

Anthropology 3DD3 - The Archaeology of Death

Office: Chester New Hall Rm. 508
Office hours: Tuesday 2:30-4:30, or by appointment

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Classes: Wednesday 8:30-10:20, Friday 8:30-9:20, Room BSB B155

The course is about the archaeological study of human interaction with the dead. We will examine how treatment of the dead varies according to the attitudes, concerns and histories of past cultures and how mortuary evidence is used to develop our understanding of past cultures and their long-term histories. Readings and research projects will focus on case studies to highlight different perspectives on mortuary evidence and its interpretation.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE VALUES:

Reading Assignments, Discussions and Debates	- 20 %
Case Study Reviews	- 20 %
Case Study Alternative Proposals	- 20 %
Final Paper	- 40 %

Reading Assignments, Discussions and Debates: Points will be assigned for readings, prepared participation in class discussions related to the case study assignments, and prepared participation in in-class debates. The combined grade will be based on the points earned from the total number available.

Weekly reading assignments will consist of written notations on **each** of the week's assigned readings. Each notation will highlight at least one point of particular interest from the reading together with a very brief (2-3 sentence) explanation of why that point is of interest. The explanations may consist of critical commentaries or discussion of the implications of points raised in the reading. Notations may also include questions based on the reading. The written notations may be used as the basis for in-class discussion of the readings and the issues they raise. The notation on each reading will be worth one point toward a final total. Reading assignments are **due on the Tuesday** of the week for which the reading is assigned. Late assignments will be accepted for half value for up to one week past their due date, but will not be accepted beyond that point.

Discussion points focused on preparation for the written assignments will be assigned for on-line submission and in-class discussion. Their number and value will be described in the detailed assignment outlines.

Prepared participation in a series of four in-class debates will be worth the equivalent of three reading points each. Preparation for the debates will consist of a minimum of 3-4 typed points for presentation and submission. Debates will be scheduled at intervals throughout the course and will focus on topics intrinsic to the study of mortuary archaeology. Points will be awarded for on-time submission of position statements and supporting arguments (one point) and for in-class participation in each debate (two points).

Case Study Reviews: These will be reviews of two assigned archaeological case studies involving the analysis and interpretation of mortuary evidence. For each, you will be required to identify the

theoretical approach, the specific goals of the study, its analyses of the evidence, the main conclusions and the validity and effectiveness of the arguments in support of those conclusions. A detailed outline of this assignment will be provided.

Case Study Alternative Proposals: These will be detailed point-form outlines of alternative research proposals for the case studies reviewed in the first assignment. For each case study you will be required to define an alternative research goal and/or theoretical perspective for the analysis of the described or potentially available evidence and specify and explain how different classes of evidence could be analysed and interpreted to support conclusions about the past that were not the focus of the original studies. A detailed outline of this assignment will be provided.

Final Paper: The final paper will be a research proposal for the re-analysis and re-interpretation of an excavated cemetery site. The proposal will draw on everything learned from the overall course content to outline and explain how alternative approaches could be applied to the analysis and interpretation of the mortuary data. The proposal will not be an exhaustive review of all possible alternatives, but will be a well-developed and imaginative application of ideas and analytical or interpretive approaches examined in the course. A detailed outline of this assignment will be provided.

Penalty deductions of 1% of the COURSE grade per day late apply to all late and missed assignments unless an MSAF is submitted.

WEEKLY TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS

- Sept. 7-9:** Introduction.
- Sept. 14-16:** Thinking historically, analytically and contextually about the dead. (Binford 1971, Kroeber 1927, Hodder 1980)
- Sept. 21-23:** Thinking emotionally and interpretively about the dead. (Hill 2013, Joyce 2001)
- Sept. 28-30:** Thinking relationally about the dead. (Fowler 2013:219-255)
- Oct. 5-7:** Places of the dead. (Moore and Thompson 2012, Littleton and Allen 2007)
- Oct. 12-14:** Mid-term recess.
- Oct. 19-21:** Places of the dead. (Joyce 2011, McAnany 2011, Parker Pearson 1993)
- Oct. 26-28:** Things with the dead. (King 2004, Brück 2004)
- Nov. 2-4:** Things with the dead. (Kristensen and Holly 2013, Sørensen 2004)
- Nov. 9-11:** The dead themselves. (Croucher 2012:94-117, Headrick 2007:44-71)
- Nov. 16-18:** Transitions in death. (Oestigaard and Goldhahn 2006, Smith and Pérez Arias 2015)
- Nov. 23-25:** Varied and changing ways of death. (Eerkens et al. 2013, Larsson and Stutz 2014)

Nov. 30-Dec. 2: Expressions in death. (Chapman 2000, Keswani 2005)

Dec. 7: Pattern and change in mortuary practice.

READINGS

Note: Readings marked ONLINE are available for download through the Library by searching for the journal or publication in the Library Catalogue. Readings marked POSTED will be available for download from Avenue to Learn.

Binford, Lewis R.

