

# Archaeology of Death

Proposed Course

**Instructor:** Kathryn Meyers Emery

**Contact:** meyersk6@msu.edu or @bonesdonotlie

## **Course Description**

The dead can tell us a lot about the living in the past- who they were, what they experienced, how their society was structured, and more. Mortuary Archaeology is the study of the material remains of human funerary behavior in the past, including the study of human remains, grave goods, and cemeteries. This course will provide you with an introduction to mortuary archaeology theory and development of the study of the dead. In order to accomplish this, the course is structured in a manner which take uses the historical development of mortuary archaeology and themes within this study.

## **Course Objectives**

In this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the development of mortuary archaeology
2. Synthesize the major themes and types of mortuary archaeology
3. Use mortuary archaeology theories and methods to approach archaeological case studies

## **Texts**

Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium. G. Rakita, J. Buikstra, L. Beck and S. Williams, eds. Gainesville: University Press of Florida

Other articles and texts will be provided online. Please check online for these materials. They will be listed in the syllabus. If you have trouble accessing a text, please alert the instructors prior to the due date. It is your responsibility to make sure you have access to everything you need to succeed in this course. Technical issues do happen and as long as you alert us we will do our best to fix the problems.

## **Course Requirements**

**Reading:** All readings are mandatory for the class, and must be completed prior to the due date.

**Participation:** While there is no attendance grade, this course is based on discussion. Your participation in these discussions is based on your completion of the readings and assignments, as well as attendance in the course.

**Assignments:** You will be expected to complete a number of writing assignments throughout this course. The assignment is due at the beginning of class each day. All assignments can be found online on D2L.

**Midterm Exam:** The midterm exam will be conducted at the middle of the semester and completed in class. You will have 1 hour and 20 minutes to complete the exam, which will be made up of two essay questions.

**Presentation:** All students will present a ten-minute presentation of their final essay topics in the last week of class.

**Final Essay:** The final essay will consist of a ten page, double spaced paper consisting of a critical review of a mortuary site of your choice or a specific type of mortuary practice like cremation or secondary burial.

## Class Schedule

### **Week 1**

#### **Class 1: Course Introduction**

Reading Due: None

#### **Class 2: History of Mortuary Archaeology**

Reading Due:

Rakita, Gordon F.M., and Jane E. Buikstra. 2005a Introduction. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*. G. Rakita, J. Buikstra, L. Beck and S. Williams, eds. Gainsville: University Press of Florida. Pp. 1-11.

### **Week 2**

#### **Class 1: History of Mortuary Archaeology**

Reading Due:

Parker Pearson, Michael. Chapter 1: Learning from the Dead. 1999 *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

#### **Class 2: History of Mortuary Archaeology**

Reading Due:

Kroeber, A. L. 1927. Disposal of the dead. *American Anthropologist* 29:308-315.

Childe, Vere Gordon 1945 Directional Changes. In *Funerary Practices During 50,000 Years*. In 45: 13-19.

### **Week 3**

#### **Class 1: Bioarchaeology and Archaeology**

Reading Due:

Goldstein, Lynne 2006 Mortuary Analysis and Bioarchaeology. In *Bioarchaeology: The Contextual Analysis of Human Remains*. J.E. Buikstra and L.A. Beck, eds. Burlington, MA : Elsevier and Academic Press. Pp. 375-387.

#### **Class 2: History of Bioarchaeology**

Reading Due:

Knudson, K. and C.M. Stojanowski 2008 New Directions in Bioarchaeology: Recent Constructions to the Study of Human Social Identities. In *Journal of Archaeological Research* 16: 397-432.

Buikstra, Jane.E. 2006b On to the 21st Century. In *Bioarchaeology: The Contextual Analysis of Human Remains*. J.E. Buikstra and L.A. Beck, eds. Burlington, MA: Elsevier and Academic Press. Pp. 389-415.

### **Week 4**

#### **Class 1: Death as Transition**

Reading Due:

Van Gennep, Arnold 1960 [1908] *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sorensen, Tim F. and Mikkel Bille 2008 Flames of transformation: the role of fire in cremation practices. In *World Archaeology* 40(2): 253-267

### **Class 2: Collective Representation**

Reading Due:

Hertz, Robert 1960 A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death. In *Death and the Right Hand*. Translated by R. Needham and C. Needham. New York: Free Press. Pp. 27-86.

