



Individual paper presentations

80 and 40 Years On – The Symbolism and Politics of Japan’s August Losses

Christopher Hood

August in Japan sees the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the country’s surrender, and the world’s deadliest single plane crash, JAL123. This paper looks at the way that the events are remembered and the way in which politicians are involved in the events.

"A note unsaid": Uncovering the phenomenon of silence associated with childhood death & dying

Sydney Campbell

The death of a child represents one of the worst human experiences possible. While millions of children and youth around the world die each year, experiences of childhood death and dying remain largely silenced. In this talk I will explore this “unspeakable” phenomenon.

Addressing the Educational Gap: The Need for Formal Death Education in Deathcare Professions

Mateus Eduardo Romão & Kate Woodthorpe

Deathcare practitioners’ roles can impact their personal and professional quality of life, but they are often not trained to cope psychologically with their duties. This panel will discuss to what extent education might decrease the holistic impact of their professional activities.

“All That Modern Science Knows:” Embalming, Segregation, and the Politics of the Corpse in Mississippi, 1906-1930

Jennifer Ford

This paper will explore the politics of embalming in early twentieth century Mississippi, specifically investigating the impact of racial segregation upon resulting laws. It will also address the legacies of the early regulations upon the state’s death culture, as well as their larger significance.

Art as a catalyst for ethical reflection on death, postmortem procedures/practices and curation of human remains in museums

Halina Suwalowska

This article examines the role of art in addressing complex ethical issues related to postmortem procedures and human remains in museums. Through an exploration of interdisciplinary projects the article highlights how art can engage the public in dialogue about the ethical dimensions of death.

Biometrics in the Face of Death: The Changing Scopes of Facial Recognition and Dead Body Identification

Mareile Kaufmann

Facial Recognition Technologies are increasingly used for dead body management in war situations. This begs a fundamental question: how do bodies become subject to death when identified by FRTs? Three case studies give insight into how big tech solutions interfuse instances of living and dying.

Boundaries of Goodbye: Navigating Legislation and Practice in Crematoria

Anneminne Frère

This study explores how crematoria interpret and implement decrees governing cremation, focusing on the social and legal boundaries that shape the current cremation practices. While kinship norms have broadened, non-human relations remain excluded, exposing hierarchies in whose wishes are honored.

Comparative Study of Mortuary Work in Transnational Alevi and Sunni Muslim Funeral Practices: Mediating Identities and Power Dynamics in Vienna's Diverse Society

Ahmet Ekren

Drawing from a multi-sited comparative ethnographic study of the Alevi and Sunni Muslim funeral industries in Vienna, this project investigates the roles of funeral and mortuary operators as mediators between transnational Alevi and Sunni Muslim families and sovereignties at various scales.

Controlling the afterlife: state propaganda and a seer of the dead in socialist Hungary

Agnes Hesz

Through the analysis of a documentary film and the following media coverage about a popular seer mediating between the living and the dead, the paper shows how Hungary's socialist regime strove to reshape people's ideas about the afterlife and their relationship with the dead.

Death by Regulation for Nature's Funerary Advocates? The case of the German Green Death start up "MEINE ERDE"

Jana Paulina Lobe

Internationally, new disposal techniques are meeting a growing demand for sustainable burial options. In Germany, restrictive legislation hinders the introduction of innovative alternatives such as human composting. By examining the company MEINE ERDE, this paper asks: Can too much regulation kill?

Do we have a moral obligation to opt for eco-friendly forms of body disposal?

Sarah Carter-Walshaw

The environmental cost of common approaches to body disposal are greater than many people realise. With more eco-friendly post-death options becoming available, do we have a moral obligation to opt for these alternatives for ourselves or for others?

Effigy: On femicide and the nation

Ellen Marie O Sullivan

This paper explores the politics of femicide within the context of Ireland as a nation, focusing on femicide and the border between the North and the Republic.



