A GLOBAL HISTORY OF DEATH

Course code: HH 4014    Instructor: Chen, Song-Chuan    Academic Unit: 4 AU
Venue and Time:  S4, LHS (Learning Hub South), TR+31; Monday; 1030-1430

Contact:    Administrative support
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COURSE OVERVIEW
How does a Chinese funeral in the twenty-first century compare with one conducted two hundred years earlier? How much does fengshui still direct the choice of burial ground or the location of a slot in the columbarium — and determine their prices? Where did the Saint Death come from and why the Catholic Church wants to expel her? What roles do dead bodies and bones as material objects play in history and in modern societies? Was there a difference between American and Singaporean funeral industries? What should we do in this scientific age with the concept of reincarnation and the Resurrection? These questions among other death practices and imaginations will be examined in this module. We will go through the recent research on death rituals and practices in the fields of history and anthropology. By analysing the original sources in English and English translation, along with a critical reading of secondary literature, we will debate how modern and how traditional are the changes in global death practices, and trace their history. We will also discuss topics such as the role of the state in shaping death practices, the persistence of the underworld in popular imagination, and how the dead exercised power from the graveyards and beyond.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
The module’s overall aim is to introduce students a global history of death. The course aims to:

- Provide a historical background for students’ knowledge of global history of death, and the centrality of death to everyday life.
- Explore the impact of globalization on traditional rituals, death practices, and imagination of death.
- Understand local forces in relation to globalization in the evolution of death related practices and imagination.
During the seminar students will do general discussions around a theme, student-led discussions, and student presentations that develop students’ transferable skills, such as their ability to research relevant information using variety of resources, to process and organize information, and to think creatively.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of the course, students will have developed knowledge and a critical understanding of:

- The history of death and death practices across regions and cultures.
- How modernization, secularization, urbanization, commercialization, globalization changed imagination of death and death practices.
- The economic-cultural significance and impact of relations between death and everyday life.
- The centrality of death in everyday life.

ASSESSMENT  (Further details on page 6-9)
100% Continual Assessment ; Assessment consists of the following three elements:

a) **Class Participation**: 10% (participation in discussion and attendance)
b) **Group Class-leading Exercise**: 15% (5% group grade; 10% intra group grade )
   This is a team-work task. The main purpose of the assignment is to have student generated course content, given that this is a 4000 level course. Each group will work on the week’s readings and the group will lead the discussion on the content for 30-50 minutes. This assignment will make students take initiative in their study, and learn in the process of thinking how to be an instructor and gain knowledge in the process. (Further instruction will be distributed in the class.)
c) **Group Research and Presentation**: 35% (10% group grade; 25% individual grade (15% intra group, 10% instructor grade—mainly on the day of presentation))
d) **Summative Assessment** 40 %
   Choice 1: Group Documentary Film Making (up to 3 persons working on a documentary film of 20-30 minutes, which needs to be uploaded to a website such as YouTube for assessment.)
   Choice 2: One Research Essay (5000-word, excluding notes and bibliography)

COURSE ARRANGEMENTS
Each week course contains students-led discussion (Group class-leading exercise), film & documentary showing, and discussion & debate

( **Between weeks 2 and 12, each week we will watch a film or a documentary before class discussion and debates**)  

WEEKLY COURSE OUTLINE

General Books on Death (pick one as your reading before class)
Connolly, Tristanne, Spectacular Death: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Mortality and (Un)Representability, Chicago University Press, 2011
Hockey, Jenny, Carol Komaromy, and Kate Woodthorpe (eds.), The Matter of Death: Space, Place and Materiality, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010
McManus, Ruth, Death in a Global Age, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012
Spellman, W. M., A Brief History of Death, Chicago University Press, 2014

W1, 13 Aug, Introduction to the course
Aubade read by Philip Larkin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDr_SRhJs80 (3:13)
Billie Holiday - Strange Fruit
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4ZyuULy9zs

W2, 20 Aug, Reincarnation
Required Readings
Gananath Obeyesekere, Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth, University of California Press, 2002

Further Readings
Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty (eds.) Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions, University of California Press, 2002