Rakita, Gordon F.M. and Jane E. Buikstra 2005b Corrupting Flesh: Reexamining Hertz's Perspective on Mummification and Cremation. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*. G. Rakita, J. Buikstra, L. Beck and S. Williams, eds. Gainsville: University Press of Florida. Pp. 97-106.

## **Week 5**

### **Class 1: Transition and Representation**

Reading Due:

Kujit, Ian 1996 Negotiating Equality Through Ritual: A Consideration of Late Natufian and Pre-pottery Neolithic A Period Mortuary Practices. In *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 15: 313-336.

### **Class 2: Status and Power**

Reading Due:

Binford, Lewis R. 1971 Mortuary Practices: Their Study and Potential. In *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*. J.A. Brown, ed. Washington, DC.: Society for American Archaeology, No. 25. Pp. 6-29.

## **Week 6**

### **Class 1: Status and Power**

Reading Due:

Brown, James A. 1971 The Dimension of Status in the Burials at Spiro. In *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*. J.A. Brown, ed. Washington, DC: Society for American Archaeology, No. 25. Pp. 92-111.

### **Class 2: Status and Power**

Reading Due:

Tainter, Joseph A. 1978 Mortuary Practices and the Study of Prehistoric Social Systems. In *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*. M.B. Schiffer, ed. New York: Academic Press. Pp. 105-141.

## **Week 7**

### **Class 1: Identity**

Reading Due:

Bruck, Joanna 2004 Material metaphors : The relational construction of identity in Early Bronze Age burials in Ireland and Britain. In *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2004 4: 307.

Bruck, Joanna 2006 Fragmentation, Personhood and the Social Construction of Technology in Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain. In *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 16(3): 297-315.

### **Class 2: Veneration/Violation**

Reading Due:

Duncan, William N. 2005 Understanding Veneration and Violation in the Archaeological Record. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*. G. Rakita, J. Buikstra, L. Beck and S. Williams, eds. Gainsville: University Press of Florida. Pp. 207-227.

Weiss-Krejci, Estella. 2005 Excarnation, Evisceration, and Exhumation in Medieval and Post-Medieval Europe. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*. G. Rakita, J. Buikstra, L. Beck and S. Williams, eds. Gainsville: University Press of Florida. Pp. 155-172.

## **Week 8**

### **Class 1: Creating Ancestors and Memories**

Reading Due:

Selections from Jones, Andrew 2003 *Memory and Material Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### **Class 2: Ancestors and Memories**

Reading Due:

Naji, Stephen 2005 Death and Remembrance in Medieval France: A Case Study from the Augustinian Monastery of Saint-Jeane-des-Vignes, Soissons. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*. G. Rakita, J. Buikstra, L. Beck and S. Williams, eds. Gainsville: University Press of Florida. Pp. 173-189.

Graham, Emma J. 2009 Becoming persons, becoming ancestors. Personhood, memory and the corpse in Roman rituals of social remembrance. In *Archaeological Dialogues* 16 (1) 51-74.

## **Week 9**

### **Class 2: Ancestors and Memory**

Reading Due:

Oakdale, Suzanne. 2005 Forgetting the Dead, Remembering Enemies. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*. G. Rakita, J. Buikstra, L. Beck and S. Williams, eds. Gainsville: University Press of Florida. Pp. 107-123.

### **Class 1: Monuments**

Reading Due:

Barrett, John C. 1990 The Monumentality of Death: The Character of Early Bronze Age Mortuary Mounds in Southern Britain. In *World Archaeology* 22(2): 179-189.

Selections from Williams, Howard. 2006 Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

## **Week 10**

### **Class 1: Gender**

Reading Due:

Conkey, Margaret W. and Janet D. Spector. 1984 Archaeology and the Study of Gender. In *Advances in Archaeological method and Theory*, Vol. 7. M.B. Schiffer, ed. Orlando: Academic Press. Pp. 10-38.

O'Gorman, Jodie A. 2001. Life, death, and the longhouse: A gendered view of Oneota social organization. In *Gender and the Archaeology of Death*, B. Arnold and N. L. Wicker, eds. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press. Pp. 23-49.

### **Class 2: Life Stage**

Reading Due:

Stoodley, Nick. 2000 From the cradle to the grave: age organization and the early Anglo-Saxon burial rite. In *World Archaeology* 31(3): 456-472.

Barrett, Autumn and Michael Blakley. 2011. Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in Colonial New York. In *Social Bioarchaeology*. Agarwal and Glencross, eds. Blackwell Publishing.

## **Week 11**

### **Class 1: Placing the Dead**

Reading Due:

Saxe, Arthur A. 1970 Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan: Ann Arbor.

