

Anthropology 457: Anthropology of Death and Dying Syllabus

See also: [Weekly Reflection Papers](#) | [War Journal](#) | [Research Paper](#)

Syllabus - Winter 2006
Dr. Kathleen Z. Young

Texts

1. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Sogyal Rinpoche. 1994
2. *Annual Editions: Dying, Death and Bereavement* 05/06. George E. Dickinson, et al.
3. *The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo*. Clea Koff. 2004.

The Course

Death and dying are considered anthropologically, as cultural constructs. We will explore a wide range of cultures with special focus on death and dying in Whatcom County. Death and dying will be examined from a variety of interdisciplinary and interactive perspectives in order to further our understanding of what it means to be human. We study death and dying in order to broaden our understanding of the human cultural experience. We will consider the obfuscation and the explication of death and dying and the ways in which different people and different groups consider death and dying.

Goals

Besides enlarging our own experience of death and dying through field trips and guest lectures, we will write and read and rewrite and read again in order to explore the cultural construction of death and dying. The goals of the class are two-fold: to further understanding of human life through the study of death and dying in culture and to help us learn to write more effectively. We will write to learn about ourselves and each other. Writers receive feedback on their writing from editors and reviewers. Students will receive similar feedback as we learn to perceive writing (and death and dying!) as a process.

Grades and the Written Component

Students will demonstrate lucid expression of death and dying in culture through a research paper (for 50 points), weekly writing assignments (for 70 points total), participation in class fieldtrips, and collaborative discussion and critique (30 points) for a possible total of 150 points.

Grades and Participation

Students are expected to accompany the class on field trips to the morgue, a mortuary and crematorium, local cemeteries, and possibly a funeral or memorial service. The times and dates are to be arranged and will be discussed in advance in class. Participation in the field trips and class discussions are an integral part of the course.

Readings

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1. INTRODUCTION / THE THANATOLOGICAL WIND

1. Rinpoche: foreword, preface, and chapter 1 (pgs 3-14)

- First Reflection Paper: a two page death/dying autobiography

Week 2. THE MORTAL COIL

1. Rinpoche: chapters 2 through 6 in, Part 1 (pgs 15-101)
2. AE Section 1. Coff: Before, Part 1 through pg 41

Week 3. BONES AND BARDOS

1. Rinpoche: chapters 7 through 9 (pgs 102-149)
2. AE Section 2. Coff, pages 42-79

Week 4. CORPUS -- 10/18-20

1. Rinpoche: chapters 10 through 12 (pgs 150-208)
2. AE Section 3. Coff, pages 80-112

Week 5. CRY ME A RIVER

1. Rinpoche: chapters 13 through 15 (pgs 209-258)
2. AE Section 4. Coff, pages 113-150

Week 6. I CRIED A RIVER

1. Rinpoche: chapters 16-18 (pgs 259-298)
2. AE Section 5. Coff, pages 150-181

Week 7. OVER YOU

1. Rinpoche: chapters 19 and 20 (pgs 299-336)
2. AE Section 6. Coff, pages 182-211

Week 8. HEAVEN'S GATE

1. Rinpoche: chapters 21 and 22 (pgs 339-336)
2. AE Section 7. Coff, pages 212-242

Week 9. NIGHT

1. Rinpoche: Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 (pgs 367-378)
2. AE Section 8. Coff, pages 243-256

Week 10. THE OTHER SIDE

1. Rinpoche: Appendix 3, Appendix 4, Notes (again!?) and Ack. (pgs 378-413)
2. AE Section 10. Coff, pages 259-272

DEAD WEEK: FINAL RESTING PLACE