

The 17th International Conference on the Social Context of Death, Dying and Disposal

Wednesday 27 – Saturday 30 August 2025
Utrecht University (NL)

Theme:
The Politics of Death



**Utrecht
University**

THE ASSOCIATION
FOR THE STUDY OF
DEATH & SOCIETY

**POLITICS
OF DEATH**

DDO17

27-30 AUG. 2025 UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

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DDD17 Conference timetable

Wednesday 27 August 2025

10.00-18.00	Registration @ Social Hub Side events and exhibitions @ Social Hub
12.00-12.45	Online programme: Meet & Greet
13.00-14.30	Panel session I ASDS Council Meeting
15.00-16.30	Panel session II Death Book Club ASDS General Members Meeting
19.15-19.45	Opening ceremony (<i>walk-in starts at 19.00</i>)
19.45-20.45	Plenary keynote: Dr. Kami Fletcher – Dying while Black: A call for social justice
20.45-22.00	Opening reception

Thursday 28 August 2025

08.30-18.00	Registration @ Social Hub Side events and exhibitions @ Social Hub
09.00-10.30	Panel session III
11.00-12.30	Panel session IV
12.45-13.45	ASDS PGR (postgraduate) & ECR (early career researcher) lunch Meet <i>Mortality</i> (online & at the Book Market)
14.00-15.30	Panel session V
16.00-18.00	Dark Tourism Tours @ Utrecht city centre (<i>meet at 16.00 in front of Instituto Cervantes</i>) Online programme: Mortal – Meet the makers
19.00-20.30	Plenary roundtable: Stretching the Dutch euthanasia law (<i>walk-in starts at 18.30</i>)

Friday 29 August 2025

08.30-18.00	Registration @ Social Hub Side events and exhibitions @ Social Hub
09.00-10.30	Panel session VI
11.00-12.30	Panel session VII
12.45-13.45	ASDS PGR (postgraduate) & ECR (early career researcher) lunch ASDS Ambassadors gathering Meet <i>Mortality</i> (online & at the Book Market)
14.00-15.30	Panel session VIII
15.45-16.15	Online programme: Meet & Greet
16.30-17.30	Plenary experiential keynote: Prof. Enny Das – Experience your own death (<i>walk-in starts at 16.00</i>)
17.45-18.30	ASDS Award ceremony
19.30-22.30	Conference dinner (<i>walk-in starts at 19.00</i>)

Saturday 30 August 2025

09.00-10.30	Panel session IX
11.00-12.30	Panel session X
14.00-17.00	Excursion to Amsterdam museums (<i>meet at 13.00 in front of Instituto Cervantes</i>)

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Welcome to DDD17: The Politics of Death

Welcome from the DDD17 Organizing committee

Welcome to Utrecht for DDD17!

Every two years, the Association for the Study of Death and Society (ASDS) convenes the International Conference on the Social Context of Death, Dying, and Disposal (DDD) at a different location in Europe.

After the first Dutch edition in 2011 - *Changing European Death Ways: New Perspectives in Death Studies* (DDD10) - hosted at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, we are delighted to welcome you back to the Netherlands for the 17th edition of this great event. This time, we're gathering at Utrecht University, right in the heart of the beautiful medieval city of Utrecht!

Though Utrecht University officially dates back to its Dies Natalis on 26 March 1636, the city suggested founding a university as early as 1470. With its long-standing academic tradition, Utrecht also boasts a vibrant religious and political history. It's known as a European City of Churches, was the first Dutch Human Rights City, and has long been a proud *Regenbooggemeente* (Rainbow Municipality). In recent years, it's been recognized as a UNESCO City of Literature and was awarded the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award last spring.

The theme of this year's DDD - *The Politics of Death* - resonates deeply with both the spirit of the university and the city. More importantly, the current global *Zeitgeist* calls for urgent, thoughtful reflection on this pressing and complex theme. Issues surrounding death, dying, and disposal are inextricably linked to questions of power, justice, and equality as well as to the allocation of resources, wealth, and well-being. We hope DDD17 offers a space for inspiring, respectful exchange - open minds and warm hearts coming together across disciplines and perspectives.

We are truly thrilled by the overwhelming interest in DDD17. The diversity and international reach of our attendees - spanning early-career participants to established scholars, practitioners, and policymakers - set the stage for rich learning and meaningful dialogue.

In addition to an exciting program of panels, workshops, roundtables, keynotes, and plenaries, DDD17 also includes book clubs, social events, exhibitions, excursions, and a festive conference dinner with performances. [Please explore our website](#) for the full range of activities! And don't hesitate to connect us - the organizing team - or fellow attendees for information, suggestions, or simply a friendly chat. Whether this is your first DDD or your ninth or seventeenth, you're warmly welcome. If you're new and feeling unsure, know that the person next to you might be in the same boat. So please do mix, mingle, and make connections - this is how we create a welcoming, inclusive, and enriching experience together.

We're all set and excited to begin. Thank you so much for joining us for DDD17.

Enjoy the conference!

Welcome from the ASDS President

As President of the Association for the Study of Death and Society (ASDS), it is my pleasure to welcome everyone to the International Death, Dying and Disposal Conference (DDD17) at the University of Utrecht. Every two years, the conference gives those of us working in the broad field of death studies the opportunity to come together to share our work, to expand our knowledge, to build new relationships and to cement existing ones. The theme of this year's conference - **the politics of death** - is a timely and exciting one in today's world. The conference programme promises us four fascinating days of plenaries, panel presentations, workshops, roundtables, side events and exhibitions; and that's before we get to the various social events!

On behalf of everyone attending the conference, and particular the ASDS Council, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Mariske Westendorp at the University of Utrecht for bringing such a big international event together working alongside other members of the organising team:

Dr. Brenda Mathijssen (University of Groningen); Esli Bodegraven, BSc (Utrecht University); Iline Ceelen, MSc (Radboud University Nijmegen); Dr. Janieke Bruin (Radboud University Medical Centre); Hanan de Sain, MSc (Utrecht University); Laura Cramwinckel, MA (Tot Zover funerary museum); Dr. Maarten Bedert (Utrecht University); Dr. Martin Hoondert (Tilbury University); Dr. Natashe Lemos Dekker (University of Amsterdam); Dr. Peter Groote (University of Groningen); Dr. Renske Visser (University of Oulu, Finland); and Dr. Yvon van der Pijl (Utrecht University). And to Lars Otermans and Robin Zeekaf (student assistants).

It's clear that the field of death studies is thriving; and whether you're coming to Utrecht or joining the conference online, DDD17 offers us all a shared space to learn from each other.

Professor Heather Conway
President, Association for the Study of Death and Society



To learn more about ASDS, please visit:
[The Association for the Study of Death and Society](http://www.asdsociety.org)

DDD17 Theme: Politics of Death

Despite its appearance as universal biological event, death is and has never been neutral. Instead, it is tied up with questions of (in)equality, access, and power (im)balances. Achille Mbembe, in his understanding of necropolitics, already underscored the essential role of death in the exercise of sovereignty, claiming that power is performed in modern-day states by the subjugation of life to the power of death. However, death is not merely a passive actor, but has itself agency. In short: **death is political and performs the political**. This is reflected not only in death itself, but equally in the dead themselves (which can become political actors), the bodies of the dead, the process of dying (which is, amongst others, infrastructurally related to political discourse and inequalities), and bereavement (which can likewise be or become a political act). The political in this theme reaches further than national or international political institutions such as governments, state actors, multinational corporations, or political or religious alliances, to include, in the widest sense of the word, everybody and everything that has to do with (the exercise of) power and moralities, e.g., families, kin, neighbourhoods, friendship networks.

The theme of the Politics of Death has become ever more crucial to examine in our current times. Death has become more politicized in our current age, and death, destruction and loss surround us from multiple (political) angles (e.g., wars, environmental destruction, global immigration, and failing states). Moreover, new technological, digital and medical developments alter the ways in which we deal with, think about, research and work with death. Such developments are equally political, both in how they come about and to whom they apply.

In these current times, how do we, as practitioners and scholars, deal with these political aspects of death? How does it influence the ways in which we engage with death? And how can we reflect on and potentially change our own positions within this political field?

Eight conference tracks

These overarching questions are reflected in the eight conference tracks that shape the structure and content of our conference programme (printed in more detail from page 29 onwards):

1. Ritual practices: Funerals, cemeteries, ideologies
2. Navigating loss and grief: Personal experiences and collective expressions
3. Digital death practices and immortality
4. The politics of death in times of crises
5. Death, culture and the politics of representation: Past and present
6. Death and/of the more than human
7. Body politics and disposal: Parts and wholes
8. End-of-life: Planning and caring in practices and politics

DDD17 Organizing committee

The DDD17 is made possible by the hard work of the following people:

Dr. Mariske Westendorp (Utrecht University)

Dr. Brenda Mathijssen (University of Groningen)

Esli Bodegraven, BSc (Utrecht University)

Iline Ceelen, MSc (Radboud University Nijmegen)

Dr. Janieke Bruin (Radboud University Medical Centre)

Hanan de Sain, MSc (Utrecht University)

Laura Cramwinckel, MA (Tot Zover funerary museum)

Dr. Maarten Bedert (Utrecht University)

Dr. Martin Hoondert (Tilbury University)

Dr. Natashe Lemos Dekker (University of Amsterdam)

Dr. Peter Groote (University of Groningen)

Dr. Renske Visser (University of Oulu, Finland)

Dr. Yvon van der Pijl (Utrecht University)

Acknowledgements

The conference would not be possible without the invaluable support of our student assistants and dedicated (student) volunteers. They will be present throughout the conference to answer your questions and provide both technical and practical assistance. We are especially grateful to Robin Zeekaf and Lars Otermans for their help in preparing all the practical arrangements.