From bare life and necropolitics to a feminist care ethic: ageism in the COVID-19 pandemic and future directions

Bethany Simmonds

I discuss the life and death decisions related to the 'care' of older people in the UK, during decades of neoliberalism, Austerity, and the COVID-19 pandemic, then present the imperative to politically reframe care systems using feminist care ethics.

Geography of the post-genocide agency of the dead

Mirjam EAM Mencej

Based on field research, my presentation will discuss the agency of those killed in the genocide of the Muslim population in 1995 in relation to specific places in the post-war region of Srebrenica.

Grief Squatting and Wreaking Havok in a Digital Safe-Haven for Bereaved Parents

Ylva Hard af Segerstad

This study examines how an impostor infiltrated a closed Facebook group for bereaved parents, exploring the impact of grief squatting and RIP trolling. It highlights the boundary work by moderators and members to restore the group as a vital support resource.

Grieving inside: the experience of supporting bereaved women during and after incarceration

Julia Spiti

Using a hermeneutical approach, this project seeks to deepen understanding of the experience of professionals and volunteers supporting bereaved women during and after incarceration, particularly when their grief stems from the death of someone significant outside of the prison context.

Identifying multi-disciplinary research themes for palliative and end-of-life care from public engagement survey data

Erica Borgstrom & John macartney

A presentation showcasing five palliative and end-of-life care research areas identified for social science and humanities research using James Lind Alliance data.

Indigenous Insiders and Anglo Outsiders in Australian Burial Disputes

Kate Falconer

This paper examines the ways in which Indigenous cultural claims are received by courts deciding burial disputes in Australia. In doing so, it inverts the privileged 'inside' and marginalised 'outside' dichotomy to explore how the politics of death can effect legal change.

Inequality in life leads to inequality in grief: findings from a study on urban Indigenous experiences of grief and bereavement

Audrey Rose Medwayosh

This paper looks at the political underpinnings that influence urban Indigenous grief's disenfranchisement.

Interdisciplinary Evaluation of the Law on Assisted Dying in Austria: Methods and Initial Insights of the multi-year Project

Klara Doppler & Julia Fischer

Presentation of the mixed-methods research design used to study the implementation of the new assisted suicide framework in Austria across all affected groups, including an introduction of preliminary results.

James Baldwin on Death Denial and White Supremacy

James K Rowe

Despite renewed interest in James Baldwin's writings on race, his focus on the role of death denial in shaping compensatory drives for supremacy has been largely overlooked. For Baldwin, addressing existential fear is crucial to effective anti-racist praxis.

Necromobility: Necro/Sovereign Power and the Securitization of Dead Body Transportation and Forensic Autopsies in the Turkish-PKK Conflict

Erdost C. Akin

This article explores the politics of mobility of dead bodies, and forensic autopsies in the Turkish-PKK conflict. It examines the functions of necro/sovereign power in the 'pre-burial' stage, showing how it reduces the Kurdish Question to terrorism and (re)produces Kurdistan as an internal colony.

Online simulations of death education to attend children's disenfranchised grief

Rivi Frei-Landau

Childhood bereavement can profoundly affect child development, yet children's grief is often disenfranchised. The study explored the outcomes of integrating simulation-based death education, related to childhood bereavement, in an undergraduate course in the service of grief literacy.

Palliative sedation: a buffer against neoliberal thanatopolitics?

Jonathan Lambaerts

End-of-life treatments (such as euthanasia) have been recognised as forms of biopolitics. In response, they have been discredited. This leaves unanswered the question of how to deal with unbearable suffering. Could palliative sedation be an answer?

Policy-Practice Gap in English End-of-Life Care: Insights from examining how the Ambitions framework has been used

Erica Borgstrom

Theorising the policy-practice gap in end-of-life care by seeing implementation as a multistage process of understanding, interpretation in relation to context and experience, and potential action.