Documentary & Film:
Unmistaken Child 1 (A Documentary Film about Reincarnation)

Unmistaken Child 2 (A Documentary Film about Reincarnation)

W3, 27 Aug, Tibetan book of the dead
Required Readings
The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying (Harper and Collins, 1992)

Further Readings
Tibetan book of the dead
Facing Death: Full Lecture (Ram Dass. org)
https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?hl=en&shva=1#inbox/14e1bc3396c55304?projector=1

Documentary & Film
The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Way of Life (45 min)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gloEua0RSs
The Tibetan Book of the Dead The Great Liberation (45 min)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MUOpnJi3no
W4, 3 Sep, Egyptian Book of the Dead

Required Readings

Further Readings

Documentary & Film
The Egyptian Book Of The Dead (part one)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwkHnjS4_yo (49:39)

The Egyptian Book Of The Dead (part two)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXCZb00sB0 (33:43)

W5, 10 Sep, The Black Death

Required Readings
David Herlihy, Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*, Harvard University Press, 1997

Further Readings
John Aberth, *The Black Death 1348 - 1350: A Brief History with Documents*, St. Martin's, 2005

Documentary & Film
BBC Documentary THE BLACK DEATH
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fAhOVFp54E (48:50)

The Black Plague of Europe
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqXJ20qXASI (1:30:05)

W6, 17 Sep, Death in Japan

Required Readings

Further Readings

Documentary & Film:
Departure (DVD)

W7, 24 Sep, No Class, Hari raya Haji

1 October, Recess week: Please use this week to revise what you have learned
W8, 8 Oct, Death in China

Required Readings
James L. Watson, Evelyn S. Rawski (eds.), *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, University of California Press, 1990

Further Readings
忻钰坤 《殡棺》The Coffin In The Mountain (film)

**Documentary & Film:**
- DVD, *SEVEN DAYS IN HEAVEN* 父後七日 (90 minu)
  (can be bought from http://www.books.com.tw/exep/prod/dvd/dvfile.php?item=D020034883)

W9, 15 Oct, Death Cult in Mexico

Required Readings
R. Andrew Chesnut, *Santa Muerte: Devoted to Death, the Skeleton Saint* (Oxford University Press, 2012)

Further Readings
Fran Graziano, *Cultures of Devotion: Folk Saints of Spanish America*. Oxford University Press, 2007

**Documentary & Film**
A Saint for Sinners: The Worship of Santa Muerte
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILKnScNCJ-Y&feature=youtu.be
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O1bh0FPILY

W10, 22 Oct, Emotions about Death

Required Readings
Caitlin Doughty, *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: And Other Lessons from the Crematory*, 2014, W. W. Norton & Company

Further Readings

**Documentary & Film:**
Griefwalker (About Stephen Jenkinson, 2008 National Film Board of Canada, 2009 Lorber HT Digital)

W11, 29 Oct, Death Poet Club: Suicide and Euthanasia

Required Readings
Further Readings
Roger Lane, *Violent Death in the City: Suicide, Accident, and Murder in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia*, Harvard University Press, 1979
Andrew Cutting, *Death in Henry James*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005

Documentary & Film:
Dead Poets Society 1989 Full Movie (1:45:32)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Uh-VocZplM

Philip Larkin: Love and Death in Hull
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqa6L22m0rY (49:10)

W12, 5 Nov, Global Funeral Industry
Required Readings

Further Readings

Documentary & Film:
Billy Connolly's Big Send Off, 2 parts
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1vdqaw_billy-connollys-big-send-off-1of2_lifestyle (45:54)
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1xs2as_billy-connollys-big-send-off-2of2_school (45:31)

W13, 12 Nov, Revision and Documentary Film Showing

Research Essay due on 19 November (Thursday) 12:00 midnight

ASSESSMENT
The group research and presentation
35% towards your final mark
(10% group grade by class peer-assessment; 25% individual grade (15% intra-group peer assessment; 10% instructor grade ))

Grading system for group research and presentation
The group and individual will be graded according to following criteria:
Organisation of presentation (20%)
• is there a strong introduction containing a clear statement of purpose?
• are there statements defining the parameters of the presentation?
• are the arguments properly structured and arranged?

