

Death in the Americas: Mortuary Encounter and Transformation, 1491-1893

Fall, 2017



HIST 233-403



Thursdays, 1:30-4:30pm

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Heaney (chheaney@sas.upenn.edu)
Office Hours: McNeil Center for Early American Studies, Room 225



Luis Montero, *Los Funerales de Atahualpa* (1865-7)

Deathways—our cultures of dying, interment, and commemoration of the dead—reveal and conceal our values in this world and the next. This reading seminar explores the history of how deathways in the Americas changed, endured, and were studied, from before Columbus to about 1893 CE. During this history, waves of religious, political, environmental, and epidemiological political changes—many due to European colonialism and the Indigenous land and Indigenous, African, and Asian labor it sought after 1492—transformed a galaxy of deathways to what seemed like only a handful of options. Internally, however, American deathways contained and continue to contain a multitude of answers to one of life’s central questions: where we go—physically and spiritually—when we stop breathing, and how we are remembered. Much of this class’s work, then, is in learning how different peoples studied each other’s deathways to determine how they could converge without compromising existing beliefs or relationships. We will also see what happened when one group had the power to divert the deathways of another, via conquest, conversion, or exhumation.

Our subjects include high-altitude human sacrifice under the Incas; origins of Mexico’s Day of the Dead; the fingerbone of a Catholic saint buried at Jamestown; an African-American burial ground in Lower Manhattan; and the collection of Indigenous, African, and Latin American remains in nineteenth century Philadelphia. Its texts are similarly wide, drawing from history, anthropology, fiction, and other primary sources. Its foundation is Indigenous

and Colonial Latin America, but it will also explore the extension of other European colonies and nations in North America and the deathways they introduced, including, in the nineteenth century, the institutionalization of archaeology as a field of study. We'll therefore read on Colonial English America and the early republican United States as well, and visit Philadelphia museums and cemeteries where the material culture of death from throughout the Americas can be contemplated.

It should be noted that we will regularly work with the University Museum's collections, which includes both artifacts and bodies that have become scientific specimens. It should also be noted that a class on dying is also a course on empathy for varieties of grief. For these reasons, students will be sensitive, mature, and respectful as we engage with the remains one of the most universal, yet personal, stages in the human experience.



Assignments

Evaluation will be based on class participation, reading responses, an in-class midterm, a museum/event critique, and a final paper that will ask students to apply their acquired knowledge to a primary source or an object from the University Museum.

This course is especially focused on reading and discussion; class participation is therefore necessary, and attendance will be taken. Before each class (before noon on Thursday), students must post two short but insightful reading questions or comments on the course website. On days that other writing is not assigned, students will also bring to class a more focused one-paragraph response to the readings that highlights or examines a theme or problem in the week's readings. A short paper (3-4 pages) will be due on Oct. 19. A 1.5 hour written midterm will be administered on Oct. 26. Students will be responsible for a short reportage (2 pages) of a Philadelphia celebration of Mexico's Day of the Dead (due Nov. 9).

The course builds towards a final paper, an 8-10 page analysis of a primary source, or an object from the Penn University Museum, in light of the semester's readings and outside readings of your choice. There will be graded steps along the way. You will be responsible for choosing that source, or object, from a pre-approved list and writing up a paragraph-length proposal. You will be responsible for a 5-10 minute presentation upon your source, or object, during our last class. You will submit your final paper by 5 pm Monday, Dec. 18.

Grading breakdown

5 % **Discussion posts on Canvas and Weekly Response Paragraphs**
30 % **Class Participation and Attendance**

Attendance (5 %): I take attendance every day. Students who attend every class will have a better handle on the material when it comes time for final assignments. Of course, things happen, and if you need to miss a class, you must make an effort to let me know *beforehand*, via a Course Absence Report. I will excuse absences for serious illness, family emergencies, or other exceptional occasions or Acts of God (see below regarding holidays). In those cases, you will be responsible for a longer, 2-3 page response to the readings, or must meet with me

to discuss them. If you miss two classes or more, this grade will suffer. If you are more than ten minutes late, your grade will be marked down for that day.