Student-assistants

Lars Otermans & Robin Zeekaf

Student volunteers

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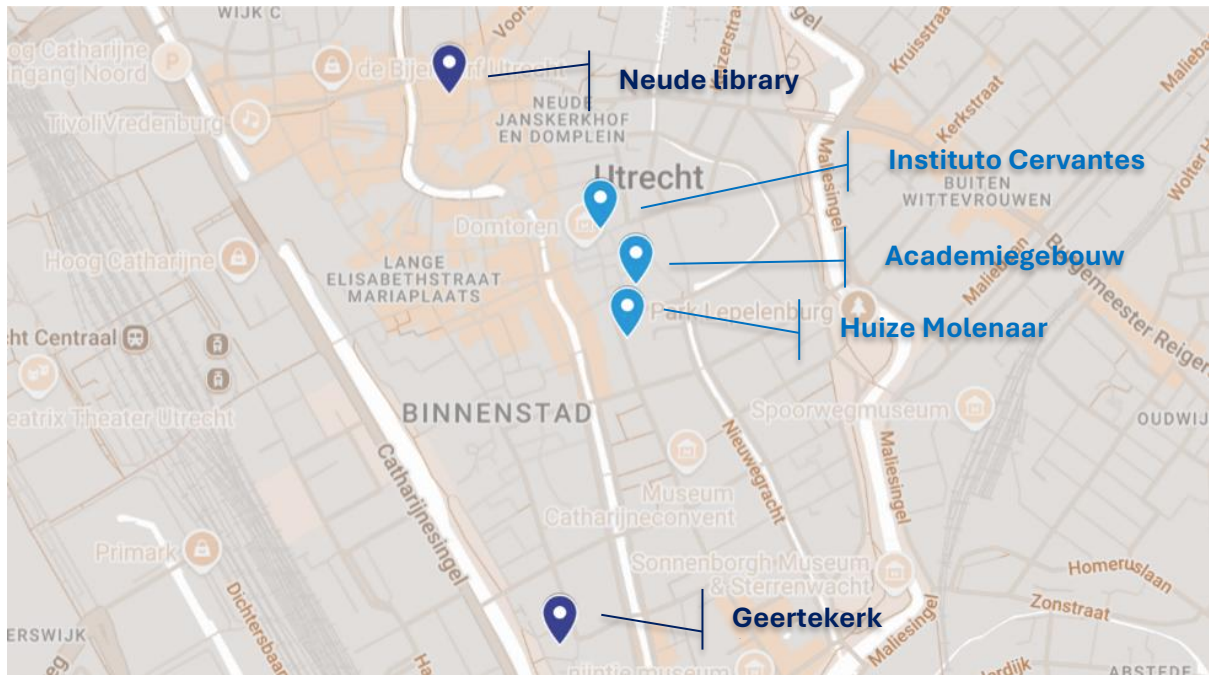
Pip Schledorn

Shaqaiq Ansari

Yvonne Dronkers

DDD17 Venues

Below you find a map of the city centre of Utrecht, with the main venues highlighted in blue. The main conference venues (Instituto Cervantes, Academieggebouw, and Huize Molenaar) are all **located at or around the central Dom Square**, all within 5-minute walking distance from each other.



PLEASE NOTE:

All panel sessions will take place in historic buildings and rooms located in the heart of Utrecht. These venues typically **do not have air conditioning**. As the conference takes place in August - during the height of summer - please be prepared for warm temperatures.

Coffee, tea, and water will be available in every room. In addition, tap water in the Netherlands is of excellent quality and perfectly safe to drink. We recommend bringing your own reusable water bottle, which you can refill throughout the day to stay hydrated.

The main conference venues are:

Academiegebouw (University Hall) (Domplein 29)

Utrecht's University Hall is the main building of Utrecht University, located on a corner of Dom Square. Since its founding in 1636, the university has occupied several annexes of the Dom Church, particularly the cloister and the chapter house. The chapter house, now connected to the University Hall, serves as an auditorium. Notably, on 23 January 1579, the Union of Utrecht - considered the foundation of the Republic of the Seven United Provinces - was signed in this room. It also holds historical significance as the place where the first female Dutch student, Anna Maria van Schuurman, attended lectures, seated in a screened-off box next to one of the two original lecture halls. She later became an influential humanist, linguist, theologian, poet, and artist.

During DDD17, the opening keynote and conference dinner will take place in this historic auditorium. The cloister will serve as the venue for our reception, while panel sessions will be held in smaller rooms throughout the building.



Huize Molenaar (Korte Nieuwstraat 6)

Huize Molenaar is a historic patrician house with a rich history. Established in 1892 by Jacob Molenaar, a Frisian-born chef, it has been a prominent venue for private dining and events for over a century. The building itself dates back to the 18th century. Throughout its history, Huize Molenaar has hosted numerous significant events, including academic promotions and receptions, particularly for Utrecht University. In the early 20th century, it was customary for all promotion dinners and receptions to be held here. Initially, these events were exclusively for men, but over time, women were also included, first in separate rooms and later together with men.

Today, Huize Molenaar continues to operate as a private dining establishment, maintaining its historical ambiance and significance. **During our DDD17 conference, it will serve as venue for panel sessions.**

Instituto Cervantes (Domplein 3)

The Instituto Cervantes (named after the renowned author Miguel de Cervantes) is a Spanish public institution established in 1991 to promote the Spanish language in the Netherlands and the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries worldwide. The Instituto Cervantes continues to play a role in fostering cultural and linguistic ties between Spain and the Netherlands, organising numerous events that celebrate and disseminate Spanish and Latin American cultures within the Dutch context. While Utrecht was historically a battleground between Spanish and Dutch interests (especially during the Dutch Revolt against Spanish rule in the 16th century), the presence of Instituto Cervantes in the city today represents a shift from conflict to cooperation.



During our DDD17 conference, Instituto Cervantes will serve as a venue for panel sessions, and as our Social Hub, where participants can gather for exhibitions, workshops, and our Book Market.

In addition to these main venues, some other venues are also of importance to conference attendees. All these venues are within walking distance of the Dom Square but can also be reached by public transport. To check how to get to these venues using public transport, you can refer to [U-OV](#).

Geertekerk (Geertekerkhof 23)

Dating back to the 12th century, the Geertekerk is a beautifully preserved medieval church with a rich history. Over the centuries, the church has been a site of worship, first Catholic, later Protestant. The name comes from Saint Gertrude of Nivelles, a 7th century abbess and saint, and patron saint of travellers, the poor, and hospices. Nowadays, the Geertekerk is amongst others an event venue, where **during the DDD17 conference a plenary roundtable on the topic of euthanasia in the Netherlands (on Thursday evening) will be organized.**

Neude Library (Neude 11)

The Bibliotheek Neude (Neude Library) is a vibrant cultural hub housed in a former 20th-century post office. Its grand halls, high ceilings, and intricate brickwork make it a striking venue. Today, the library is a dynamic space for learning, creativity, and community, featuring reading rooms, exhibition spaces, and a café where visitors can relax and connect. **The experiential plenary keynote by Prof. Enny Das and the ASDS Award Ceremony (on Friday afternoon/evening) will be held at the theatre hall of the library.**

DDD17 Social Hub (Instituto Cervantes)

The DDD17 conference will be more than just a platform for exchanging research ideas and findings — it will also be an **opportunity to network, connect over coffee or tea, and engage in inspiring discussions in smaller groups**. To facilitate this, we're dubbing part of the Instituto Cervantes building our "Social Hub." Here, the following activities are organized:

- On the ground floor of the building, conference participants are invited to come together over **coffee or tea** and have a chat. **Registration** will also take place here.
- In the theatre hall of the building (on the first floor), we will set up a **Book Market**, where both international academic publishing houses and Utrecht local bookshops will display and sell some top picks of interesting books on anything related to (the politics of) death. Some authors of books will also be present. In addition, you have the opportunity to meet editors of the interdisciplinary death studies journal *Mortality* here.
- In addition, conference participants will be invited to visit several **art exhibitions and workshops** in the basement and first floor of the building. More information on these addition events can be found on page 18 of this programme.

DDD17 Plenary meetings and additional activities

Alongside stimulating paper presentation, workshop, and roundtable discussions (see programme from page 29 onwards), conference participants are invited to join **plenary sessions** and take part in additional conference events, including our **Death Book Club** and optional **excursions** in Utrecht and Amsterdam. Details on these main events are listed below.

Plenary keynote Dr. Kami Fletcher – Dying while Black: A call for social justice

Wednesday 27 August, 19.45-20.45 @ Aula, Academiegebouw. [Click here to join this session.](#)



In 2020, our world was engulfed in a world-wide pandemic. COVID-19 reminded the world that death is political – meaning that death is not just this inevitable occurrence that will happen to every human being, but that the circumstances of one's death are highly predicated upon one's social, economic and even racial status. In the United States of America, one's assigned racial category weighs heavily on one's cause of death. This is further impacted by age, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion. In the first months of the pandemic, Richmond, VA reported that of the first 15 Coronavirus deaths,

14 of them were African American. Later, the COVID Racial Tracker began to collect data that illustrated how Black Americans were dying at just about 1.5 times the rate of whites. The reason pundits all pointed to were pre-existing conditions that were compounded by COVID-19. The stark reality began to shed light on health disparities and structural inequalities that Black Americans face past and present. Or as one American sociologist said, at the time, in an op-ed “when America catches Coronavirus, Black people die.” **But why? What can unpacking the racial disparities of COVID teach us about deathways as we zoom in on the experiences of Black Americans?**

In this talk, Dr. Kami Fletcher will discuss what it means to die while Black and how the bereaved use it as a call for social justice. She will discuss the histories and historical legacies of white supremacy that have abnormally shaped Black American deathways. Framed within the spiritual and secular norms surrounding death ideology, Dr. Fletcher will invite participants to view ritual as a call to arms and mourning as a radical act of remembrance that transforms grief into a powerful force of social justice and collective memory. Participants will be left to consider how through grief and mourning, Black communities demand justice while reclaiming humanity. Dr. Fletcher will engage those in attendance to interrogate how systems of power determine whose lives are publicly mourned and whose deaths are rendered invisible. She will push participants to grapple with the idea that mourning, in the Black experience, is not only personal but profoundly political - an act of resistance that insists on visibility, dignity, and justice.

Dr. Kami Fletcher is Associate Professor of African Diasporic History & Coordinator of Africana Studies, and President of Collective for Radical Death Studies. For more information, see www.kamifletcher.com

Plenary roundtable – Searching for the boundaries of the Dutch euthanasia law

Thursday 28 August, 19.00-20.30 @ Geertekerk. [Click here to join this session.](#)

The Netherlands are internationally known to have a functioning euthanasia legislation. Since the Euthanasia Law was passed in 2002, there have been ongoing public and professional debates about the conditions and circumstances under which euthanasia should or should not be allowed, and the legal and ethical boundaries of euthanasia practices. In recent years, numerous “boundary cases” have stirred up this debate, including cases of people with dementia, young people, cases of mental (as opposed to physical) suffering, and discussions around a “completed life.” **These cases and debates call into question the boundaries of the existing Euthanasia Law.** How, and to what extent, is the Dutch law being stretched? With a highly diverse panel, we will explore these questions and offer the audience an opportunity to delve deeper into the Dutch approach to euthanasia.

