

GSEM 619 Death and Beyond: Ancient Greece and China

Fall 2014

Tuesday 2-4, Carpenter 15

Professor Shiamin Kwa

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Office Hours:

Office Hours: MWF 9:00-10:00

or by appointment

or by appointment

Required Texts:

- Garland, Robert, *The Greek Way of Death*, Cornell University Press: New York, 1985.
- Grant, Beata and Wilt Idema, *Escape from Bloodpond Hell*. Seattle: Univ. Washington Press, 2011
- Olberding, Amy and Philip Ivanhoe, eds. *Mortality in Traditional Chinese Thought*. Albany: SUNY, 2012.
- *The Peony Pavilion: Mudan ting*, Second Edition (ed. Cyril Birch and Catherine Swatek Intro.). Indianapolis: Indiana Univ., 2002.
- *Six Yuan Plays* (Penguin Classics). London: Penguin, 1972.
- van Gennep, Arnold, *Rites of Passage*, trans. M.B. Vizedom & G. L. Caffee, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1960.

Course Description:

The question of what happens after the moment of death has always fascinated humanity - at one moment there is a living person, the next only a corpse; where did the person go? Every culture struggles with these questions of death and afterlife - what does it mean to die and what happens after death? This seminar will examine a variety of types of evidence - archaeological, poetic, and philosophical - to uncover ideas of death and afterlife in some of the cultures of the ancient world, with particular attention to the similarities and differences between ideas of death and beyond in the cultures of Greece and China. Van Gennep's model of death as a *rite de passage* provides the basic structure for the class, which is divided into three sections, each concerned with one section of the transition: *Dying* - leaving the world of the living; *Liminality* -

the transition between the worlds; and *Afterlife* - existence after death. This anthropological model allows us to analyze the different discourses about death and afterlife.

In the first section (*Dying*), we will first look at ideas of death itself. One of the fundamental dichotomies in human culture is the split between mortal and immortal, and death can thus be seen as an essential part of being human. We will examine ideas of when and how a human being should or could die, as well as what happens in the process of dying and how that fits into larger cosmological ideas.

The next section of the course (*Liminality*) will examine the transition of the deceased into the world of the dead, from the perspective of both the deceased and of the living community. We will explore the various types of funeral rituals performed by the relatives and mourners of the deceased in different periods, paying special attention to the roles of women and the ways the community regulates funeral behavior. We will look at the ways in which the journey of the deceased from the realm of the living to the dead is imagined, focusing particularly on the obstacles in the journey and the consequences of a failed transition - monsters and ghosts.

The final section of the course (*Afterlife*) will deal with the stage after death, again from the perspective of both the deceased and the living. We will explore visions of the afterlife throughout Chinese and Greek literature and art, focusing particularly on the changing topography of the underworld and the privileges and punishments reserved for different types in the mystery religions and philosophical schools. This section will also include a study of the various kinds of rituals performed by the living for the dead, ranging from tendance at the tomb to hero cult.

The class will read selections from a variety of primary sources in translation, along with some secondary sources, both anthropological and historical. Most of these readings will be available on Moodle or on reserve in Carpenter, but some will be from the required texts for the class. Each week several students will be responsible for leading discussion on the special topics; these students will have additional readings to enrich their understanding of the topics (although all students are welcome to do these readings if time permits).

In addition to discussion in the seminar, each student will produce a substantial research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with one or both of the professors. A detailed proposal and preliminary bibliography will be due in the week before fall break. All the student proposals will also be read by the panel of experts who will visit the class later in the semester for a cross-cultural symposium. Every student will give a brief presentation of the research project in the second to last week of the semester, and the final papers will be due in the exam period.

Seminar Schedule

Week 1. Sept. 2 Introduction

Topics:

Death and Dying

Afterlife and the community
Ancient Greece and China

Readings:

Van Gennep, Rites of Passage
Scheffler 2013, Death and Afterlife

Week 2. Sept. 9 – **Death in Greece: Dying - Who Dies? When and How?**

Topics:

- Mortals vs. Immortals
- Good Death and Bad Death
- Mechanics of Dying - departure of the psyche, dissolution of elements

Primary Readings:

Plato, *Phaedo*
Hesiod, *Works and Days*
Lyric Poets: Callinus, Tyrtaeus, Semonides, Mimnermus, and Solon
Homer, *Iliad* xvi, xxii
Herodotus I.30-33 (Solon)