Participation (25 %): In class, I expect you to engage with the material, and your fellow students. This class will mostly be conducted via open discussions, to engage with the readings. Your participation will be registered if you ask questions, refer back to class readings, and speak to your fellow students' observations. Useful, civil debate is encouraged, creating an environment that encourages other people to speak. That sometimes means staying quiet while other students explore their own questions, and responding afterwards. I also understand that speaking in class makes some students nervous; if so, come talk to me about ways to engage, as participation is essential in this grade.

10 %

Short paper – 3-4 pages, due Oct. 19

20 %

Written Midterm – Oct. 26

5 %

Reportage of Philadelphia Day of the Dead event (due Nov. 9).

30 %

Final Paper

Proposal (5 %) – Due Nov. 16. One paragraph on the source or object you have chosen, detailing its known significance, what questions it provokes, and how you hope to approach it, in light of two sources from our course readings, and at least one source from outside of them.

In-class Presentation (5%) – Dec. 7. A 5-10 minute presentation upon your object or source to the class, summarizing how your initial understanding of it has changed since your research has begun.

Final Paper (20%) – 8-10 pages, with bibliography attached, due Dec. 18.

Grading Scale

A 94-100 B+ 88-89.9 C+ 78-79.9

B 84-87.9 C 70-77.9

A- 90-93.9 B- 80-83.9 D 60-69.9

F <60* *Failure to turn in an assignment will result in 0 grade points



Required Readings

Gabriela Ramos, *Death and Conversion in the Andes: Lima and Cuzco, 1532-1670* (Notre Dame, 2010)

Otherwise, readings will be from a coursepack, purchasable at the Campus Copy Center, at 3907 Walnut Street, from uploads on our Canvas page, or via Penn's library's online services. * indicates that a reading is in the coursepack, (w) that a reading is on the course website (L) that it is readable via Penn's library. If from outside the coursepack, which you should bring to every class, I expect you to print readings out, mark them up, and bring them to class. If you cannot bring them, you must take and bring good notes.



I. FROM THE GROUND UP: INTRODUCTIONS, THEORY, FOUNDATIONS

Thursday, August 31.

1. Introductions. Celebrating Death

readings (If possible, please print these short articles, read them, and bring them to our first class.)

- Antonio Weiss, “Why Mexicans Celebrate the Day of the Dead,” 2 Nov., 2010
- “Zombies, Hollywood invade Mexico’s Day of the Dead,” 30 October 2016
- Pilar Zazueta, “The meaning of Day of the Dead is changing,” 1 Nov. 2016

Thursday, September 7

2. Theory. Living with the Dead.

in-class activity

- “The Ancestors of the People Called Indians: A View from Huarochirí, Peru (ca. 1598-1608),” pp. 3-6, and Chapters 27 and 28 of *The Huarochirí Manuscript*, pp. 129-131.

readings (required)

- Robert Hertz, “A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death” [1907], pp. 197-212.
- Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (2001), pp. 1-6, 47-76.
- Frank Salomon, “‘The Beautiful Grandparents’: Andean Ancestor Shrines and Mortuary Ritual as Seen Through Colonial Records” (1995), pp. 315-347

readings (optional)

- Pablo A. Marquet et al, “Emergence of social complexity among coastal hunter-gatherers in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile,” (2012), 14754-14760

Thursday, September 14.

3. Pre-Columbian Closure. Everyday Deathways Before Contact

readings (required)

- Erik Seeman, *Death in the New World* (2010), Chapter I. (L)
- Cia Sautter, “Women, Dance, Death, and Lament in Medieval Spain and the Mediterranean: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Examples” (2017), pp. 93-113.
- Jeffrey P. Blomster, “Bodies, Bones, and Burials: Corporeal Constructs and Enduring Relationships in Oaxaca, Mexico” (2011), pp. 102-151.

readings (optional)

- Jane E. Buikstra and Kenneth C. Nystrom, “Ancestors and Social Memory: A South American Example of Dead Body Politics” (2015), 245-260.