The roundtable discussion panel consists of the following speakers: Yvette Schuijt (legal counsel for the Dutch Right to Die Society), Theo Boer (Professor of Healthcare Ethics at the Protestant Theological University in Utrecht), Kit Vanmechelen (Flemish psychiatrist, and author of Let Me Go), Hansje van de Beek (investigative journalist at Argos) and Els van Wijngaarden (care ethicist and Associate Professor in “Meaning and Ethics regarding the End of Life” at Radboud University Medical Center).

Plenary keynote Prof. Enny Das – Experience your own death

Friday 29 August, 16.30-17.30 @ Neude library



PLEASE NOTE: Due to the experiential nature of this event, this keynote will NOT be offered in a hybrid fashion.

On Friday afternoon, we will have the pleasure to experience our own death. Prof. Enny Das will guide the audience through a practice of the art of dying via meditation. The participants' experiences will be connected to findings from a recent art-meets-science project that explored the effects of the art installation *This Body That Once Was You* by Bakels and Mascini.

The pervasive denial of death in modern society has led to an unbalanced relationship with death—treating it as an existential problem to be avoided, rather than a natural part of the life cycle that should be openly discussed. A key barrier to meaningful conversations about death and dying is human's unconscious tendency to suppress thoughts about death and dying. **This underscores the need to (re-)discover strategies that encourage open, meaningful discussions about death without triggering resistance, suppression, or denial.** One such strategy comes from ancient Buddhist and philosophical traditions, which proposed that practicing the art of dying can help reduce the denial of death and foster a greater appreciation for life. The Nine Cemetery Contemplations, for instance, encourage individuals to visualize the nine stages of decay of their own body. Building on these insights, this keynote will guide the audience through a practice of the art of dying via meditation. The participants' experiences will be connected to findings from a recent art-meets-science project that explored the effects of the art installation *This Body That Once Was You* by Bakels and Mascini.

Prof. Enny Das is Professor at the Centre for Language Studies, Radboud University, the Netherlands

Online programme

The DDD17 conference will almost entirely be offered in a hybrid format. This means that most sessions - **with the exception of workshops, roundtable sessions, and the experiential keynote by prof. Enny Das** - will also be accessible online via Microsoft Teams. The Teams links for each session will be shared via our website.

There will also be specific activities for online participants, including:

Online Meet & Greet

Wednesday 27 August, 12.00-12.45 & Friday 29 August, 15.45-16.15

Meet other online participants and chat about your work and interests, your hopes and wishes for and experiences of the conference, or anything you'd like. So just grab a cup of coffee or tea and call in! Click here to join this [meeting on Wednesday](#). Click here to join this [meeting on Friday](#).

Meet *Mortality*: Promoting the interdisciplinary study of death and dying

Thursday 28 & Friday 29 August, 12.45-13.45

Mortality is the leading journal related to subjects of death and dying, grief and bereavement, and memorialisation. If you would like more information on the journal and publishing, are interested in peer reviewing for the journal, or have a book for review (or that you would like to review), please contact us directly at mortalityjournal@gmail.com or join Dr Bethan Michael-Fox online. She's happy to answer all your questions. Click here to join this [meeting on Thursday](#). Click here to join this [meeting on Friday](#).

Mortal, three short animations: Meet the makers

Thursday 28 August, 16.00-17.00

Via the DDD17 website, you are invited to watch three animated films by UK-based artists Ben Faircloth, Eilidh Nicoll, and Mariana Leal, who take inspiration from the Death Positive Movement. Their work reflects on how death and dying can be rethought, and how matters such as end-of-life care and planning, handling grief, and funerary practices can be better approached. Each artist has undertaken a period of research and development, engaging broadly with the subject and their local community groups. They have also been supported by social anthropologist Dr Hannah Rumble, Research Fellow at the Centre for Death and Society at the University of Bath. In this online session, you are invited to meet the makers and dr. Hannah Rumble for a talk on these animations. [Click here to join this meeting](#).

Side events and exhibitions

As part of the conference experience, we invite our conference participants to explore a series of engaging side events hosted in the general building - **our designated “Social Hub”** (located at Instituto Cervantes). We encourage all participants to lend their perspective and be part of the evolving conversations in this building.

Animated films: Mortal – Three short animations on our mortality and relationship with death and dying

Abigail Addison (Animate Projects, United Kingdom)

Animated films by UK-based, artists Ben Faircloth, Eilidh Nicoll, and Mariana Leal, that take inspiration from the Death Positive Movement. The work reflects on how death and dying can be rethought, and how matters such as end of life care and planning, handling grief, and funerary practices can be better approached. Each artist has undertaken a period of research and development, engaging broadly with the subject and their local community groups. They have also been supported by social anthropologist Dr Hannah Rumble, Research Fellow at the Centre for Death and Society at the University of Bath.

Art exhibition: Let’s talk about death - Dödlük & Bingo

Tot Zover (‘So Far’) is the Dutch museum about life and death in Amsterdam, known for high-profile exhibitions, impactful events and its open approach to mortality. The museum adheres to the death positive movement and encourages to lean into death. Don’t avoid – move toward. To the subject and each other. At DDD17 two interactive museum objects are on display: DÖDLIK – the fictive IKEA coffin with instruction leaflet invites you to step in and show your deadliest face (selfie). The Deadfun Bingo invites you to spin the gold bingo cage, see what numbered ball rolls out that defines the death related question you and your playing partner will discuss.

Art exhibition: Memento morididdle / Memento viverididdle

Charles Clary (Coastal Carolina University, USA)

This will be a pop-up art exhibition of my framed sculptural pieces that explore the themes of death and living, or memento mori and memento vivere. My work explores the themes of death and trauma using hand-cut paper and anatomical and floral decorative paper. This small pop-up show will include small, framed works installed in a salon style reminiscent of a sitting room or family home installation. The works feature anatomical and skull imagery with playful colours and florals to call to mind the realities of death with joys of life and remembrance.

Art exhibition: Our bedrooms – A photographic record of dying alone

Mariska van Zutven (photographer, Netherlands)

Documentary photographer Mariska van Zutven (1969) presents a series of photographs of the bedrooms of deceased individuals. Since 2006, Van Zutven has been documenting the homes of people who died without relatives, capturing these spaces just before they are cleared out by “the cleaner,” a man responsible for vacating houses when there are no friends or relatives to do so. In some homes, the environment of the deceased remains fully intact. In others, some belongings have already been removed. By photographing these rooms, Van Zutven seeks to capture the story of the inhabitants, people how have lived alone for a long time and mostly died in isolated.

Audio gallery: When the state kills – Unlocking the truth and fighting for justice

Emma Halliday (University of Lancaster, United Kingdom)

The role of the state is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. But what happens when the state itself is responsible for inflicting harm and death on the public? Either through direct violence or as a result of catastrophic failure and neglect, the British state has been complicit in the deaths of thousands of its own citizens. Such deaths include people held in prison or immigration detention, people in mental health care settings, deaths after police contact or in police custody, as well as those killed in mass disasters such as at Hillsborough and in Grenfell. In the aftermath of such deaths, there is often a coordinated effort by powerful institutions and state actors to legitimise their violence and neglect. This interactive audio gallery aims to provide an alternative lens on state related deaths and amplify the voices, lives and experiences of the victims of state violence and showcase the work of families and activists who continue to fight against the unjust systems that enable these deaths. The audio gallery will give delegates the opportunity to hear the testimonies of bereaved families and campaigners who tell their stories of what happens when the state kills.

Creative space: There are no words – Building a better sympathy card

Becky Robison (Dead parents what now, United Kingdom)

A 1977 study by C.H. Lippy of more than 200 sympathy cards found that none of them referred to death directly. A 2017 study by R.W. Hallett of 134 sympathy cards found that only one of them used the word “death.” American and European society is becoming increasingly secular, but our sympathy cards remain largely Christian or Christian-coded, reusing generic language and refusing to acknowledge death directly. We can do better. Together, we’ll create text for death positive sympathy cards that will later be available for free download on deadparentswatnow.com.

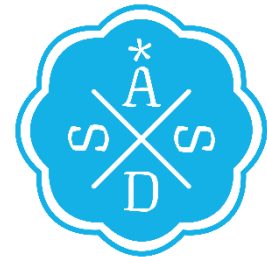
Vignettes: Lend your perspective – Share reflections on the meaning of ambivalence and hesitation in end-of-life choices

Els van Wijngaarden (Radboud UMC, Netherlands)

Experiences of and perspectives on the existential topics of death and dying are highly influenced by a person’s personal background, culture, and legislative context regarding end-of-life practices. Therefore, research into end-of-life topics benefits from collecting the views of people from diverse backgrounds. We would like to invite you to share your insights with us – and with other attendees – about some illustrative vignettes regarding the meaning of ambivalence and hesitation in end-of-life choices collected in various qualitative research projects. Receiving your outlook on these cases helps us to reflect on how end-of-life choices are understood from different perspectives. But first and foremost, they may spark lively discussions and intellectual exchange among conference attendees.

ASDS Events and meetings

Throughout the conference, you have ample opportunity to get to know and engage with the Association for the Study of Death and Society (ASDS) and its members, in various activities listed below.



ASDS Award ceremony

Friday 29 August, 17.45-18.30 @ Neude library

The Association for the Study of Death and Society is delighted to announce the return of our ASDS Awards. The winners are being revealed at a special ceremony at DDD17 on the evening of Friday 29th August, and we hope that as many conference delegates as possible will attend as we celebrate the work of all of the nominees and recipients.