Secondary Readings:

Garland, ch. 1-2
Johnston 1999, ch.1
Vermeule 1979, ch. 1 & 3
Sourvinou-Inwood 1981, To Die and Enter the House of Hades
Humphreys 1980, Death and Time

Special Topics:

- *Mortals vs. Immortals*
Vernant, Mortals and Immortals ch 1
Loraux 1995, Therefore Socrates is Immortal
- *Good Death and Bad Death*
Simonides on the Battle of Plataea
Vernant, A Beautiful Death ch 2
Vernant, Panta kala ch 4
- *Mechanics of Dying*
Bremmer 1983, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* ch. 1-2
Vernant, Psyche ch 10

Week 3. Sept. 16 **Death in China: Dying - Who Dies? When and How?**

Topics:

- Is there a heroic death in China?
- How are female deaths understood?
- "Using" your one death

Primary Readings:

The Injustice Done to Dou E and *The Orphan of Zhao* (Both in 6 Yuan plays)
 Sima Qian, "Letter to Ren'an" "Biography of Boyi and Shuqi" "Biography of Nie Zheng"
 Confucius, *Analects* Book 11

Secondary Readings:

Olberding. Chs. 4 "War, Death and Ancient Chinese Cosmology: Thinking Through the Thickness of Culture", 5 "Death and Dying in the Analects" and 6 "I Know not 'Seems': Grief for Parents in the *Analects*"

Special Topics:

- *Women and inheritance:*

Birge, *Women, Property and Confucian Reaction* Chs. 2 and 4 (connect on Tripod)

- *Chinese Knight Errants*

James Liu, "The Chinese Knight Errant" and "Yueh Fei and China's Heritage of Loyalty"

- *Womanly Virtue:*

Theiss, Ch. From *Disgraceful Matters*

Week 4. Sept. 23 **Liminality for the Community in Greece: The Funeral Ritual and Mourning**

Topics:

- Ritual for the community
- Miasma and Purification
- Funeral ritual in different periods
 - Funeral components - burial vs. cremation, offerings, lamentation
 - Funeral Legislation - community regulates its rituals, the role of women
- Parallels between funeral ritual and marriage ritual
 - Assimilation of the transitions in myth
 - the case of Persephone at Locri

Primary Readings:

Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Homeric Hymn to Demeter

Lucian *On Mourning*

Funeral legislation references: Demosthenes 43.57-66 & Plato, *Laws* 958d-960b;

Plutarch, *Life of Solon*; Cicero, *de legibus* 2.55-69

Secondary Readings

Garland, ch. 3; 4

Kurtz and Boardman 1971, ch. vii; xi

Alexiou 1974, *The Ritual Lament* ch. 1

Johnston 1999, ch. 2

Vermeule 1979, ch. 5

Special Topics:

- *Miasma and Purification*
Parker 1983, *Miasma* ch. 1-2, Cyrene Appendix
Lex Sacra from Selinous
- *Funeral ritual in different periods*
Sourvinou-Inwood 1983, A Trauma in Flux; Appendix to *Reading Greek Death*
Morris 1989, Attitudes toward Death in Archaic Greece
- *Lamentation*
Alexiou 1974, Ritual Lament ch. 7-9 (on reserve in Carpenter)
Hame 2008, Female Control
- *Funeral Legislation*
Garland 1989, The well-ordered corpse
Toher 1991, Greek funerary legislation and the two Spartan funerals
- *Marriage and Death*
Seaford 1987, The Tragic Wedding
Rehm 1994, Marriage to Death, ch 1-2
Sourvinou-Inwood 1978, Persephone and Aphrodite at Locri
Redfield 2003, Locrian Maidens

Week 5. Sept. 30 Liminality for the Community in China: Tombs and their Discontents**Topics:**

- Reinforcing kinship
- Repetitions of the mundane
- Death as Journey

Primary Readings:

Peony Pavilion * (Skim battle scenes, focus on 9-14, 24-28, 32-36 and 48-55)
From *Songs of the South*

Secondary Readings:

Watson, *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, Chs. 1 and 2
Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare* Ch. 7 "Immortality, Soul, and the Netherworld"
Lai, Guolong, "Death and the Otherworldly Journey"
Olberding, Ch. 3 "Concepts of Death and the Afterlife"