Politics of death in Palestine: Martyrdom and ritualcide

Nina Gren

This paper investigates the politics of violent death in Palestine. Building on ethnographic fieldwork, I explore how Palestinians under Israeli occupation, manage violent politicised deaths when their possibilities to uphold both political practices and traditional rituals are limited.

Pushing for Personhood: IVF Embryos and the Death Politics of US Antiabortion Movements

Risa Cromer

Embryos made through in vitro fertilization, frozen, and stored in tanks have become strategically enrolled in the US antiabortion movement's death politics focused on the radical goal of redefining legal personhood, which bear major consequences across sexual and reproductive healthcare.

Rethinking Refusal: Sudden Death as a Necropolitical Event

Tanya Zivkovic

This paper considers the social and political contexts of untimely death and draws on theoretical framings of necropolitics to rethink how and why families refuse organ donation.

Reversing a vanishing: using creative arts to counter the mid-century mandated forgetting of stillbirth

Sarah Clement

This autoethnographic paper draws on postmemory theory to explore how creative arts (poetry, fiction, and visual art) can belatedly commemorate the ‘vanished’ stillborn babies never seen by their parents and buried in unknown unmarked graves during the mid-twentieth-century in the UK and elsewhere..

Rituals for whom? Distinguishing between Mental and Physical Illness Ritual Behaviour in Euthanasia

Iline Ceelen

People in the Netherlands seeking euthanasia for mental illness and those with physical diagnoses exhibit distinct end-of-life rituals. One involves elaborate planning to ease loved ones’ burdens and justify the decision, while the other focuses on personal processes of dying without explanation.

Systemic Neglect for People Experiencing Homelessness with Life-Limiting Illnesses: Explicating Equity-Focused Palliative and End-of-Life Care from the Perspectives of Service Recipients and Providers

Courtney R. Petruik

I examine the "politics of death" through an equity lens for people experiencing homelessness with life-limiting illnesses. By interviewing this group and their providers, we highlight systemic neglect and actionable insights for providers and policymakers to support equitable care for this group.

The Affect of Haunting: Gender, Industrial Work, and Postindustrial Memory in Taiwan

Anru Lee

Through the story of 25 unwed factory women who died in a ferry incident in 1973, I interrogate how the affect associated with an industrial structure of feeling is mobilized to create subjects and practices commensurable with capital accumulation in Taiwan's current postindustrial economy.

The Illusion of Immortality and its political consequences

Kate Woodthorpe

Advances in healthcare have meant that in affluent countries around the world people are living longer than ever before. A lack of proximity to death has arguably enabled political disengagement. This paper asks what the consequences of this are, for both people and the planet.

The Politics of Death Doulas: The Rise of the Alternative Death Movement in the US and Its Impact on the Death Industry

Patricia A Jauchler

This paper examines the challenges faced by US End-of-Life (Death) Doulas and other alternative deathcare workers from the funeral industry and the modern medical establishment, with special focus on current Issues, attitudes, and legislation impacting the quality of death in the United States.

The politics of law and death: purpose, reform and medico-legal death investigation

Imogen Jones

Evaluation of the investigation of contentious death in the UK has been dominated by the themes of inconsistency, limited resources and ineffective leadership at judicial and political levels. This offers a reform agenda based on a critical appraisal of the purpose of death investigation.

The politics of non-human animal death in Poland: Between the utilization of dead bodies and pet care

Lucja Lange

I emphasize in the paper the importance of allowing caregivers to be buried with their pets. Therefore, we need a new kind of legislation that grants us the right to bury non-human animals in regular cemeteries, so that, in time, we can be united with them.

The Politics of Sound and the Funeral of an American President

Deborah L Jaramillo

Bringing together death studies and radio studies, this paper examines U.S. radio stations' responses to President Harding's death in 1923. In covering their first presidential death and funeral, broadcasters reconciled sound's potential collision course with respect for authority and good taste.