Thursday, September 21. Meeting at **PENN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM**

4. Pre-Columbian Openings. Breaking Bodies, Making Monarchs

in-class activity:

- High Altitude Sacrifice Exercise & Disembodied Heads

readings (required)

- James L. Fitzsimmons, “Perspectives on Death and Transformation in Ancient Maya Society: Human Remains as a Means to an End” (2011), pp. 53-73.
- Constanza Ceruti, “Human Bodies as Objects of Dedication at Inca Mountain Shrines (North-Western Argentina),” (2004), pp. 103-119.
- Carlos M. N. Eire, “King Philip and his Palace of Death” (1995), pp. 255-282
- Andrea Carlino, *Books of the Body: Anatomical Ritual and Renaissance Learning* (1999), pp. 92-119

readings (optional)

- Mary Weismantel, “Many Heads Are Better Than One: Mortuary Practice and Ceramic Art in Moche Society” (2015), pp. 76-100.

II. GRAVE OPENINGS: EARLY COLONIAL ENCOUNTERS WITH DEATH

Thursday, September 28.

5. Cannibal Colonialism: Consuming the Dead, Enslaving the Living

readings (required)

- David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars* (2000), Chapter 1.
- Richard Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires: The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians* (2011), pp. 9-26.
- Beth A. Conklin, “Hunting the Ancestors: Death and Alliance in Wari’ Cannibalism” (1993), pp. 65-70
- Neil Whitehead, *Of cannibals and kings: primal anthropology in the Americas* (2011), 1-23, 35-43, 73-80, 115-119
- Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (1990 [1578]), xv-xix, 122-133.

October 5 – NO CLASS

Thursday, October 12.

6. Devils, Disease, and Dying in Mesoamerica

readings (required)

- Caroline Dodds Pennock, *Bonds of Blood: Gender, Lifecycle and Sacrifice in Aztec Culture* (2008), 1-3, 12-40
- Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World* (1994), 5-73.
- Errika Hosselkus, “Noble Nahuas, Faith, and Death: How the Indigenous Elite of the Colonial Puebla-Tlaxcala Valley Prepared to Perish,” in *Death and Dying in Colonial Spanish America* (2012), pp. 28-52. (L)

Thursday, October 19.

7. The Living Dead in the Andes

assignment due

- 3-4 pp. comparison of the conquest of death in Mesoamerica and Andes

reading (required)

- Ramos, *Death and Conversion in the Andes*, pp. 1-88, 161-222

reading (optional)

- Haagen D. Klaus and Manuel E. Tam, “*Requiem Aeternam?: Archaeoethanatology of Mortuary Ritual in Colonial Mórrope, North Coast of Peru*” (2015) 267-303. [SKIM]

Thursday, October 26 - **MIDTERM**

8. North American Dyings: Indian Idolaters and English Saints

in-class activity

- The Feast of the Dead (Seeman, *Death in the New World*, Chapter 4)

readings (required)

- Heaney, “A Peru of their Own: English Grave-Opening and Indian Sovereignty in Early America,” (2016), pp. 609-646.
- Christopher M. B. Allison, “Jamestown’s Relics: Sacred Presence in the English New World,” (2016)
<http://mavcor.yale.edu/conversations/essays/jamestown-s-relics-sacred-presence-english-new-world>
- Seeman, *Death in the New World*, Chapter 5.