There are four categories, two of which (the ASDS Book Award and the ASDS Death and Public Engagement Award) were open to nominations from ASDS members and non-members. The categories are:

1. **ASDS Lifetime Achievement Award:** This prestigious award is awarded to a current ASDS member for outstanding contributions to Death Studies over the course of an academic, professional, voluntary, and/or artistic career.
2. **ASDS Book Award:** This award recognises outstanding and original books in the broad field of Death Studies, published during the nomination period (i.e. 1 April 2021- 31 March 2025). The shortlisted books for the 2025 award are: [The Final Farewell: Understanding the Last Rites and Rituals of India's Major Faiths](#) (Minaksi Dewan); [Ashes to Admin: Tales from the Caseload of a Council Funeral Officer](#) (Evie King); and [Necropolitics of the Ordinary: Death and Grieving in Contemporary Singapore](#) (Ruth Toulson).
3. **ASDS Mortality Journal Article Award:** This award recognises important Death Studies scholarship in the form of a full-length article published in the [ASDS journal Mortality](#) during the nomination period (i.e. 1 April 2021- 31 March 2025). It is awarded at the discretion of *Mortality*'s editors and focuses on those new to publishing in the journal.
4. **ASDS Death and Public Engagement Award:** This award recognises individuals and/or teams who have raised public awareness of important issues related to death, dying, grief and loss. The 2025 shortlist is: [Dead Good](#) (creative death workers and arts-based death educators); the [Death Studies Podcast](#) (a platform for the diversity of voices in, around and contributing to the academic field of Death Studies); and the [Victoria and Stuart Project](#) (end of life care planning with people with learning disabilities).

ASDS PGR & ECR lunch

Thursday 28 and Friday 29 August, 12.45-13.45 @ Instituto Cervantes 1.03

For DDD17, the Association for the Study of Death and Society's (ASDS) monthly online support groups are taking the chance to meet in person! If you are a postgraduate (PGR) or postdoctoral/early career researcher (ECR) you are warmly invited to **informal lunches on Thursday and Friday**, generously provided by the ASDS and the University of Bath's Centre for Death and Society (CDAS).

Join Anna Wilde (ASDS PGR representative) and Jennie Riley (Postdoctoral representative) to enjoy networking with colleagues and peers, as well as finding out more about CDAS and ASDS and the support and opportunities they offer. We will also be joined by representatives from international interdisciplinary journal *Mortality*.

ASDS Ambassadors gathering

Friday 29 August, 12.45-13.45 @ Instituto Cervantes 1.04

The ASDS Ambassadors Gathering is open to our current Ambassadors and individuals who are interested in learning more about the scheme and potentially becoming an Ambassador for their own country/region. All are welcome to join us for a relaxed gathering during the DDD17.

The ASDS Ambassadors are members of the Association who help promote the interests of ASDS among networks in their respective countries and regions. Their role is crucial in widening the scope and reach of the work that ASDS does, and their contributions help expand networks in death studies and identify research, practice, and art forms in death studies. Our scheme currently covers 23 different nations and 28 regions around the world. For more information, visit [our webpage](#). If you have further questions about the ASDS Ambassadors scheme, please contact Panagiotis Pentaris (panagiotis.pentaris@gold.ac.uk) and/or Stacey Pitsillides (stacey.pitsillides@northumbria.ac.uk)

Meet *Mortality*: Promoting the interdisciplinary study of death and dying

Thursday 28 & Friday 29 August, 12.45-13.45 @ Instituto Cervantes Theatre Hall

The subjects of death and dying, grief and bereavement, and memorialisation do not belong to any one discipline, and the journal *Mortality* reflects the range of scholarship associated with them. The aim of the journal is to provide a space for interdisciplinary engagement, welcoming contributions from discrete disciplines as well as inter-multi- and trans-disciplinary submissions.

If you would like more information, are interested in peer reviewing for the journal, or you have a book for review (or that you would like to review), please contact us directly at mortalityjournal@gmail.com or come and meet us in person at the conference. Dr Bethan Michael-Fox will be available at the Book Market and online to answer questions. If you're attending in person, **you can pick up a free copy of the journal at the book market too!**

Death Book Club

Wednesday 27 August, 15.00-16.30

During the DDD17 conference, the Death Book Club will feature three different authors, each presenting their own work. Prior to the conference, we invite participants to read any of the three books below. During the conference, every session includes a brief author talk, followed by a Q&A. At the end of each session, participants will have the opportunity to join a discussion about the book they read in preparation.

Evie King – Ashes to admin: Tales from the caseload of a council funeral office

In person session (author will be present at the DDD conference)

What happens if you die without family or money? The answer to this question is that Evie, or someone like her, will step in and arrange your funeral. Evie is a local council worker charged with funerals for those with nobody around, willing or able to bury or cremate them. In this book, Evie discovers that her job is more about life than it is about death, funerals being for the living and death being merely a trigger to rediscover a life and celebrate it against the odds. [Click here to join this session.](#)

Juliet Hooker – Black grief, white grievance: The politics of loss

Hybrid session (author will be present online)

In this book, Juliet Hooker, a leading thinker on democracy and race, argues that the two most important forces driving racial politics in the US today are Black grief and white grievance. Calling for an expansion of Black and white political imaginations, Hooker argues that both must learn to sit with loss, for different reasons and to different ends. [Click here to join this session.](#)

Joshua Trey Barnett – Mourning in the Anthropocene: Ecological grief and earthly coexistence

Hybrid session (author will be present online)

Enormous ecological losses and profound planetary transformations mean that ours is a time to grieve beyond the human. Yet, Joshua Trey Barnett argues in this eloquent and urgent book, our capacity to grieve for more-than-human others is neither natural nor inevitable. This book reveals rhetorical practices that set our ecological grief into motion and illuminates pathways to more connected, caring earthly coexistence. [Click here to join this session.](#)

Conference dinner

Friday 29 August, 19.30-22.00 @ Aula, Academiegebouw (attendance at the dinner is by registration, which closes on 01 August)

On Friday evening, we offered registered attendees a wonderful three-course, vegetarian dinner. In addition to delicious food and fine wines, we've arranged a special entertainment programme between courses, created by two performers just for our event.

Poet Baban Kirkuki

Baban Kirkuki is an Iraqi-Dutch poet and writer, and member of the Utrecht City Poet Society (*Utrechts Stadsdichtersgilde*). He also writes poems for lonely funerals. During the conference dinner, Baban will share some of his poems, which reflect on his identities, relation to the Netherlands and Utrecht, and life and death.

Theatre maker and performer Tim Hammer

During the days preceding the conference dinner, theatre maker and writer [Tim Hammer](#) will respectfully snoop around the conference, gently eavesdrop and carefully poke the attendees to share their experience. Like Casper the ghost, friendly haunting the programme. By collecting quotes, wishes and thoughts, Tim will compose a scavenged spoken word poem, forming a testament of the conference. He will share his findings during the conference dinner in a performance.

Dark Tourism Tours @ Utrecht City Centre

Thursday 28 August, 16.00-18.00 (attendance at the excursions is by registration, which closes on 01 August)

We are delighted to offer conference participants the opportunity to experience Utrecht from a unique and thought-provoking perspective through our specially curated Dark Tourism Tours. **If you are participating in either of these excursions, please be ready in front of the Instituto Cervantes by 16:00.**

Traces of Slavery City Walk

Discover Utrecht's intricate ties to the history of colonial exploitation, slavery, and the global slave trade. Though this past may seem distant, the city - including its former residents, administrators, and civic institutions - played a notable role in colonial enterprises, investment in plantations, and slave ownership. Accompanied by a knowledgeable guide, you will visit significant sites in the historic centre where narratives of slavery and exploitation continue to resonate.

Guided Tour of Soestbergen Cemetery

Explore Soestbergen, Utrecht's oldest public cemetery, established in 1830. Renowned for its winding paths, venerable trees, and striking circle of burial vaults, this cemetery reflects the evolving history of Utrecht over nearly two centuries. During this tour, you will uncover how the city's heritage is represented through tomb monuments and the spatial arrangement of the grounds over time.

Mountain of Fear

Travel to a Japanese mystical mountain in the middle of the city. Come to your senses in this guided theatrical walk, accompanied by artist Tim Hammer and a puppet sculpted for mourning. Inspired by the secluded temple of Osorezan, the 'mountain of fear,' you are invited to join this introspective experience, transforming your direct surroundings into metaphors for mourning.

Excursion to Amsterdam museums on death and memorial culture

Saturday 30 August, 14.00-17.00 (attendance at the excursion is by registration, which closes on 01 August)

You can join the museum excursion to Amsterdam on Saturday afternoon. Both museums excel in curating (dis)comfort around death, but from different cultural and artistic perspectives. **If you are participating in this excursions, please be ready in front of the Instituto Cervantes by 13:00.**

Museum Tot Zover (*So Long*)

Tot Zover (*So Long*) is the Dutch museum about life and death in Amsterdam, known for high-profile exhibitions, impactful events and its open approach to mortality. At the museum death – and all its aspects – is living culture. It has historical artefacts but also contemporary funeral rituals of diverse Dutch cultural groups on permanent display. The museum wants to invite a conversation about death, not as something gloomy but as an essential part of life. Curatorial choices are ‘close to embodied experience’ and the tone of voice is open, light-hearted and loving. Taboos are not shunned.

Holocaust Museum

Learn all about the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands in this – somewhat contested – museum that opened in 2024. Three-quarters of the Dutch Jewish population – 102,000 people – were killed by the Nazis during the second world war, the highest proportion in western Europe. But, unlike some other countries, the Netherlands has never had a national museum devoted to those horrors, until recently. The museum opened amid protests by human rights groups that voiced their anger at Israel’s continuing offensive in Gaza. On the other side of the street from the museum, the former Hollandsche Schouwburg theatre, where 46,000 Jewish people were held on their way to the camps, is now a memorial.

DDD17: Practicalities

To ensure you have the best possible experience at the DDD17 conference, please take a few moments to carefully review the following important logistical details and practical information.

Catering

Lunch is not provided during the conference. However, coffee, tea, and water are available in each building throughout the day. For your convenience, a comprehensive list of lunch and good coffee/drinks options close to the conference venues is available [on our website](#). We encourage you to explore the local area and enjoy the variety of cafés and restaurants within walking distance.

Changes to the conference programme

Minor changes to the conference programme may occur. Any updates will be communicated via our website and social media channels. QR codes linking to the latest version of the programme will be available at the conference venue.

Instructions for presenters

Each panel session lasts 90 minutes. It includes three to five 15-minute presentations delivered back-to-back, followed by a general Q&A at the end. Each speaker has a **maximum of 15 minutes** to present. Time limits of 15 minutes are strict. Session chairs will enforce timing rigorously, as overrunning will reduce the shared Q&A time for all presenters and audience.

Instructions for presenting in person

When you are presenting, please be in your session room **at least 10 minutes before** the start to transfer your file to the conference laptop. Technical staff will assist with file transfers and hybrid connection setup. If you use slides, these must be in **PDF or PowerPoint (PPT) format**. Other formats (e.g., Google Slides, Keynote, Prezi) are not supported.