The politics of the law of death, burial and inheritance for Indigenous people in Australia

Prue Vines

Australian common law completely ignored the 'other' law of Indigenous people in relation to non-criminal matters for 200 years. Only now have we begun to recognise and use customary law in relation to death, burial and succession., but significant problems still remain.

The socio-political life of dead bodies in war: How international law engages with the social and political existence of human corpses

Welmoet Wels

The bodies of the dead of war are of individual importance to families and societal cohesion. Yet as visible products of warfare, bodies are part of a politization process. International law protects the bodies of the dead, while also creating space for this socio-political existence of the dead.

“This pandemic takes away from us the right to grief”: political neglect incidence on covid-19 bereaved families

Gislaine Leoncio Motti

In Brazil, COVID-19 bereaved families experience disenfranchised grief due to denialist attitudes of political authorities regarding the pandemic. Political dimensions of grief must be considered, particularly in the context of disasters and large-scale epidemics, to develop more effective policies.

Timing the Useful and Meaningful Death: New Technologies for Heart Transplantation

Joel Ferrall

This paper examines the ethical, political, and social dimensions of a novel technique in heart transplantation to increase the supply of hearts. Through anthropological analysis, I investigate this technology as it contests the timing of death and creates meaning in a tragedy for donor families.

Unnoticed dying: intersection of political will, social norms and individual choice

Glenys Caswell

People regularly die unnoticed. People living solitary lives, people experiencing homelessness, people moving between countries. The way in which they die is impacted by political decisions. This paper uses a case study approach to explore some of the issues involved when someone dies unnoticed.

Victims and victories: sculpture as carrier of ideology

David Lillington

A critical look at Modern and especially Contemporary sculpture and the ideas and arguments around it, in their relation to, and embeddedness in, the worlds of politics and of social ideas about mortality. In particular – monuments and memorials, and the work of the dead in their domain.

Roundtables

Legal Frameworks for Death Practices: Roundtable discussion in response to the new Dutch ‘Law on Disposal of Bodies of Deceased Persons’

Martin Hoondert & Brenda Mathijssen

Legal frameworks are available for the dying process, death and disposal of the corpse. In the Netherlands, disposal is regulated in the *Wet op de Lijkbezorging* from 1991. Right now, a new law is being drafted. There are many issues that have emerged in the process of drafting a new law. In this roundtable, we will discuss several of these issues with experts in the funerary industry, health care providers, legal experts, philosophers, policymakers, and death studies scholars.

The Politics of Contemporary Death Rituals in Europe

Brenda Mathijssen, Maija Butters, Ida Høeg, Martin Hoondert & Yvon Van der Pijl

This roundtable introduces the forthcoming *Handbook on Contemporary Death Rituals in Europe*, a project featuring contributions from over 40 scholars across the humanities and social sciences. Through 35 ethnographic case studies, the handbook examines how death rituals in 21st-century Europe are transformed in response to social, cultural, and political changes. It explores their creative reconfiguration, individualization, adaptation in migration contexts, and intersections with traditions.

Workshops

Art-Research Collaborations: Fostering Public Engagement with Death and Dying

Yvon van der Pijl & Janieke Bruin-Mollenhorst

This workshop examines how art-research collaborations, including interactive theater and performance art, can engage the public with critical issues in death and dying—from ethical end-of-life dilemmas like euthanasia in dementia to the complexities of ecological grief and mass extinction. Using the World Café method, participants will explore how these collaborations can deepen public understanding and foster new dialogues around these complex, often politicized topics.

Pet or Pest? Exploring death and frames of non-humans

Maite van Gerwen & Mariske Westendorp

To reveal the complex ethical distinctions in how we judge which animals deserve to live or die, this workshop examines attitudes toward rats – as either pests or pets. Together we experience how framing influences perceptions of rats' "killability," exposing broader hierarchies that determine whose lives are valued or dismissed.