

ANTHROPOLOGY 4493G/9104B
Advanced Special Topics in Anthropology/Advanced Bioarchaeology
Mortuary Archaeology

COURSE OUTLINE

Winter 2020

Class day/time: Monday, 1:30-4:30pm

Classroom: SSC 2257

Instructor: Andrew Nelson

Office: SSC 3410

Office hours: Tuesday 2-3pm; Wednesday 4:30-5:30pm

Email: anelson@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistants: none

Credit value: 0.5 credit

Calendar Course Description: This course takes a cross-cultural and deep temporal perspective on how different societies have dealt with the loss of one of their members. Mortuary archaeology draws on many different threads in Anthropology, including ethnography, cultural theory, bioarchaeology, archaeological theory, forensic analysis to name only a few. It also reaches beyond the bounds of Anthropology to draw on research in Sociology, Biology and other disciplines to take a truly interdisciplinary approach to how societies deal with death.

Antirequisite(s): none

Prerequisite(s): 4493G - Registration in fourth year in Anthropology and permission of the instructor. A minimum grade average of 80% in 2200-level and higher Anthropology courses is recommended.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Syllabus:

"...Tis impossible to be sure of anything but *Death and Taxes*" (Christopher Bullock, 1716, *The Cobbler of Preston*). There are myriad ways in which societies have dealt with this stark reality, and the rituals they construct shed important light on the society at large.

In mainstream North America, we have a very uniform, hygienic and medicalized view of death and burial, while the range beliefs and practices of other contemporary and ancient cultures is quite remarkable.

This is a lecture/seminar course open to senior undergraduate students. Weekly meetings will include short lectures followed by student presentations and/or class discussions. Class participation is mandatory. The critical evaluation of the literature will be emphasized.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL site before the first day of class.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course you should be able to:

- describe how societal structures and beliefs shape ritual behavior (observed through ethnographies), particularly in the mortuary context
- recognize how archaeology has contributed to our understanding of variability in societies' responses to death
- integrate perspectives from several disciplines in the analysis of an archaeological mortuary context
- reflect on how modern beliefs and norms shape how we act and react in the face of the death of a loved one
- work with your peers in a collaborative framework

Course Materials:

Registered students will be able to access information about additional course readings through the course's on-line OWL site before the first day of class.

Students will provide additional readings as part of the weekly discussion. There is no textbook.

Evaluation:

Weekly reflection papers/Class participation – 20%

Assignment #1 – ethnographic example of a mortuary ritual – 20 %

Assignment #2 – research paper on the analysis of an archaeological mortuary context – ca. 2500 words (honours students) or 3500 words (graduate students) – 20%

Assignment #3 – group project on a local cemetery – 40%

- there is no final exam

Details of the Assignments:

- Weekly assignments/Participation - write a 500-word reflection paper on the week's readings and one additional paper that you find. What is the key point of the readings? How are they relevant to you and to the week's theme? Bring the paper to class and be prepared to present your papers to the class and to discuss the papers provided as well as the papers brought by the other students.
 - partial participation grades will be posted to OWL in week 8
- Assignment #1 – find an ethnographic account of a contemporary (or penecontemporaneous) society that describes and discusses a mortuary ritual. Craft a detailed description of this ritual and then analyze it using principles discussed in class. Important components of the analysis will include: does the ritual fit with the general structure of rites of passage rituals espoused by Van Gennep? Does the ritual reflect the sociopolitical complexity of the culture?
 - the results of this assignment will be presented to the class as a 20-minute power point presentation in week 4 (January 27th).

- Assignment #2 – write a 2,500 or 3,500 word research paper on an archaeological mortuary context not discussed in class. You will need to present a short description of what is known of the archaeological culture and the specific context in order to undertake an analysis of how the mortuary context reflects the society as a whole. Draw on all appropriate ethnographic analogies, archaeological theories and anthropological models in your analysis.
 - the results of this research will be presents as a manuscript for submission to the journal *Antiquity*. Its instructions for authors page is [here](#).
 - The research paper is due March 9th, 2020 in class in printed form and it should be submitted to OWL by 11:55pm that evening. Assignments that are not submitted on the due dates will be assessed a late penalty of 5% per day; assignments that are more than a week late will not be accepted.
 - All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

- Assignment #3 – Assignment 3 is a group project that has both hands-on “field work” at the Woodland Cemetery and archive sleuthing aspects to the project. There will be two components: one a field component at the cemetery in the “Potter’s Field”, where hundreds of people were buried in unmarked graves on unconsecrated ground just at the edge of the main cemetery (see [here](#) for some context). Then, you will need to do some archival/historic research of what led to the formation of this particular mortuary context. The fieldwork will hopefully (weather permitting) involve ground penetrating radar, survey, mapping and photography.
 - representatives from Woodland Cemetery will come to class on January 20th to discuss the project.
 - the results of this assignment will be presented and discussed in the last class. Each student should submit a 2-page (500 word) description of their contribution to the project (due March 30th).
 - the graduate students will coordinate the assembly of the final report
 - the group will also prepare a report that can be presented to the cemetery for their records. This report will be due April 6th and will be submitted electronically and in hard copy to Dr. Nelson by 4:30pm.
 - details of the report form and content will be worked out in class.

Course Specific Statements and Policies:

Statement on Seeking Academic Consideration:

Academic consideration will not be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please consult university policies on procedures for seeking academic consideration [here](#):

Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

Policy on Laptops and Cellphones in Class:

Laptops are permitted for note-taking in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites, they will be asked to close the laptop and will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cellphones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. These policies are outlined, here: [Western's academic policies](#).