All presentations will run from the conference-provided computer. **Personal laptops are not permitted**. Bring your slides on a **USB-C flash drive**. Slides stored in cloud accounts (e.g., Google Drive, email inboxes, Dropbox) will not be accepted. No downloads will be made on-site.

Instructions for presenting online

A week before the conference, you will receive **an invitation with a link to your panel** via the email with which you've registered for the conference. Be in your online session **at least 10 minutes before** the start of the session to test your microphone, camera and screen sharing. At the start of your presentation, you can **share your screen** if wanted. Please make sure to turn your microphone and camera on.

Joining the conference dinner

Attendance at the conference dinner is only possible with a pre-purchased ticket. The dinner will begin promptly at 19:30, so we kindly ask all guests to **be on time**. The venue - the aula of the University Hall - will open at 19:00, giving you ample time to enter and find your seat. Unfortunately, we won't be able to accommodate late arrivals, so please make sure to arrive promptly.

Joining the conference online

The DDD17 conference will almost entirely be offered in a hybrid format. This means that most sessions - **with the exception of workshops, roundtable sessions, and the experiential keynote by prof. Enny Das** - will also be accessible online. We use **Microsoft Teams** as platform for our hybrid event. The Teams links for each session will be shared via our website.

Joining the excursions

We are organizing excursions on Thursday afternoon in Utrecht's city center, and on Saturday to museums in Amsterdam focusing on death and memorial culture. Please note that participation in all excursions is only possible with a pre-purchased ticket.

If you are **joining one of the three excursions in Utrecht on Thursday**, we will gather at 16:00 in front of the Instituto Cervantes. For the **Saturday excursion to Amsterdam**, we will meet at the same location at 13:00.

Joining the plenary experiential keynote by Prof. Enny Das

The plenary experiential keynote by Prof. Enny Das will take place at the Neude Library, located in the beautifully repurposed former main post office in the heart of Utrecht. This unique venue blends historic architecture with a vibrant cultural atmosphere. The main theatre hall, where the keynote will be held, has a maximum capacity of 180 people. If the room reaches capacity, an overflow space will be available where attendees can watch the keynote via livestream. So, **if you want to fully experience the keynote in person, we strongly recommend arriving early** - seating is first come, first served. Doors open 30 minutes before the session begins.

Joining workshops

To ensure a safe and comfortable environment for the workshop, rooms where workshops are held have a maximum capacity of 16 people, including workshop convenors. A volunteer will be present to count attendees as they enter and close the door once the maximum number of participants is reached (on a first come, first served basis). So, **if you want to join a workshop, make sure you come in time**.

Live media presence and sharing

During the conference, photographers will be capturing moments throughout the event. In addition, members of the Death Studies Podcast will be making occasional audio recordings, and a writer will be documenting highlights of the conference in short texts and audio recordings. These updates will be shared continuously on our social media channels – follow us on Instagram (ddd17_2025) and BlueSky (ddd17-2025) to stay connected and see what's happening in real time.

If you prefer not to appear in photos, please inform one of our volunteers, who will be happy to assist.

Need help?

When urgent help is needed, please call the Dutch emergency telephone number:

112

During the conference, our volunteers will be available to help with any questions you may have. They are there to support you and can be easily identified by their yellow Utrecht University t-shirts. You can also continue to reach us by email, although responses may be delayed during the conference period.

For emergencies only, an emergency phone number will be available from Tuesday afternoon, 26 August; each day, we can be reached between 8am and 10pm. The number is:

+31 (0)6 86 44 51 06

Please note: **this number is strictly for urgent situations.**

If you require medical assistance, please refer to the following doctor's office:

[Gezondheidscentrum Binnenstad](#)

Telephone number: + 31 (0)30 233 38 88

For pharmacy services ("apotheek"), you can visit this location:

[Apotheek Koert](#)

Address: Van Asch van Wijckskade 30

Telephone number: +31 (0)30 232 6010

Registration

Conference registration takes place at Instituto Cervantes. The registration desk opens on Wednesday 27 August at 10:00 and is open daily until 18:00. Registration closes on Friday at 18:00. **Please make sure to register as soon as you arrive.** You will receive a name badge, which must be worn at all times during the conference.

Security at conference venues (Academiegebouw)

For safety reasons, security personnel may be stationed at the entrance of the Academiegebouw. They will ask everyone entering the building about the purpose of their visit. **Please make sure to wear your name badge at all times.** If asked, simply state that you are attending the conference - this will be sufficient for entry.

Social media channels

To stay informed about any (minor) changes to the conference programme, be sure to follow us on social media. Throughout the event, we'll also be sharing exclusive behind-the-scenes glimpses, highlights from major sessions, photos, and other exciting updates.

You can follow us on [Instagram](#) and/or [BlueSky](#).

Staying in and getting around Utrecht

All conference activities will take place in the heart of Utrecht's city center and are easily accessible within a 10-minute walk. If walking isn't an option, the city is well-served by buses and trams. For more details on public transport routes, visit the [U-OV website](#) (Utrecht's public transportation service). You can easily check in and out of the buses and trams using your debit or credit card. For buses, simply check in and out on board; for trams, do so at the tram station.

Prefer to travel like a local? Rent a bike! You can find bike rental information [here](#).

Looking for recommendations on what to do in Utrecht beyond the conference? Need tips on the best places to eat, stay, or enjoy a drink? [Visit our website](#) for a wealth of information.

Timing of session

Each session runs for 90 minutes. Given our packed schedule, sessions will begin promptly at their scheduled times. To ensure you don't miss out, please arrive on time if you wish to attend.

Panel sessions include three to five 15-minute presentations delivered back-to-back, followed by a general Q&A at the end. Each speaker has a maximum of 15 minutes to present. Time limits of 15 minutes are strict. Session chairs will enforce timing rigorously, as overrunning will reduce the shared Q&A time for all presenters and audience. All rooms for panel sessions are equipped for hybrid delivery. A microphone and camera are provided so remote participants can hear and see presentations. Remote presenters and audience can join via Teams.

Roundtables will have no more than five people discussing a particular theme or issue in front of (and subsequently with) an audience. While a roundtable may include short (approx. 5 min) contributions/presentations, the main idea is to create a lively debate, and not to focus on any one or multiple presenter(s). To be able to create such debate, roundtables will **not be offered in a hybrid format**.

Workshops of 90 minutes are characterised by experimentation, collaboration, interaction and/or improvisation. The aim of workshops is to organise collective activities that are open-ended and cultivate possibilities for surprise, novelty, and learning. Workshops will be designed as interactive, reflexive sessions that prioritise exploration, rather than the discussion of already established research results. To make true collaboration possible and create safe space, the workshops will **not be offered in a hybrid format**. Also, to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for the workshop, the room has a maximum capacity of 16 people, including all convenors. A volunteer will be present to count attendees as they enter and close the door once the maximum number of participants is reached (on a first come, first served-basis). **So, if you want to join a workshop, make sure you come in time.**

Wi-Fi at venues

All venues will offer free Wi-Fi to our conference participants. Details about this will be shared during the conference in all the venues.

**CONFERENCE PROGRAMME:
PANEL SESSIONS, WORKSHOPS AND
ROUNDTABLES**

	Instituto Cervantes		Huize Molenaar		Academiegebouw				
	Room 1.3	Room 1.4	Tuinkamer	Suite	Kanunniken-zaal	Johanna Westerdijkkamer	Belle van Zuylenzaal	Kernkamp-kamer	Opzoo-merkamer
Wednesday 27 August									
13.00-14.30	P4.1 Death during war	P1.1 Meaningful deathscapes	P8.1 Care of/for the carers	P2.1 Small matters	RT1 The changing faces of immortality	ASDS Council meeting	P2.2 Invisible, unspeakable death and grief literacy (I)	WS1 Do you see what you/I see?	
15.00-16.30	P5.1 The historical governance of death	DEATH BOOK CLUB: Juliet Hooker – Black Grief, White Grievance	DEATH BOOK CLUB: Evie King – Ashes to Admin	DEATH BOOK CLUB: Joshua Trey Barnett – Mourning in the Anthropocene	RT2 Silenced losses	ASDS General members meeting	P4.2 Liminality and migrant deaths	WS2 What is the meaning of ambivalence and hesitation in end-of-life choices?	
Thursday 28 August									
09.00-10.30	P3.2 The mourning after	P1.2 Funerals and mortuary work	P3.1 Digital death practices (I)	P4.3 New approaches to necropolitics	RT3 Politics of ecological loss and grief	P1.3 Personalisation	P8.2 Speaking for assisted dying	P6.1 Politics of death beyond the human	
11.00-12.30	P4.4 Death, equity and (in)equality	P4.5 The politics of death and law	P3.1 Digital death practices (II)	P8.3 Steering the final passage	RT4 The politics of contemporary death rituals in Europe	P8.4 End-of-life care (I)	P1.4 Cemeteries and policies (I)	P2.2 Invisible, unspeakable death and death literacy (II)	
12.45-13.45	ASDS PGR lunch session								
14.00-15.30	P8.5 End-of-life planning	P8.6 Volunteers and death doulas at the end-of-life	P8.7 Until untold	P7.1 The corpse as object-subject	RT5 Legal frameworks for death practices	P7.3 Death and remains in public history and community archaeology	P8.4 End-of-life care (II)	WS3 Exploring death and frames of non-humans	

To join either of the paper presentation sessions, click on the hyperlinks in this table. They will redirect you to the correct Teams-meeting.