III. MIDDLE PASSAGES: CREOLIZATION & DE-COLONIZATION OF DEATH

Thursday, Nov. 2 - Meeting at **PENN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM.**

9. Days of the Dead & African Mourning in Christian America

in-class activities

- Day of the Dead Altar
- Two Brazilian Wills (1793, 1823), 375-383 OR Urban Slavery in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil: The Wills of Captain Joaquim Félix de Santana, Colonel Manoel Pereira da Silva, and Rose Maria de Conceição (1809, 1814, 1843), Hendrik Kraay

readings (required)

- Claudio Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico* (2005), Chapter V
- Seeman, *Death in the New World*, Chapter 6.
- Karen B. Graubart, “‘So color de una cofradía’: Catholic Confraternities and the Development of Afro-Peruvian Ethnicities in Early Colonial Peru,” (2012), 43-64.

readings (optional)

- Leo J. Garofalo, “Conjuring with Coca and the Inca: The Andeanization of Lima's Afro-Peruvian Ritual Specialists, 1580-1690,” (2006), 53-80.

Thursday, Nov. 9 Meeting at **PENN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM.**

10. Secret Covenants: American Judaism and Indian Ancestors

assignment due

- 2pp. Reportage of Philly’s Day of the Dead celebration

in-class activity

- Ex Votos paintings

readings (required)

- Seeman, *Death in the New World*, Chapter 7.
- Ana E. Schaposchnik, “Exemplary Punishment in Colonial Lima: The 1639 Auto de Fe,” in *Death and Dying in Colonial Spanish America*, pp. 121-141. (L)

- Salomon, “Ancestor Cults and Resistance to the State in Arequipa, ca. 1748-1754,” (1987), 148-165.

Thursday, Nov. 16.

11. Death to the Colony.

assignment due

- Final Paper proposal

in-class activity

- Rachel N. Ponce, “The Fever,” *The Appendix* (2014), <http://theappendix.net/special/the-fever/>

readings (required)

- Seeman, *Death in the New World*, Chapter 8.
- Jan Szeminski, “Why Kill the Spaniard? New Perspectives on Andean Insurrectionary Ideology in the 18th Century” (1987), pp. 166-191.
- Adam Warren, “Medicine and the Dead: Conflicts over Burial Reform and Piety in Lima, 1808-1850,” in *Death and Dying in Colonial Spanish America*, 170-201.

reading (optional)

- Robert V. Wells, “A Tale of Two Cities: Epidemics and the Rituals of Death in Eighteenth-Century Boston and Philadelphia,” in *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America*, (2003), pp. 56-67.

IV. THESE REPUBLICS OF DEATH

TUESDAY, Nov. 21. Meeting at **WOODLANDS CEMETERY**

12. Death in Exile – Final Paper proposal due

readings (required)

- Jeffrey Ostler, “To Extirpate the Indians” An Indigenous Consciousness of Genocide in the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes 1750s-1810” (2015), 587-622.
- Matthew Dennis, “Patriotic Remains; Bones of Contention in the Early Republic,” in *Mortal Remains*, pp. 136-148.
- Thomas G. Connors, “The Romantic Landscape: Washington Irving, Sleepy Hollow, and the Rural Cemetery Movement,” in *Mortal Remains*, pp. 187-203.

Thursday, Nov. 30. Meeting at **PENN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM**

13. Digging and Studying the Dead

In-class activity

- Samuel George Morton skull collection

readings (required)

- Miruna Achim, “Skulls and Idols: Anthropometrics, Antiquity Collections, and the Origin of American Man, 1810-1850,” (2014), 23-42.
- Thomas, *Skull Wars*, Chapter 6.
- Daina Ramey Berry, “*The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of the Nation* (2017), Chapter 4.
- James Riding In, “Repatriation: A Pawnee’s Perspective,” in *Repatriation Reader: Who Owns American Indian Remains?* (2000) pp. 106-118.

Thursday, Dec. 7

14. Who Will Survive in America?

In-class activity

- Presentations

readings (required)

- Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883* (1996), pp. 156-175.
- Wendy L. Rouse, “‘What We Didn’t Understand’: A History of Chinese Death Ritual in China and California,” in *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors* (2005), pp. 19-41.
- Catherine J. Allen, “Body and Soul in Quechua Thought,” (1982): 179-196.
- Tiffany Stanley, “The Disappearance of a Distinctly Black Way to Mourn” (2016)

readings (optional)

- Stephen Prothero, *Purified by Fire: a history of cremation in America* (2001), Chapter 1.
- Alan Knight, “The Several Legs of Santa Anna: A Saga of Secular Relics,” (2010): 227-255.