Analysis (30%)
• ability to answer the ‘so what?’ question
• coherent central argument
• Ability to synthesise material
• command of the literature
ability to marshal the evidence to prove a point

Use of sources (20%)
- does the students engage a wide variety of sources?
- does the students use sources with critical thinking?

Group synergy (15%)
- test of group cooperation and the ability to work together with each other.
- the individual presentation coming together to form a coherent one presentation.

Style and creativity of presentation (15%)
- is there something extra that make the group outstanding? Fun or wow factor?

Summative Assessment

Choice 1: Group documentary film making
Given that video technology is widely available and students are using it for their presentation and daily live; also documentary is an important media in the spread of historical knowledge, in this module you can make a short film as your summative assessment. This is a third way of presentation, in addition to written form and oral presentation. In making the film you will think about Chinese history, and think historically. The documentary will be premiered to the class in week 13 before final submission.

Grading components: 40% towards your final mark (10% instructor group grade; 20% intragroup peer-grade; 10% instructor grade for individuals)

Rules:
Length: 20-30 minutes
Group: up to 3 persons working on a documentary film; strictly no more than 3 persons, no begging and no ‘please’; Teams of two person or one person (40% instructor grade) are very much welcomed.

Standard (requirements): The film needs to be uploaded to a website such as YouTube in order to be assessed. That means both visual and audio effects need to have copy rights, i.e. film the story yourself (if you need extra for filming please ask your friends, or do group mutual-support agreement), use copyrights expired footages, use computer animation (you can certainly do the whole film in this way), use copyright-free music or make one yourself.

Deadlines: 23 Sep: submit application: member list, working title, and a draft plan. (Create the application form yourself). Once the application is made, you are to be assessed in this choice, strictly no switch to choice 2; only in special circumstances you can change to choice 2.
Between 23 Sep – 12 Nov: meet, the whole group, with the instructor at least two times to discuss.
12 Nov: showing the draft film in class.
18 Nov: submitting the final film in USB Disk and webpage link to the instructor.

Grading system for documentary film
Organisation (30%)
- is there a strong introduction?
- does the narrative structure make sense?

Analysis (20%)
- ability to answer the ‘so what?’ question
- coherent central argument
- Ability to synthesise material
- ability to marshal the evidence to prove a point

Use of sources (25%)
does the students engage a wide variety of sources?
• does the students use sources with critical thinking?

**Style and creativity of presentation (25%)**
• is there something extra that make the short film outstanding?

**Choice 2: Research essay**
50% towards your final mark
Word limits: 3,000 word, excluding notes, bibliography, and other things
Paper due on **16 November (Monday) 12:00 midnight** (After the deadline, you can still submit through the NTU Learn link, but there will be a penalty).

**Plagiarism in writing research papers**
It is important that all unacknowledged material in essay is your own work. The University has strict rules relating to plagiarism that may result in disciplinary procedures. Remember that copying or using any part of another student’s essay or written work also falls within the definition of plagiarism.

Exact texts cited from other’s works and placed in your paper must be put within quotation marks. Otherwise, paraphrase. **The sources of both quotations and paraphrasing have to be properly noted.** On how to cite properly, please see the section on ‘style’ below.

**How to paraphrase:** ‘Paraphrase 1’ below will be deemed as plagiarism; ‘Paraphrase 2’ is an example of proper paraphrasing.

**Original text**
Wilson took personal responsibility for the conduct of the important diplomacy of the United States chiefly because he believed that it was wise, right, and necessary for him to do so. Believing as he did that the people had temporarily vested their sovereignty in foreign affairs in him, he could not delegate responsibility in this field to any individual. His scholarly training and self-disciplined habits of work made him so much more efficient than his advisers that he must have thought that the most economical way of doing important diplomatic business was for him to do it himself. Experience in dealing with subordinates who sometimes tried to defeat his purposes also led him to conclude that it was the safest method, for he, and not his subordinates, bore the responsibility to the American people and to history for the consequences of his policies.