Goldstein, Lynne 1981 One-dimensional Archaeology and Multi-dimensional People: Spatial Organization and Mortuary Analysis. In *The Archaeology of Death*. R. Chapman, I. Kinnes, and K. Randsborg, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 53-69.

### **Class 2: Placing the Dead**

Reading Due:

Ashmore, Wendy and Pamela L. Geller. 2005 Social Dimensions of Mortuary Space. In *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium*. G. Rakita, J. Buikstra, L. Beck and S. Williams, eds. Gainsville: University Press of Florida. Pp. 107-123.

Charles, Douglas K. and Jane E. Buikstra 2002 Siting, Sighting, and Citing the Dead. In *The Space and Place of Death*. H. Silverman and D. Small, eds. Arlington, VA: Archaeological papers of the American Anthropological Association, Vol. 11. Pp. 13-25.

## **Week 12**

### **Class 1: Placing the Dead**

Reading Due:

Silverman, Helaine 2002 Narratives of Identity and History in Modern Cemeteries of Lima, Peru. In *The Space and Place of Death*. H. Silverman and D. Small, eds. Arlington, VA: Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association, Vol. 11. Pp. 167-190.

Brown, James A. 1995 On Mortuary Analysis- With Special Reference to the Saxe-Binford Research Program. In *Regional Approaches to Mortuary Analysis*. New York: Plenum Press. Pp. 3-23

### **Class 2: Spatial Analysis**

Reading Due:

Bongers, Jacob, Elizabeth Arkush, and Michael Harrower. 2011 Landscapes of death: GIS-based analyses of chullpas in the western Lake Titicaca basin. In *Journal of Archaeological* 39(6): Pp. 1687-1693.

## **Week 13**

### **Class 1: Cremation**

Reading Due:

Williams, Howard 2008 Towards an Archaeology of Cremation. In *The Analysis of Burned Human Remains*. C. Schmidt and S. Symes, eds. Great Britain: Academic Press. p. 239-269.

Quinn, Goldstein, Cooney, and Kujit. 2014. Perspectives- Complexities of Terminologies and Intellectual Frameworks in Cremation Studies. In *Transformation by Fire*. University of Arizona Press.

### **Class 2: Cremation**

Reading Due:

Goldstein, Lynne and Katy Meyers 2014. Transformation and metaphor: thoughts on cremation practices in the precontact Midwestern US. In *Transformation by Fire*. University of Arizona Press.

McKinley, J. 2006 Cremation... the cheap option? In *The Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*. R. Gowland and C. Knusel, eds. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

## **Week 14**

### **Class 1: Cremation and Inhumation**

Reading Due:

Rebay-Salisbury, Katharina 2012 Inhumation and Cremation: how burial practices are linked to beliefs. In *Embodied Knowledge: Historical Perspectives on Technology and Belief*. M.L.S. Sørensen and K. Rebay-Salisbury (eds). Oxford: Oxbox Pp. 15-26.

Williams, Howard 2014. A Well-Urned Rest: Cremation and Inhumation in Early Anglo-Saxon England. *In Transformation by Fire*. University of Arizona Press.

### **Class 2: Digital Humanities and Death**

Reading Due:

Meyers, K. and Williams, H. 2014. Blog bodies: mortuary archaeology and blogging. In *Blogging Archaeology*. D. Rocks-Macqueen and C. Webster, eds. E-book: Landward Research, pp. 137-70.

## **Week 15**

### **Class 1: Politics of Studying the Dead**

Reading Due:

Buikstra, Jane E. 2006 Repatriation and Bioarchaeology: Challenges and Opportunities. In *Bioarchaeology: The Contextual Analysis of Human Remains*. J.E. Buikstra and L.A. Beck, eds. Burlington, MA: Elsevier and Academic Press. Pp. 347-357.

### **Class 2: Politics of Studying the Dead**

Reading Due:

Kaliff, Aanders and Terje Oestigaard 2008 Excavating the Kings' Bones: The Materiality of Death in Practice and Ethics Today. In *The Materiality of Death: Bodies, Burials, Beliefs*. F. Fahlander and T. Oestigaard, eds. BAR International Series 1768

## **Week 16**

### **Class 1: Presentations**

### **Class 2: Presentations**

\*This syllabus is subject to change- however, students will be made aware of any changes prior to the change, and the syllabus will be updated to reflect it.

All documents on the course D2L and this syllabus are the intellectual property of Katy Meyers Emery © 2015