Important Additional Information:

Re-grading policy

For your privacy, and out of respect to other students, I cannot discuss grades in the classroom. If you want to revisit a grade, my policy is that we have to wait 24 hours after I first hand it back before that discussion can begin, and your request has to come via CANVAS. We will then meet during office hours to discuss it.

Plagiarism

Students should adhere to Penn’s [Code](#) of Academic Integrity. Do not plagiarize. All your written work should be yours alone, or cited to an appropriate source. If you are uncertain what this means in practice, please speak with one of us and please refer to the University of Pennsylvania’s Code of Academic Integrity Violations will mean an F in the course, at minimum.

Policy on holidays

The University recognizes that there are holidays, both religious and secular, which are of importance to some individuals and groups on campus. Such occasions include, but are not limited to, Sukkot, the last two days of Passover, Rosh Hashana, Shavuot, Shemini Atzerat and Simchat Torah, as well as Chinese New Year, the Muslim New Year, Diwali, and the Islamic holidays Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha. Students who wish to observe such holidays must inform me, as their instructor, within the first two weeks of the semester of their intent to observe the holiday even when the exact date of the holiday will not be known until later. This is so that alternative arrangements convenient to both you and I can be made at the earliest opportunity. Students who make such arrangements will not be required to attend classes on the designated days, and I will provide reasonable opportunities for such students

to make up missed work.

*****LATE ESSAY/TECH/EMAIL POLICY*****:

Late submissions will result in a deduction of one full grade per 24-hour period after the deadline (including weekends & holidays). Exceptions will be made **ONLY** in cases where students have a **documented** personal, university related, or health related excuse. In all cases, if you have any doubts, or are struggling with the material, come see me during office hours. I'm here to help, and I want you to succeed. I also encourage you to reach out to the Weingarten Learning Resources Center, WHEEL Academic Services, and the Tutoring Center, early and often. Together they offer free, individualized, expert help with work, such as writing, for Penn undergraduates. See below for more.

Computer and Smartphone Policy: In general, I do not permit the use of laptops or smartphones in my class. There will sometimes be exceptions for laptops for groupwork. If you need to use a device because of a disability or another reason, come talk to me.

E-mail and Canvas Policy: I will answer students' emails within 72 hours of getting them. That means that if you email me over the weekend I might not get back to you until Monday morning. Class communications to you will generally happen via Canvas. I request that you do the same. Digital copies of articles and essays will be uploaded to Canvas at least a week in advance of class

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

- The [Weingarten Learning Resources Center](#) provides academic support and accommodations for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. The center is composed of two offices: the Office of Learning Resources and the Office of Student Disabilities Services.
- The [Office of Learning Resources](#) provides individual and group instruction in academic reading, writing, study strategies, and time management.
- The [Office of Student Disabilities Services](#) provides consultation and accommodations for students with physical and/or learning disabilities.
- The WHEEL is the name given to a group of support programs in math, writing, technology, library, languages, CSE, chemistry, career services and more provided where students need it most—at home, in the College Houses.
- The [Tutoring Center](#) offers Penn students a variety of peer tutoring services to supplement the academic support provided by Penn faculty, teaching assistants and learning instructors. All Tutoring Center services are free for matriculating undergraduates. Tutorials are generally offered for the core introductory and intermediate undergraduate courses. Tutoring for upper level courses is available on a limited basis.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) provided include: individual and group counseling and therapy; crisis intervention; structured workshops; psychological testing; medical reviews; and consultations.
- The [Office of International Programs](#) (OIP) provides services to students related to immigration and employment status, social and personal adjustments to a new culture, and practical matters related to your stay in Philadelphia.