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THE COURSE

This course examines ancient Roman mortuary practices and beliefs in the light of the high rate of mortality in antiquity and an institutionalized culture of violence in classical Rome. It asks how these and other cultural factors may have influenced Roman attitudes toward death and dying, and it aims to show how Roman funerary behavior can shed light on several 'core values' of classical Roman culture. Finally, it considers how the advent of Christianity and its rise in late antiquity may have absorbed, adapted, and reconfigured, classical Roman funerary culture. Various methodologies and types of evidence will be reviewed, but in the second half of the course (after a midterm test in Week 7) a recurrent focus will explore how anthropological theory of mortuary ritual helps (and doesn't help) to illuminate Roman funerary behavior.

The course begins with an overview of some characteristic features of the Roman culture of death (Weeks 1-2) and a brief consideration of the implications of Roman mortality and demographic patterns on attitudes toward death (Week 3). We will then turn to death as an entertainment and funerals as public spectacles (Weeks 3 and 4), as religious rites (Week 4), and as a business (Week 5). The first half of the course will conclude with a survey of philosophical reflections, both high and low ('popular'), on the afterlife, grief, and consolation (Week 6), followed by a midterm test (Week 7).

The second half of the course will begin with an introduction to the anthropology of funerary ritual and a consideration of Robert Hertz's pioneering study of the collective representation of death (Weeks 7-8). This will be followed by individual class sessions devoted to wills and legacies (Week 8), the organization of cemeteries (Week 9) and the age-old question of interpreting the significance of a change from cremation to inhumation as the dominant form of burial in the early imperial period (Week 9). After spring break, in the final stretch of the course, we will consider material reflections of Roman funerary beliefs next to intangible articulations of them—lament and tombs (Week 10), corporeal dissolution and funerary furniture (Week 11)—royal and imperial funerals (Week 12), and the effects of the advent of Christianity on Roman funerary practices (Week 13). The class will conclude during Reading period with a brief consideration of Roman deathways in the light of modern American approaches to death, and a final review session.

Readings will consist of chapters in J. M. C. Toynbee's classic (if now somewhat dated) study, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*; selections from a sourcebook of ancient texts in translation (Hope); a survey of anthropological approaches to mortuary ritual (Metcalf and Huntington); a classic early anthropological study of funerals (Hertz); and a selection of articles and essays that will be posted at the course Canvas site and many of which are available also through JSTOR.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (JHU Press: Baltimore 1971) (= Toynbee *D&B*)
- V. M. Hope, *Death in Ancient Rome. A Sourcebook* (Routledge: New York 2007) (= Hope *DAR*)
- P. Metcalf and R. Huntington, *Celebrations of Death. The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge Univ. Press: Cambridge 1991) (= Huntington & Metcalf, *CoD*)
- R. Hertz, *Death and the Right Hand*, transl. R. and C. Needham, 1960 (repr. New York 2004) (= Hertz, *DRH*)

(All are available at the Brown University Bookstore)

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- 1 Jan. 23: Introduction (syllabus and course details)
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- 2 28: The Roman way of death 1
 K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge 1983) ch. 4, "Death in Rome", pp. 201-226.
 Toynbee, *D&B*, ch. 1, "Etruscan antecedents", pp. 11-17.
 Hope, *DAR*, "Introduction" and ch. 1 "Dying", pp. 1-22 nos. 1.1-24.
- 30: The Roman way of death 2
 K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge 1983) ch. 4, "Death in Rome", pp. 226-256.
 Toynbee, *D&B*, ch. 1, "Etruscan antecedents", pp. 18-32.
 Hope, *DAR*, ch. 1 "Dying", pp. 23-45 nos. 1.25-59.
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- 3 Feb. 4: Demography and mortality
 R. Saller, "Men's age at marriage and its consequences in the Roman family," *Classical Philology* 82 (1987) 21-34.
 B. Shaw, "The cultural meaning of death: age and gender in the Roman family," in D. Kertzer and R. Saller, eds., *The Family In Italy. From Antiquity to the Present* (London 1991), 66-90.
 J. Bodel, "From *columbaria* to catacombs: communities of the dead in pagan and Christian Rome," in L. Brink and D. Greene, eds., *Roman Burial and Commemorative Practices and Earliest Christianity* (Berlin 2008), Appendix, pp. 235-42.
- 6: Spectacles of death 1: Entertainments
 K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge 1983) ch. 1, "Murderous games", pp. 1-30.
 K. M. Coleman, "Fatal charades: Roman executions staged as mythological enactments," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990), 44-73.
 Hope, *DAR*, pp. 162-65 nos. 4.48-51; 170-71 no. 4.59.
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- 4 11: Spectacles of death 2: Obsequies
 J. Bodel, "Death on display: looking at Roman funerals", in B. Bergmann and C. Kondoleon, eds., *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (Washington, D.C. 1999), 258-81.
 M. Bettini, "Death and its double: *imagines*, *ridiculum* and *honor* in the Roman aristocratic funeral," in *The Ears of Hermes. Communication, Images, and Identity in the Classical World*, transl. by W. M. Short (Columbus 2011) 225-37.
 Hope, *DAR*, pp. 120-27, nos. 3.60-70.
- 13: Funerals and the cult of the dead
 Toynbee, *D&B*, ch. 3 "Funerary rites and the cult of the dead," pp. 43-72
 Hope, *DAR*, pp. 93-119, 173-75, 231-36; nos. 3.11-59; 5.1-3; 6.41-47.
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- 5 18: Long weekend
- 20: The business of death in the Roman world
 J. Bodel, "Dealing with the dead: undertakers, executioners, and potter's fields in ancient Rome," in E. Marshall and V. Hope, eds., *Death and Disease in the Ancient City* (London 200) 128-51.
 J. Bodel, "The Organization of the Funerary Trade at Puteoli and Cumae," in S. Panciera, ed. *Libitina e dintorni (Libitina 3)* (Rome 2004) 149-70.