Friday 29 August									
09.00-10.30	P7.2 Corpses and their afterlives (I)	P4.6 The politics of dying away from home	P6.2 Caring beyond the human	P1.5 Loss and mortality	RT6 Care for unclaimed, unexpected and abandoned dead in cities and border zones (I)	P4.9 Bodies on the move	P2.4 Loss in translation	WS4 Exploring death and dying through a community of philosophical enquiry	
11.00-12.30	P7.2 Corpses and their afterlives (II)	P4.7 Dying at the margins (I)	P2.3 Politics of embryonic and foetal death	P3.3 The politics of digital afterlife	RT7 Care for unclaimed, unexpected and abandoned dead in cities and border zones (II)	P4.8 Thanatological sovereignty	P2.5 Education and support in learning to cope with death	WS5 Tarot as tool for transforming the overdose crisis	
12.45-13.45	ASDS PGR Lunch session	ASDS Ambassadors gathering							
14.00-15.30	P8.9 Covid-19	P4.7 Dying at the margins (II)	P5.2 Historical infrastructures of death	P5.3 Cultural mediations of death (I)	RT8 Enacting and encouraging respect for the dead in work with human remains	P1.6 Spiritualities and ideologies	P1.7 Legal frameworks and commercialization	WS6 Climate change as the work of mourning	
Saturday 30 August									
09.00-10.30	P8.8 Where we live is how we die?	P1.4 Cemeteries and policies (II)	P1.8 Ordinary necropolitics (I)	P7.4 Governing disposal	RT8 Politics of necrowaste	P4.10 The Mediterranean deathscape	P4.11 Decolonizing "good death"	WS7 The researcher's role in the politics of death	P4.12 Death, violence and the afterlife
11.00-12.30	P2.6 Taking care	P5.3 Cultural mediations of death (II)	P1.8 Ordinary necropolitics (II)	P7.5 Corpses resurrected	RT9 The decolonisation of death studies	P1.9 Intermediaries	P4.13 Death and activism	P8.10 Ethics of good death and dying	P3.4 Relationships between the living and the dead

To join either of the paper presentation sessions, click on the hyperlinks in this table. They will redirect you to the correct Teams-meeting.

Panel sessions

1. Ritual practices: Funerals, cemeteries, ideologies

P1.1 Meaningful deathscapes: Worldview minority cemeteries in Finland

Chairs: Auli Vähäkangas, Maija Butters, Helena Krohn, Dora Pataricza, Helena Kupari, Maija Penttilä

From life to rest: Jewish burial customs in Finland

Dora Pataricza (University of Helsinki, Finland)

This paper presents the comprehensive rituals on the journey from life to rest in the Finnish Jewish community.

Placing non-religious death: Negotiating secular deathscapes in a postsecular society

Helena Krohn

The study explores the complex dynamics surrounding non-religious death practices and spaces within Finnish society. In a postsecular society where religious and secular elements coexist and intersect, I examine how non-religious deathscapes are produced, managed, and continuously negotiated.

Participatory research in two Orthodox Christian cemeteries in Helsinki, Finland: A methodological perspective

Helena Kupari, Maija Penttilä (University of Helsinki, Finland)

This paper discusses methodological issues involved in using participatory methods to study the significance of cemeteries for Orthodox Christian minority communities. It addresses, for example, the social and cultural status and internal power hierarchies of the communities under study.

Meaningful deathscapes: Worldview minority cemeteries in Finland (MeDea)

Auli Vähäkangas, Maija Butters (University of Helsinki, Finland)

The “Meaningful Deathscapes: Worldview minority cemeteries in Finland” (MeDea) project collaboratively studies the meanings that members and leaders of religious and non-religious worldview communities give to their own burial grounds.

P1.2 Funerals and mortuary work

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 (Central European University, Austria)

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.

Dead bodies’ agency and women’s role in subversion of patriarchy: The politics of death in contemporary Iran

Hajar Ghorbani (University of Alberta, Canada)

This paper explores how dead bodies, through death rituals, redistribute agency to Iranian women—historically marginalized by patriarchy—transforming them into agents of political and social change.

Living funerals and dying bodies

Cindy Stocken (University of Melbourne, Australia)

Though much is written about the presence, or absence, of a body at a funeral or memorial – what does it mean to have a living, but dying, body at a funeral? The emerging ritual of living funerals invites consideration of both the relational and practical implications of this.

It's good to talk: The benefits of discussing funeral wishes in advance

Ruth Bickerton (University of Dundee, United Kingdom)

Talking about funeral wishes in advance can help prevent organisers going into funeral debt. Knowing wishes gives 'permission' to the organiser to not necessarily make high-cost choices and also provides comfort in fulfilling wishes. These conversations need to be encouraged across society.

P1.3 Personalisation

Baggage for the beyond: The significance and subtle politics of contemporary "grave goods" in the UK

Jennifer Riley (University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom)

Grave goods are a widespread, meaningful manifestation of contemporary funeral 'personalisation,' but they are also complex and contested. Drawing on emerging results from an ongoing UK-based study, this paper suggests grave goods are both reflections of people and polysemic political realities.

Interrogating the personal in religious funerals

Vikki Entwistle, Jennifer Riley, Árnar Arnason (University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom)

The 'personalisation' of funerals, emphasising individualisation and choice, is often seen as a secular phenomenon. This paper illustrates how funeral provision in diverse cultural and religious traditions can be 'personal' in ways that warrant more ethical and political attention.

Almost anything goes? Understanding suitable casket items in the context of contemporary Finland

Elsa Sara Suvena Salonen (University of Helsinki, Finland)

PhD project that examines casket items in the context of contemporary Finland. In my presentation, I discuss my preliminary findings on perceptions of suitable casket items and their selection and provide insight from individuals and professionals.

Juggling care and commerce: Business and care logics in the Dutch funeral industry

Martin Hoondert, Joost Verhoeven (Tilburg University, Netherlands)

The focus in this presentation is on funeral directing companies in relation to institutional logics. Based on semi-structured interviews with Dutch funeral directors, we discuss the relationships between the so-called business logic on the one hand, and the care logic on the other.

P1.4 Cemeteries and policies (I)

Supraconfessional inter-municipal cemeteries: A new government initiative in multicultural Luxembourg

Sonja Kmec, Cathy Claudine Collard (University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

We present preliminary results of a study launched by the Luxembourg Home Office in 2024 into the feasibility of supraconfessional cemeteries. It builds on findings and best practices identified by the internationally comparative HERA project "Cemeteries & Crematoria as Public Spaces of Belonging".

Israel's perpetual burial challenge: A stakeholders' perspective

Danna Unmani (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

Examining stakeholders' views on Israel's perpetual burial challenge in the present and their perception of an ideal future. This analysis is based on both integrating and contrasting interview outputs with policy legislation and other materials.

Dying for reform: Funeral funding in a privatised system

Lucy Walton (University of Sheffield, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

Exploring the interplay between the political, social, and economic, this paper will demonstrate how the burden of funeral costs has shifted from the public to the private realm, creating an inequitable system where access to funeral services is determined by an individual's socio-demographic status.

Defining the places of burial: What now makes a cemetery a cemetery?

Julie Rugg (University of York, United Kingdom)

In reviewing 'What makes a cemetery a cemetery' (Rugg, 2000), this paper finds the need to expand the frame of site types. The paper also evidences the emergence of fuzziness and hybridity between site types, associated with characteristics of Bauman's 'liquid modernity'.

Bringing up the bodies: Cemetery renewal and green imaginaries in Australasia

Samuel Holleran (RMIT University, Australia)

This study examines efforts to transform ageing inner city cemeteries in Australasia into 'green infrastructure', sometimes at odds with heritage protections and interment rights. It examines the history of cemetery removal and site reuse, and contemporary social movements focused on biodiversity.

P1.4 Cemeteries and policies (II)

Places of care: Embodying love, remembrance and responsibility in Brussels' Muslim cemeteries

Joe Fayad (KU Leuven, Belgium)

This paper engages with the notion of Care to unravel how relationships between the living and the deceased are nurtured through Islamic burial sites. It consists of ethnographic fieldwork in the cemetery of Evere, Brussels, and explores how different actors practice and embody Care in these spaces.

Aside the cemetery, a distinctive laboratory for public policies for ecological transition: Strasbourg city and metropolis as an example of gaps in the ecological transformation of a territory and its cemeteries

Marie Fruiquiere (National School of Architecture of Strasbourg, France; City and Eurometropolis of Strasbourg, France) (online presentation)

Through the example of the City and Eurometropolis of Strasbourg (France), the paper aims to highlight stakes relating to the inclusion of cemeteries into a political project and its policies for the ecological transformation of the territory.

Muslim cemeteries and funeral practices in Belgium: Unveiling the challenges, needs and demands

Eva Verschuere (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

Exploring the evolving funeral needs of Belgian Muslims, this research addresses legal, practical, and symbolic challenges tied to Muslim cemeteries and burial. It combines surveys, focus groups, and interviews to examine the preferred burial location of Muslims in Belgium.

Where the Irish dead tell tales: Glasnevin cemetery, identity and belonging

Halyna Herasym (University College Dublin, Ireland)

Based on the institutional ethnography of the Irish death system, this presentation explores how an Irish necropolis, Glasnevin Cemetery, conveys an idea of what it means to be Irish.

P1.5 Loss and mortality

Mass graves, exhumations and the politics of memory in Slovenia

Jaka Repic (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

The presentation explores the effects of mass graves on the politics of memory in Slovenia. With the discovery of mass graves and exhumations, the dead, their remains, or testimonies enter the public arena and influence memory, political discourse and morality.

80 and 40 years on: The symbolism and politics of Japan's August losses

Christopher Hood (Cardiff University, United Kingdom; CDAS, United Kingdom)

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.

Victims and victories: Sculpture as carrier of ideology

David Lillington (London, United Kingdom)

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.

P1.6 Spiritualities and ideologies

Exploring Ideas, attitudes, and understandings of the afterlife among alternative spiritual people in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tina Ivnik (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

The presentation will explore how involvement in alternative spirituality has transformed the perspectives on the afterlife among spiritual people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, it will examine how that influenced their views on death, dying, and experiences of contact with the dead.

“The touch of the dead”: An exploration of a ritually mediated connection between the living and the dead
Khyati Tripathi (Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium)

This paper explores the Taharah ritual in Judaism, analysing its psychosocial and liminal dimensions. It examines how ritual performers’ emotions extend beyond the ritual space and are reinterpreted through psychosocial framework, linking the living and the dead in profound ways.

Bereavement and bad theology: A toxic cocktail

Terri Daniel (Marian University, USA) (online presentation)

This presentation examines how certain religious beliefs can complicate the mourning process. We will review current research to help clinicians identify toxic theologies, and explore therapeutic tools and healing practices to help grievers reframe fear-based cosmologies and disempowering images of the divine.

Hell through a child’s eyes: How children engage with and are affected by the idea of eternal damnation

Martina Bottazzo (Osaka University, Japan), Zhaoxi Zheng (University of New South Wales, Australia)

This paper presents a preliminary exploration of how children engage with the concept of Hell, the diverse impacts of exposure to Hell-related narratives on their development, and addresses the possible ethical implications of teaching such narratives to children.

P1.7 Legal frameworks and commercialization

Community archaeology and gravestone preservation in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

Robyn S Lacy (Independent Researcher, Canada), Ian C Petty (Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada)

This paper will discuss ongoing conservation efforts to preserve historic burial grounds in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, in collaboration between Black Cat Cemetery Preservation and a variety of heritage associations, municipalities, and parishes.

