are embedded within the memorial. The project should respond to these questions while also reflecting on the student's experience of observing the memorial and the community. Think like an ethnographer! Observe, reflect, and pose new questions for future investigation! The project should include three components: 1) a written report that offers reflection and analysis that draws on field observations, course materials, and additional research (2000 words); 2) a photo series depicting components of the marker (4-5 photos); 3) fieldnotes from the observation(s).

Weighting 40%
Length 2000 word report, 4-5 photos, and 2 pages of fieldnotes
Due Date 24 September, 11.59pm
Submission Method Online – Turnitin via Canvas.
Assessment Criteria Additional information is provided on Canvas
Return Method Online
Feedback Provided Returned work
Opportunity to Reattempt Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

Assessment 4 - Ethnographic essay (2000 words)

Assessment Type Written Assignment
Description Drawing on the concepts and theories covered in this course, choose a ritual or gravely matter and examine its practice within a particular community. Students are encouraged to choose an international example and apply their ethnographic sensibilities to the analysis. To do so, the essay should draw on media stories, visual representations, social media, and academic texts to examine the chosen practice. The essay should provide background and context to the practice and offer theoretical and ethnographic insights that draw on the themes and theories from class. All essays must utilise texts from class.

Weighting 30%
Length 2000 words
Due Date 29 October, 11.59pm
Submission Method Online – Turnitin via Canvas

Assessment Criteria	Additional information is provided on Canvas.
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Returned work
Opportunity to Reattempt	Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Grading Scheme

This course is graded as follows:

Range of Marks	Grade	Description
85-100	High Distinction (HD)	Outstanding standard indicating comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an outstanding level of academic achievement; mastery of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
75-84	Distinction (D)	Excellent standard indicating a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a very high level of academic ability; sound development of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
65-74	Credit (C)	Good standard indicating a high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a high level of academic achievement; reasonable development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
50-64	Pass (P)	Satisfactory standard indicating an adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an adequate level of academic achievement; satisfactory development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
0-49	Fail (FF)	Failure to satisfactorily achieve learning outcomes. If all compulsory course components are not completed the mark will be zero. A fail grade may also be awarded following disciplinary action.

*Skills are those identified for the purposes of assessment task(s).

Communication Methods

Communication methods used in this course include:

- Canvas Course Site: Students will receive communications via the posting of content or announcements on the Canvas course site.
- Email: Students will receive communications via their student email account.
- Face to Face: Communication will be provided via face to face meetings or supervision.

Course Evaluation

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the University for the purposes of identifying areas of excellence and potential improvement.

Learning Analytics

The University uses an evidence-based approach to enhancing student learning and delivering support. Our careful analysis of data through learning analytics informs decision making processes related to student learning, academic outcomes, and support services. Learning analytics may be used to identify targeted individual opportunities for additional support services or interventions.

Oral Interviews (Vivas)

As part of the evaluation process of any assessment item in this course an oral examination (viva) may be conducted. The purpose of the oral examination is to verify the authorship of the material submitted in response to the assessment task. The oral examination will be conducted in accordance with the principles set out in the [Oral Examination \(viva\) Procedure](#).

In cases where the oral examination reveals the assessment item may not be the student's own work the case will be dealt with under the [Student Conduct Rule](#).

Academic Integrity and Ethical Academic Conduct Policy

All students are required to meet the academic integrity standards of the University. These standards reinforce the importance of integrity and honesty in an academic environment. Academic Integrity policies apply to all students of the University in all modes of study and in all locations.

Please refer to the [Academic Integrity and Ethical Academic Conduct Policy](#)

Adverse Circumstances

The University acknowledges the right of students to seek consideration for the impact of allowable adverse circumstances that may affect their performance in assessment item(s).

Applications for special consideration due to adverse circumstances will be made using the online Adverse Circumstances system where:

1. the assessment item is a major assessment item; or
2. the assessment item is a minor assessment item and the Course Co-ordinator has specified in the Course Outline that students may apply the online Adverse Circumstances system;
3. you are requesting a change of placement; or
4. the course has a compulsory attendance requirement.

Before applying you must refer to the [Adverse Circumstance Affecting Assessment Items Procedure](#).

Use of generative artificial intelligence in course assessments

It is critical that any work submitted for assessment is your own original work. Before using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, Microsoft Copilot, etc) in any assessable work you must ensure that such use is in line with the requirements for the course and expectations of your Course Coordinator

Misuse of AI tools may be considered a breach of the [University's Student Conduct Rule](#) and could result in disciplinary action.

Artificial Intelligence detection software may be used to review any work you submit. If you have used AI in any way other than has been expressly permitted by your course coordinator, you may be engaging in academic misconduct and be subject to penalties.

For information, refer to:

- [Generative AI Tools](#)
- [Academic Integrity](#)

Important Policy Information

The Help button in the Canvas Navigation menu contains helpful information for using the Learning Management System. Students should familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures at <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/respect-at-uni/policies-and-procedures> that support a safe and respectful environment at the University

This course outline was approved by the Head of School. No alteration of this course outline is permitted without Head of School approval. If a change is approved, students will be notified and an amended course outline will be provided in the same manner as the original.

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