- _____ Hope, *DAR*, pp. 93-119; nos. 3.11-59
- 6 25: Philosophical reflections 1: Views of the afterlife
 Toynbee, *D&B*, ch. 2, "Roman beliefs about the afterlife...", pp. 33-39
 Hope, *DAR*, pp. 46-53, 211-47; nos. 2.1-15; 6.1-63
- 27: Philosophical reflections 2: Grief and consolation
 TBA
 _____ Hope, *DAR*, ch. 5, "Grief," pp. 172-210, nos. 5.1-63.
- 7 Mar. 4: **Midterm Test**
- 6: The anthropology of funerary ritual
 Metcalf and Huntington, *CoD*, ch. 1, "Preliminaries," pp. 24-39.
 _____ Hertz, *DRH*, pp. 1-24.
- 8 11: The collective representation of death
 Hertz, *DRH*, pp. 27-86.
- 13: Testamentary dispositions
 E. Champlin, *Final Judgments* (Berkeley 1991), chs 8, "Community", 9, "Memory", and "Conclusion",
 pp. 155-86.
 _____ Hope, *DAR*, pp. 53-70, nos. 2.16-43
- 9 18: Cemeteries
 Toynbee, *D&B*, ch. 4, "The layout of cemeteries and ownership of tombs", pp. 73-100
 Hope, *DAR*, ch. 4, "The cemetery," pp. 128-152-71, nos. 4.1-19, 30-60.
- 20: Cremation vs. inhumation: fact and fantasy
 Toynbee, *D&B*, ch. 2, "Roman beliefs about the afterlife...", pp. 39-42.
 I. Morris, *Death-ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge 1992), ch. 2, "*Mos Romanus*": cremation and inhumation in the Roman empire," pp. 31-69.
 _____ Hope, *DAR*, pp. 107-11 nos. 3.35-41. **term paper topics due**
- 25/27: **SPRING BREAK**
- 10 Apr. 1: Processing grief: lament
 Metcalf and Huntington, *CoD*, ch. 2, "Emotional Reactions to Death," pp. 43-61.
 D. Dutsch, "*Nenia*: gender, genre, and lament in ancient Rome," ch. 12, in A. Suter, ed., *Lament. Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (Oxford 2008), 258-79.
 A. Corbeill, *Nature Embodied. Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton 2004), ch. 3, "Blood, Milk, and Tears: The Gestures of Mourning Women,"
 _____ Hope, *DAR*, pp. 98-99, 104-7, 205-10 nos. 3.19-20, 31-34; 5.58-673.
- 3: Houses of the dead
 Toynbee, *D&B*, ch. 5, "Selected types of tombs I", pp. 101-63.
 _____ Hope, *DAR*, ch. 4, "The cemetery," pp. 141-52, nos. 4.20-29.

- 11 8: Transitions
 Metcalf and Huntington, *CoD*, ch. 5, "Death rituals and life values," pp. 108-30.
 E. J. Graham, "Memory and materiality: Re-embodying the Roman funeral," ch. 2, in V. M. Hope and J. Huskinson, *Memory and Mourning. Studies on Roman Death* (Oxford 2011), 21-39.
- 10: Furniture of the dead
 Toynbee, *D&B*, ch. 7, "Gravestones and tomb furniture", pp. 245-81
 A. D. Nock, "Sarcophagi and symbolism," *American Journal of Archaeology* 50 (1946) 140-70.
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- 12 15: The royal corpse
 Metcalf and Huntington, *CoD*, ch. 7, "The immortal kingship," pp. 162-88.
 J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, I. 1-4, "The king of the wood"
- 17: Imperial funerals
 S. Price, "From noble funerals to divine cult: the consecration of Roman emperors," in D. Cannadine and S. Price, eds., *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge 1987), 56-105.
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- 13 22: Early Christianity 1: burial
 E. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, ch. 5, "Christian piety and burial duty," pp. 89-122.
 J. Bodet, "From *columbaria* to catacombs: communities of the dead in pagan and Christian Rome," in L. Brink and D. Greene, eds., *Roman Burial and Commemorative Practices and Earliest Christianity* (Berlin 2008), Appendix, pp. 177-35.
- 24: Early Christianity 2: cult of the dead
 E. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, chs. 6, "Christian funerals and funerals of Christians," and 7 (part), "The Church, Christians, and the Dead," pp. 123-57.
 N. Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers* (Boston 2008), selections
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- 14 29: Wrap-up. The American way of death
 Metcalf and Huntington, *CoD*, ch. 8, "American deathways," pp. 191-214.

May 1: Review session

May 6: Term papers due (5:00 p.m.) (in hard copy and as a Word document)

May 16: Final Exam (2:00 p.m.)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each of the following will determine an approximate percentage of the final grade:

1. **Class participation** (10%).
2. **Midterm test**, based on the lectures, discussions, and assigned readings (20%).
3. **Research term paper** (ca. 5,000-6,000 words), one on a topic of your choice, after consultation with the instructors, due at the end of Reading period (May 6) (40%).
4. **Final Exam**, based on the class discussions and assigned readings (30%).