Special Topics:

- *Understanding Tombs:*
Wu Hung, *Art of the Yellow Springs* (Online at Tripod) Intro and Choose a Section
(Spatiality, Temporality or Materiality)
- *Theorizing Death and the Feminine:*
Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body* Chs. 14 and 15

Week 6. Oct. 7 Liminality for the Deceased in Greece: The Journey and its Perils

Topics:

- the journey - directions
- obstacles to the journey - need for burial, the water barrier, special knowledge
- Failed transitions - the fate of the unburied, unmarried, or untimely dead, Lamia and other female demons
- the use of ghosts - necromancy, defixiones

Primary Readings:

Odyssey 10-11, 24

Necromancy in *Kestos* of Julius Africanus & Aeschylus' *Persians*

Pausanias IX.39 on the Trophonius Oracle

Plutarch, *de genio Socratis* 589f-592f

'Orphic' Gold Tablets

Aristophanes, *Frogs*

Plato, *Phaedo*

Secondary Readings

Garland, ch. 4

Johnston 1999, ch. 3

Vermeule 1979, ch. 6

Special Topics:

- *failed transitions – demons and the restless dead*
 - Smith 1976, Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers
 - Johnston 2001, Defining the Dreadful
- *obstacles to the journey in the Orphic Gold Tablets*
 - Edmonds 2004, Roadmaps of Déviance
 - Johnston 2007, Ritual Texts
- *the use of ghosts - necromancy, defixiones*
 - Faraone 1991, Binding and Burying the Forces of Evil
 - Ogden 2001, Necromancy

Week 7.Fall Break

Week 8.Oct. 21 **Liminality for the Deceased in China: Specters of the Past**

Topics:

- Why are most Chinese ghosts women?
- Marriage and Death
- Ghosts, Spirits, Foxes

Primary Readings:

Qian nü (6 Yuan plays)

Pu Songling stories

View "A Chinese Ghost Story" (Hong Kong, 1993)

Secondary Readings:

Poo, Intro and *Rethinking Ghosts* "Culture of Ghosts in the Six Dynasties Period"
Yu, Anthony, "Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit!"

Special Topics:

- *Theorizing the ghost in literary theory:*
Marge Garber's *Shakespeare's Ghosts* Intro, Ch. 1 and 7
- *Gendering the Ghost*
Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine* Intro and Chs. 1 "The Ghost's Body" and 3 "Ghosts and Historical Time" (connect via Tripod)
- *The Angry Ghost*
Feuchtwang, "The Avenging Ghost" in *Religion and Society: Anthropology of Religion, Charisma and Ghosts* (connect via Tripod)

Week 9.Oct. 28 Beyond: After Death in Greece - the community regroups

Topics:

- secondary burial practices
- epitaphs and funeral orations
- visiting the tomb and hero cult

Primary Readings:

Homer, *Iliad* xxiii-xxiv
Thucydides 2.33-46, Pericles' Funeral Oration
Lysias Funeral Oration
Demosthenes Funeral Oration
Hyperides Funeral Oration
Plato, *Menexenus*

Secondary Readings

Kurtz and Boardman 1971 ch. xii; xiv
Garland, ch.7
Lattimore 1942, Themes in Greek & Latin Epitaphs
Parker 2005, Ancestral Gods, Ancestral Tombs

Special Topics:

- *funeral orations*
Loraux 1986, Address to the Dead
Tyrrell & Burnett 1999, Pericles' Muting of Women's Voices in Thuc. 2.45.2
- *epitaphs*
Meyer 1993, Epitaphs and Citizenship
Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, *Reading Greek Death* ch. 3
- *visiting the tomb*
Humphreys 1980b, Family Tombs & Tomb Cult
Shapiro 1991, The Iconography of Mourning
Oakley, Picturing Death in Classical Athens (book on reserve in Carpenter)
- *hero cult*
Antonaccio 1994, Contesting the Past

- Rohde 1925, *Psyche* ch.iv
- Whitely 1995, Tomb and hero cult in Archaic Greece
- *funeral games*
 - Brown 2003, Homer, funeral contests and the origins of the Greek city
 - Roller 1981, Funeral Games for Historical Persons
 - Grethlein 2007, Epic Narrative and Ritual. The Case of the Funeral Games in *Iliad* 23