1971 Mortuary Practices: Their Study and Their Potential. In *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*, edited by James A. Brown, pp. 6-29. *Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology* No. 25. Washington, D.C. ONLINE

Brück, Joanna

2004 Material Metaphors: The Relational Construction of Identity in Early Bronze Age Burials in Ireland and Britain. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 4:307-333. ONLINE

Chapman, John

2000 Tension at Funerals: Social Practices and the Subversion of Community Structure in Later Hungarian Prehistory. In *Agency in Archaeology*, edited by Marcia-Anne Dobres and John E. Robb, pp. 169-195. London: Routledge. POSTED

Croucher, Karina

2012 *Death and Dying in the Neolithic Near East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. POSTED

Eerkens, Jelmer W., Eric J. Bartelink, Karen S. Gardner, and Randy S. Wiberg

2013 The Evolution of a Cemetery: Rapid Change in Burial Practices in a Middle Holocene Site in Central Alta California. *California Archaeology* 5:3-35. POSTED

Fowler, Chris

2013 *The Emergent Past: A Relational Realist Archaeology of Early Bronze Age Mortuary Practices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. POSTED

Headrick, Annabeth

2007 *The Teotihuacan Trinity: The Sociopolitical Structure of an Ancient Mesoamerican City*. Austin: University of Texas Press. POSTED

Hill, Erica

2013 Death, Emotion, and the Household among the Late Moche, In *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Death and Burial*, edited by Sarah Tarlow and Liv Nilsson Stutz, pp. 597-616. Oxford: Oxford University Press. POSTED

Hodder, Ian

1980 Social Structure and Cemeteries: A Critical Appraisal. In *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries*, edited by Philip Rahtz, Tania Dickinson, and Lorna Watts, pp. 161-169. *British Archaeological Reports* vol. 82. Oxford: BAR. POSTED

- Joyce, Rosemary A.
 2001 Burying the Dead at Tlatilco: Social Memory and Social Identities. In *Social Memory, Identity, and Death: Anthropological Perspectives on Mortuary Rituals*, edited by Meredith S. Chesson, pp. 12-26. Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association, No. 10. Arlington, Virginia. ONLINE
- Joyce, Rosemary A.
 2011 In the Beginning: The Experience of Residential Burial in Prehispanic Honduras. In *Residential Burial: A Multiregional Exploration*, edited by Ron L. Adams and Stacie M. King, pp. 33-43. Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association Vol. 20. ONLINE
- Keswani, Priscilla Schuster
 2005 Death, Prestige, and Copper in Bronze Age Cyprus. *American Journal of Archaeology* 109:341-401. ONLINE
- King, John M.
 2004 Grave-goods as Gifts in Early Saxon Burials (ca. AD 450–600). *Journal of Social Archaeology* 4:214-238. ONLINE
- Kristensen, Todd J. and Donald H. Holly
 2013 Birds, Burials and Sacred Cosmology of the Indigenous Beothuk of Newfoundland, Canada. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 23:41–53. ONLINE
- Kroeber, A.L.
 1927 Disposal of the Dead. *American Anthropologist* 29:308-315. ONLINE
- Larsson, Xsa M. and Liv Nilsson Stutz
 2014 Reconcilable Differences: Cremation, Fragmentation, and Inhumation in Mesolithic and Neolithic Sweden. In *Transformation by Fire: The Archaeology of Cremation in Cultural Context*, edited by Ian Kuijt, Colin P. Quinn, and Gabriel Cooney, pp. 47-66. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press. POSTED
- Littleton, Judith and Harry Allen
 2007 Hunter-gatherer Burials and the Creation of Persistent Places in Southeastern Australia. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 26:283–298. ONLINE
- McAnany, Patricia A.
 2011 Practices of Place-Making, Ancestralizing and Re-animations within Memory Communities. In *Residential Burial: A Multiregional Exploration*, edited by Ron L. Adams and Stacie M. King, pp. 33-43. Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association Vol. 20. ONLINE
- Moore, Christopher R. and Victor D. Thompson
 2012 Animism and Green River Persistent Places: A Dwelling Perspective of the Shell Mound Archaic. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 12:264–284. ONLINE
- Oestigaard, Terje and Joakim Goldhahn
 2006 From the Dead to the Living: Death as Transactions and Re-negotiations. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 39:27-48. ONLINE

Parker Pearson, Mike

1993 The Powerful Dead: Archaeological Relationships between the Living and the Dead. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 3:203-229. POSTED

Sørensen, Marie Louise Stig

2004 Stating Identities: The Use of Objects in Rich Bronze Age Graves. In *Explaining Social Change: Studies in Honour of Colin Renfrew*, edited by John Cherry, Chris Scarre, and Stephen Shennan, pp. 167-176. Cambridge: MacDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.
POSTED

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own for which other credit has been obtained. (*Insert specific course information, e.g., style guide*)
2. Improper collaboration in group work. (*Insert specific course information*)
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations. (*If applicable*) In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion. Email Forwarding in MUGSI:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link
(Approved at the Faculty of Social Sciences meeting on Tues. May 25, 2010)

MSAF

- The MSAF should be used for medical and non-medical (personal) situations.
- Approval of the MSAF is automatic (i.e. no documentation required)
- Rules governing the MSAF are as follows:
 - The timeframe within which the MSAF is valid has been reduced from 5 days to 3 days.

- The upper limit for when an MSAF can be submitted has been reduced from ‘less than 30%’ to ‘less than 25%’ of the course weight.
 - The ‘one MSAF per term’ limit is retained.
 - As per the policy, an automated email will be sent to the course instructor, who will determine the appropriate relief. Students must immediately follow up with their instructors. Failure to do so may negate their relief.
- Policy: The MSAF policy can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar under General Academic Regulations > Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work or here: http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=1698#Requests_for_Relief_for_Missed_Academic_Term_Work

AODA

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact Eszter Bell at 905-525-9140 extension 24423 or email bellesz@mcmaster.ca