Traditional death vs McDeath: Towards an understanding of transformation of death rituals in Varanasi

Bhavya Singh (Banaras Hindu University, India) (online presentation)

This paper examines the transformation of death rituals in Varanasi, India, focusing on the contrast between traditional practices and the commercialization of death in the 21st century. It explores the impact and politics of globalization, tourism, and market forces on the present society in India.

How national and local laws (or the lack thereof) change the way death is experienced in Venice

Irene Renzi (University of Perugia, Italy)

Legislation regarding death creates tension between the juridical and political sphere and its surrounding environment, which is both changed by it while actively trying to change it. Venice offers a unique case study to investigate how this is experienced and how it mirrors socio-cultural changes.

The impact of the concession of cemeteries in São Paulo, Brazil, to the private sector: Reflections from an ethnographic study at São Pedro Cemetery

Aline Silva Santos, Vitor Augusto de Moraes Murro (Federal Institute for Education Science and Technology of São Paulo (IFSP), Brazil) (online presentation)

Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in a cemetery in 2024, this study aims to examine the process of transferring the management of public cemeteries in the metropolis of São Paulo, Brazil, to the private sector.

P1.8 Ordinary necropolitics: Interrogating the state and its absence in everyday death (I)

Chairs: Ruth E Toulson, Sarah E Wagner

“Because you have already buried your dead”: Elsa's dual loss and the politics of waiting in Ecuador's COVID-19 pandemic

Maria Jose Pelaez (George Washington University, USA)

This paper examines how bureaucracy during Ecuador's COVID peak transformed routine administration into suffering. Elsa Maldonado's experience with contradictory claims about her mother's remains shows how “The politics of waiting” entangle families and bureaucrats in death verification.

Revisionism and social forgetting: Mass death from the 1918 influenza to the COVID-19 pandemic

Paige Gavin (George Washington University, USA)

How does the United States memorialize mass death due to disease? This paper will examine the historical, political, and social patterns of past disease events in parallel with the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of revisionism and social forgetting.

The necropolitical landscape of COVID misinformation: The shifting landscape of public health authority in the United States

Avery Nennmann (George Washington University, USA)

In the United States, due to medical misinformation and mistrust, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted significant changes to public health. What are the results when the state determines—or diminishes—death's causes and consequences and what communities are left to mourn?

An American state of denial: The unreckoning of pandemic death, five years on

Sarah E Wagner (George Washington University, USA)

Pandemic denialism takes new shape in the wake of President Trump's re-election, forcing COVID bereaved to grapple with the absence of state recognition of mass death and its long-term effects.

P1.8 Ordinary necropolitics: Interrogating the state and its absence in everyday death (II)

Chairs: Ruth E Toulson, Sarah E Wagner

The politics of lonely funerals

N. Sally Raudon (University of Cambridge, United Kingdom)

When someone dies alone, who looks after them? This comparative UK-US study examines what social gap might exist between next of kin and the state at the end of life, to illuminate new aspects of what the social looks like if we start from death.

Necropower and improvised ritual

Sarah Richardson (George Washington University, USA)

Based upon work with victims of state violence in Colombia, this paper first examines how rituals are elaborated in contexts where language and ritual are thought to be impossible and, second, how those novel forms of expression are recruited into governance projects.

A refuge for the bad death: The politics of class at a conservation cemetery in rural New England

Sasha Kramer (Johns Hopkins University, USA)

This paper examines if a conservation cemetery in rural New England is spurring a new form of politicized mourning in the U.S., what the cemetery reveals about bereaved working-class families, and what it offers them in the wake of stigmatized losses.

Ordinary necropolitics: Finding the state in private grief in Singapore

Ruth E Toulson (Maryland Institute College of Art, USA)

In Singapore, few laws govern the treatment of the dead, yet funeral rites and forms of grief come to reflect state policies on identity, language, and love. This paper explores how grief comes to align with state narratives, revealing the mechanisms for ordinary necropolitics.

P1.9 Intermediaries

Intermediaries between the physical and spirit worlds: A study of the figure of the medium in an Australian Spiritualist group

Charlotte Tribouillois (Australian National University, Australia)

In Spiritualist discourse, death is described as a passage from the physical world to the spirit world. As an intermediary between worlds, the medium bridges them by giving voice to the deceased and transcending the limits of social relationships. In Spiritualist mediumship, death fosters the reunion of worlds by extending planes of existence.

"It feels like my mother": Experimentally-induced after death experiences (ADEs)

Courtney Applewhite (École Polytechnique Fédérale De Lausanne, Switzerland)

This presentation introduces a novel approach to the study of experiences of presence of deceased loved ones, or after death experiences (ADEs). Using mixed methods from cognitive neuroscience and qualitative research, we discuss preliminary results and ethical considerations.

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

Agnes Hesz (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; University of Pécs, Hungary)

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.

Supernatural vision or clinical delirium? The ontological politics of extraordinary experiences at the end of life

Rachel Cummings (Bath University, United Kingdom)

Deathbed phenomena are extraordinary experiences with contested causes: medical, psychological or supernatural. This presentation will consider the ontological politics revealed in talk about such experiences within clinical practice.

2. Navigating loss and grief: Personal experiences and collective expressions

P2.1 Small matters: Exploring "child," children and childhood in relation to (multispecies) death and dying

Chairs: Renske Visser, Karin Murris

Children: The missing people of death studies?

Renske Visser, Karin Murris (University of Oulu, Finland)

Research on children's perceptions of death and dying often appear absent in Death Studies. This paper critically examines the current literature and theories around children and death and highlights the importance of involving children's own ideas in future research.

Material intra-views: Rethinking multispecies death and dying with children and families

Jennifer Ann Skriver (Kolding School of Design, Denmark) (online presentation)

This paper explores material intra-views as a post-qualitative approach to engaging children and families in multispecies death and dying. Through sensory intra-active encounters, it disrupts human-centered narratives, fostering care, curiosity, and relational learning (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016).

Philosophical animism, post/age wo/anderings and ontological tact

Karin Murris (*University of Oulu, Finland; University of Cape Town, South Africa*), Joanna Haynes (*University of Plymouth, United Kingdom*), Joanne Peers (*Centre for Creative Education, South Africa*)

This paper demonstrates how philosophical animism brings Indigenous epistemologies and children as philosophers together. It proposes that conversations on death and dying are 'post/age'. Examples of disruptions of the adult/child binary that speak directly to the politics of death are included.

P2.2 Invisible, unspeakable death and grief literacy (I)

Contesting accounts: Responding to the deaths of "crossover" children and young people

Rebecca Scott Bray (*The University of Sydney, Australia*)

The paper explores death investigation and review following the deaths of care-and-justice experienced youth. Examining the circulation of childhood, welfare and justice discourses, it illustrates how these processes unintentionally buttress state indifference to the deaths of certain children

Shattered crayons and failing words? A thanatosociological survey on attitudes towards child death and dying in Germany

Marc K. Köhler (*Kinderpalliativteam Sternenboot/Universitätsklinikum Düsseldorf, Germany*)

Childhood, death and dying are shaped by sociopolitical changes. Through entanglement with their contemporary constructs and assumptions associated taboos, discrimination, fear and shame might arise. In which society do our children die? Which assumptions on child death and dying are present?

"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.

"Teen sluts don't grieve": How the politics of abortion healthcare shapes the bereavement experience across the lifespan following adolescent perinatal death

Caroline Lloyd (*Trinity College Dublin, Ireland; University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom*) (online presentation)

Findings from my research with women aged between 19 and 57 who had experienced an adolescent abortion revealed themes of non consensual sexual activity, political/societal stigmatisation from procuring a termination, adolescent female mortality, and disenfranchised grief across the lifespan.

P2.2 Invisible, unspeakable death and death literacy (II)

The value of visibility in perinatal loss and grief

Maria Papalampropoulou, Domna Michail (*University of Western Macedonia, Greece*)

Perinatal loss, impacting 6.3 million women each year (WHO) is both common and socially overlooked, frequently referred to as invisible deaths. This type of grief often goes unacknowledged. Parents require social and emotional recognition of their loss, along with the right to mourn and access care.

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

Sarah Clement (*Independent Scholar, United Kingdom*)

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.

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

Rivi Frei-Landau (online presentation)

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.

Using a critical lens to examine social inequities in current research on families' child bereavement experiences

Meridith C. Burles (St. Thomas More College, Canada)

Social inequities have gone unexplored in the context of families' child bereavement experiences due to serious illness. We critically examine existing research to understand the state of knowledge and gaps that can be addressed through intersectional approaches in practice and future research.

"This pandemic takes away from us the right to grief": Political neglect incidence on COVID-19 bereaved families

Gislaine Leoncio Motti (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil)

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.

P2.3 Politics of embryonic and foetal death: Entanglements of bodies, persons and institutions

Chairs: Risa Cromer, Susie Kilshaw (online panel)

The insensitivity of sensitive care: Clinical pregnancy remains disposal following early miscarriage and the production of personhood in England

Susie Kilshaw (University College London, United Kingdom)

Based on ethnographic research the paper discusses pregnancy remains disposal practices in a National Health Service Hospital. The way these practices are encountered by those experiencing miscarriage will be explored to reveal the production of as well as resistance to notions of foetal personhood.

Fetal disposition laws and women's miscarriage experiences in the United States: Navigating care, choice and commemoration

Kathryn J. LaRoche (Purdue University, USA)

This paper explores US women's desire to memorialize fetal remains following a miscarriage in settings with (Indiana) and without (Kentucky, Missouri) legislation that dictates specific practices for the disposal of pregnancy remains.

Thresholds of perinatal personhood and their effects on families' disposal choices after pregnancy loss and ending in England

Aimee Middlemiss (University of Plymouth, United Kingdom)

Choices around the disposal of foetal or babies' bodies after pregnancy loss and ending in England are limited by the reproductive governance of perinatal personhood enacted through biomedical and legal institutions.

Pushing for personhood: IVF embryos and the death politics of US antiabortion movements

Risa Cromer (Purdue University, USA)

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.

P2.4 Loss in translation: Discourses and performances

Political (in)visibility of pre-death grief: Living losses among young relatives in Denmark

Anne Vinther Søndergaard (Roskilde University, Denmark)

This paper explores how pre-death grief shapes the everyday lives of young relatives of seriously ill family members in Denmark, focusing on the cultural and social silences around grief and the emotional labor of navigating living losses before death.