Week 10. Nov. 4 **Beyond: Afterlife in China: To Hell and Back**

Topics:

- Filial Piety
- Pollution
- Celebrating the family

Primary Readings:

Escape from Blood Pond Hell trans. Idema and Grant

Secondary Readings:

Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* Chs. 1, 2, and 4

Brown, *The Politics of Mourning in Early China* Ch. 3 "Sons and Mothers"

Special Topics:

- *Buddhism and the Family:*
 - Teiser, Ch. 7 "Buddhism and the Family"
- *Transforming Transformation (Mulian in Tibet):*
 - Kapstein "Mulian in the Land of Snows and King Gesar in Hell"
- *Mourning, Filial Piety, and the State*
 - Kutcher "Death and the State in Imperial China"
- *Ledgers of Merit and Demerit*
 - Brokaw, "Merit Accumulation in the Early Chinese Tradition"

Week 11. Nov. 11 **Beyond: Afterlife in Greece - Topography of the Underworld**

Topics:

- the changing location of the underworld - Elysium, Isles of the Blest, Hades
- the nature of life in the afterlife
- privilege and punishment
- Mystery Cults and Salvation
- Eleusinian Mysteries and Orphism
- Symposia of the Blest

Primary Readings:

Pindar *Olympian* II & Dirges

'Orphic' Gold Tablets

Plato: myths from *Phaedo* (107c-115b) and *Gorgias* (523a-527e);
Pausanias X.28-31 on Polygnotos (cp. Frazer's commentary)
Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead*
Plutarch *de sera numinis vindicta*

Secondary Readings

Garland, ch. 5, 6
Vermeule 1979, ch. 2

Special Topics:

- *post-mortem punishment*
 - Burkert 2009, Pleading for Hell
 - Saunders 1991, Anxieties and Surrogates
- *Mystery Cults and Salvation*
 - Burkert 1987, Mystery Cults
 - Redfield 1991, The Politics of Immortality
- *Orphism*
 - Parker 1995, Early Orphism
 - Edmonds 2008, Extra-ordinary People
- *Philosophical Consolations*
 - [Plato] *Axiochus*
 - Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium*
 - Boys-Stones 2013, *The Consolatio ad Apollonium: Therapy for the Dead*

Week 12. Nov. 18 Beyond the Afterlife: Reincarnation or Nothing in China

Topics:

- Memory and Identity
- Spirit and self
- Trials and justice

Primary Readings:

"Moonlight Monk" and "Mi Heng"
Lang Xian "Censor Xue Finds Immortality"

Secondary Readings:

Introduction from *The Resurrected Skeleton: From Zhuangzi to Lu Xun*
Bokenkamp, *Ancestors and Anxiety* pp.1-32, Chs. 4 and 5 (Connect on Tripod)

Special Topics:

- *Purgatory in Medieval Buddhism*
 - Teiser, *Scripture of the Ten Kings* pp. 1-31
- *Memory and Rebirth*
 - Mo Yan *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out*

Week 13. Nov. 25 Beyond the Afterlife: Reincarnation or Nothing in Greece

Topics:

- Alternatives to the Underworld
- Atomism and the afterlife
- Ethicization of reincarnation

Primary Readings:

Diogenes Laertius: Lives of Empedokles & Pythagoras
Plato on reincarnation: selections from *Republic & Phaedrus*
Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, book III
Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophrastus*

Secondary Readings:

Edmonds 2013, *Life in the Afterlife*
Henry, *Epicurean Ideas of Death*
Long 1948, *A Study of the Doctrine of Metempsychosis*
Obeyesekere 2002, *Eschatology In Greek And Rebirth Soteriology*

Special Topics:**- pre-ethicized reincarnation**

Obeyesekere, *Imagining Karma* (on reserve in Carpenter)

- Epicurean philosophy and death

Philodemus *On Death* (on reserve in Carpenter)

Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecius*

Warren, *Facing death: Epicurus and his critics* (on reserve in Carpenter)

- Neoplatonic ideas of reincarnation

Neoplatonists on Reincarnation: excerpts from Plotinus, Proclus, et al.

Baltzly, *Patriarchy, Metempsychosis and Women in the Neoplatonic Commentary Tradition*

[Proclus, *in Remp.* XVI]

Week 14.Dec. 2 Student Reports

Week 15.Dec. 9 Conclusions