**Paraphrase 1 (Plagiarism)**
Wilson took personal responsibility for conducting diplomacy because he believed it was right for him to do so. Believing that the people had vested their sovereignty in foreign affairs in him, he could not delegate this responsibility. His scholarly training and self-discipline made him more efficient than his advisers. He thought that the most economical way of doing important diplomatic business was to do it himself. Experience in dealing with subordinates who sometimes tried to defeat his purposes led him to conclude that it was the safest method because he bore responsibility to the American people for the consequences.

**Paraphrase 2 (Not plagiarism)**
Wilson felt personally responsible for major diplomacy, because he believed that the voters had entrusted him with such matters. He was more capable than his advisers in this area. He, and not his advisers, was responsible to the people.

**Penalties for late submission**
There will be penalties for late submission of 5% per day unless there are approved medical or other certificated reasons explaining the delay. Please ensure that the instructor is aware
of these circumstances as soon as possible. Students failing to submit an assignment will be denied their credit points for this course.

**Extensions**
In exceptional circumstances extensions may be granted for individual students, but only for students who ask BEFORE the essay submission date.

**Word Limit**
You are required to provide a word count on the front page of your paper. Students failing to include a word count will automatically incur a 2% penalty, as will students falsifying their word count. The word count excludes notes, appendices and the reference list.

The following penalties will also be levied for essays that do not adhere to the word limits:

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<th>Words over and under length</th>
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<td>1% off original mark</td>
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<td>2000 plus</td>
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**Factors taken into account**
In grading assignments the following factors will be taken into account by markers:

- The relevance of the answer to the question set;
- A clear introduction, the ability to structure an argument clearly and a conclusion;
- Critical analysis;
- The use of relevant reading;
- The recognition, where appropriate, of different perspectives;
- The avoidance of sexist, racist, xenophobic, homophobic, and ageist language;
- Grammar, style and presentation, including accurate acknowledgement of sources.

**Grading system for research essay**
Your essay will be graded according to the following criteria:

**Organisation (15%)**
- is there a strong introduction containing a clear statement of purpose?
- is there a proper conclusion
- are there statements defining the parameters of the essay?
- are the arguments properly structured and arranged?

**Analysis (30%)**
- ability to answer the ‘so what?’ question
- coherent central argument

**Ability to synthesise material (20%)**
- command of the literature
- ability to marshal the evidence to prove a point

**Writing/Grammar (15%)**
- test of writing skills;
- choice of words;
- ability to convey complex ideas

**Use of sources & style (20%)**
- does the student engage a wide variety of sources?
- does the student use sources with critical thinking?

**Style : Research papers must follow these guidelines:**
- typed and NO NEED to double-spaced
- must be within the word limits
• FOOT NOTES (not endnotes) must follow the Chicago Manual of Style: (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)
  o If you use Microsoft Word: References / Insert Footnote
• MARKS WILL BE DEDUCTED FOR INCORRECT REFERENCING AND WRONG STYLE.

File name for electronic submission
Use your full name, as it appears on your student card, as the file names for the essay that you submit on NTU Learn (You don't need to submit a hard copy. If you use you name as file name, the papers will come to me in a proper order.)

Bibliography

Ariès, Philippe, Helen Weaver, *The Hour of Our Death: The Classic History of Western Attitudes Toward Death over the Last One Thousand Years*, Vintage Books, 1982
Ariès, Philippe, Patricia Ranum, *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975
Asen, Daniel. *'Dead Bodies and Forensic Science: Cultures of Expertise in China, 1800-1949,'* Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2012
Christakis, Nicholas A., *Death Foretold: Prophecy and Prognosis in Medical Care*, Chicago University Press, 2000
Jentzen, Jeffrey M., *Death Investigation in America, Coroners, Medical Examiners, and the Pursuit of Medical Certainty*, Harvard University Press, 2009
Obayashi, Hiroshi, *Death and Afterlife: Perspectives of World Religions*, Praeger, 1991
Watson, James L. and Evelyn S. Rawski eds. *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, University of California Press, 1988