Harmagrátur og sorgarsögur: Death talk in contemporary Iceland – a short report to the academia
Arna Árnason (University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom)

This paper reports on death talk in contemporary Iceland: public accounts of death, grief and trauma. It notes about these accounts: 1. the placing of death and grief under the sign of trauma; 2. the grammar of the melodramatic imagination exhibited; 3. and the affective identification on offer.

Dignifying the mundane: The political imperative of performed mourning in Africa
Ogochukwu Ukwueze (The Pennsylvania State University, USA) (online presentation)

Why do we grieve for others to witness? Why do we have to put up some performances for others to validate our grief? I demonstrate that these mourning rituals are necessitated by care for the dead, the bereaved, and other mourners as individuals and as a community.

The politics of death in Romanian civic protests: Navigating collective grief amidst ongoing crises
Adela Toplean (University of Bucharest, Romania) (online presentation)

This paper analyzes the impact of death on Romanian civic protests. It discusses the role of collective grief, the frustrations stemming from recent crises, and how these factors intertwine to shape public demands for accountability, change and moral solidarity.

P2.5 Education and support in learning to cope with death

Experiences with death and dying among academic hospital employees
Renske Kruizinga, Els van Wijngaarden (Radboudumc, Netherlands)

Radboudumc organized a “Week of Openness About Death” to address the topic of dealing with death. A survey-based study was conducted to explore hospital employees’ experiences. Pre-liminary results show barriers in having conversations about death and respondents express the need for more support.

Addressing the educational gap: The need for formal death education in deathcare professions
Mateus Eduardo Romão (University of Pavia, Italy), Kate Woodthorpe (University of Bath, United Kingdom)

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.

Technology-led teaching of anatomy: Will an absence of cadavers increase accessibility to the new medicine course in North Wales?

Isabella Paris Palmer (Bangor University, United Kingdom)

By observing students’ first encounters with anatomical teaching material, this research utilises a sociological perspective to uncover the potential impact from students experiencing different anatomical teaching methods across Wales. This shall be done through a focus on emotional sociology and hidden curriculum.

Designing for end of life: Bridging the personal, the universal, and the political
Galina Arbely, Anne Cohen Kirah (Kristiania University, Norway)

Design education on death confronts taboos and inequalities, reclaiming death as vital to life. It bridges personal and political dimensions, exposing inequities, amplifying voices, and fostering compassion. Design becomes a tool for equity and change in how we live, die, and remember.

P2.6 Taking care: How care ethics makes grief both a more daunting and more manageable responsibility

Chairs: Katrien Schaubroeck, Nele Buyst

Multispecies mourning in contemporary everyday aesthetic practices
Nele Buyst (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

Looking at contemporary everyday aesthetic practices through the lens of ecological mourning can help to exemplify an ethics of care for the web of relationships we are part of.

From grief to stewardship: Expanding care ethics beyond the personal

Kalin Pak

I explore the example of human composting as a reimagining of care as a practice that extends beyond the home, and its potential to create a relational network that connects human mourning to environmental care.

We didn't arrive here together: On the politics/poetics of grief and social death

Tundé Adefioye (KdG, Belgium)

How do we deal with the grief that comes with a social death, the kind of death where the community that once gave us reason to awake, ceases to exist?

The work of the living: a care-ethical rereading of The Work of The Dead

Katrien Schaubroeck (University of Antwerp, Belgium)

Critically engaging with Thomas Lacqueur and invoking insights on care by Val Plumwood and Yuriko Saito I will interpret Diogenes' request to throw his dead body over the city walls for the animals to devour, as an expression of care rather than carelessness.

3. Digital death practices and immortality

P3.1 Digital death practices (I)

The double-faced nature of digital solidarity in death: Ecuadorian stories of repatriation and loss

Christien Klaufus (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

This paper addresses the politics of transnational deathcare, particularly in terms of community solidarity, by unraveling how digital platforms and social media are utilized for grassroots support in situations of remote death of transnational migrants, based on Ecuadorian case-studies.

From archives to emotions: XR and art for exploring death and grief in cultural heritage institutions

Gabriella Di Feola (Artist and Designer, Sweden), Ylva Hård af Segerstad (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

This paper explores the use of extended reality technologies in combination with arts-based methods and personal narratives as immersive tools for approaching and exploring grief and loss in a cultural heritage institution.

The posthuman politics of death in videogames

Poppy Wilde (Birmingham City University, United Kingdom)

This paper suggests that critical posthumanism offers an alternative politics of death by situating the human in more rhizomatic relations. It utilises videogames about death, dying, and grief to demonstrate these wider ethical stances that move beyond anthropocentrism and individualism.

Postmortem life: Bodies, thanobots and feminist immortality

Stacey Pitsillides (Northumbria University, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

This paper explores cellular and digital bodies, introducing a new category between life and death: Postmortem Life. It breaks away from technology mimicking humanness into new materialist feminist biopolitical power to explore a lively ecology of bio-technological Postmortem Life.

P3.1 Digital death practices (II)

The (future) politics of immortality: Societal tensions in the futures of the postmortal society

Joshua Hurtado Hurtado (University of Helsinki, Finland) (online presentation)

This paper explores the politics of different futures of immortality, from transhumanism to ecological immortality. Methodologically, it uses concept art to elicit ideas from experts in the social and political sciences. It finds that inequalities and polarisation are important concerns for experts.

Algorithmic afterlives: The digital dignity of the dead on TikTok

Nilou Davoudi, Jennifer Douglas (University of British Columbia, Canada)

This paper examines how AI-generated content depicting deceased individuals on TikTok raises ethical concerns about the digital dignity of the dead and the rights of their survivors. It explores how such content exposes new vulnerabilities, leading to novel privacy and accountability challenges.

Grief squatting and wreaking havoc in a digital safe-haven for bereaved parents

Ylva Hard af Segerstad (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

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.

An imaginary of algorithmic violence: The story of Molly Russell in the UK Online Press, 2019-2024

Paul Benjamin Ord-Szymaniak

A thematic analysis of 298 online news articles published between 2019 and 2024 in which is narrated the "death-by-algorithm" of Molly Russell in 2017. A contribution is made to empirical literature on the socio-technical imaginary, and to the theorisation of algorithmic power.

P3.2 The mourning after: The politics of grieving and mourning practices on social mobile media

Chairs: Larissa Hjorth, Katrin Gerber

The politics of affective witnessing of Instagram's grief influencer

Larissa Hjorth, Katrin Gerber (RMIT, Australia) (online presentation)

This paper explores how Instagram influencers navigate mourning politics, creating affective witnessing that blurs the line between mourner and observer. Through hashtags, online etiquette, and parasocial grief, it examines how grief literacy is shaped by platform affordances and cultural practices.

Grief spaces for young people in the age of politics of well-being

Sharon Greenfield (RMIT, Australia)

This paper explores how digital platforms like TikTok and Instagram support young people's grief and identity formation. Focusing on Australia's 2024 ban on under-16s using these platforms, it examines the political and emotional consequences of restricting access to these crucial grieving spaces.

Pet online eulogies: Giving voice and visibility to animal loss and grief

Leanne Downing, Larissa Hjorth (RMIT, Australia) (online presentation)

This paper examines pet eulogies on social media, highlighting their role in challenging norms prioritizing human loss. It explores the political and cultural implications, revealing how digital platforms expand notions of grief, visibility, and who or what is considered mournable.

The politics of deathbots: Ethical and social implications of AI in digital legacy-making

Katrin Gerber, Larissa Hjorth (RMIT, Australia) (online presentation)

This paper investigates the ethical and political dimensions of AI-powered chatbots that respond like a deceased loved one. Addressing data ownership, consent, commercialisation, and socio-economic inequities, it examines how these tools reshape grief, memory, and power in contemporary society.

P3.3 The politics of digital afterlife

Chairs: Johanna Sumiala, Anu A Harju

Deepfaked dead: A critical analysis

Johanna Sumiala (University of Helsinki, Finland), Graham Meikle (Westminster School of Media and Communication, United Kingdom)

This paper approaches digital afterlife from a perspective of deepfaked dead. With case study illustrations, the authors provide an analysis of the realisations and workings of deepfakes and their related digital afterlives and discuss them against the present-day synthetic media landscape.

The everyday politics of chatting with the dead

Eva Nieto McAvoy (King's College London, United Kingdom), Bethan Jones (Cardiff University, United Kingdom)

We present findings from our research on deathbots - conversational bots or avatars programmed from digital data of a dead person. We interrogate the everyday politics of grieving via algorithmic systems and the ethics of the digital afterlife industries and platforms offering these services.

Authorship, data and the techno-affective contours of digital afterlife

Anu A Harju (University of Helsinki, Finland), Sade Kahra

This theoretical paper examines post-death data in the context of digital afterlife and asks what implications authorship, as a concept and an empirical category, has for politics of remembering and the techno-affective contours of digital afterlife.

The interactive personality constructs of the dead and their ethical hazards

Adam J Buben (Leiden University, Netherlands)

New technologies rarely announce the ways they threaten the established values and practices. This philosophical paper explores ethical and regulatory worries about existing and possible future applications of emerging technology referred to as “Interactive Personality Constructs of the Dead”.

P3.4 Relationships between the living and the dead

Digital death tech and communication with the dead: Setting the research agenda

Raine Shakti (Tilburg University, Netherlands)

This scoping review of the literature summarizes existing literature on how technology, including AI, has altered the way we communicate with the dead. It identifies key themes and describes benefits and disadvantages of technology, and identifies opportunities for future research.

Eternal digital souls: The conciliatory potential of digital immortality in violent conflicts

Tal Morse (Centre for Death and Society, United Kingdom), Paula Kiel (London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), United Kingdom)

Mortality salience increases ingroup bias and outgroup negativity. This pilot study explored if digital immortality could reduce such biases in the context of violent conflict. Initial findings were inconclusive but suggest demographic factors may influence outcomes, warranting further research.

Living with the dead: Hauntology, ontology and the “politics” of death

Salman Hussain (York University, Canada)

This paper ethnographically examines the lived experiences of death and grief in Pakistan and proposes a rethinking of the relationship between the dead and the living—conceiving both as existing within a shared ontological space or reality.

“Drawing bridges”: Sketching out ways to extend digital death methodologies in human-computer interaction and computer science

Denise Lengyel (Newcastle University, United Kingdom), Gabriella Di Feola (Artist and Designer, Sweden), Ylva Hård af Segerstad (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

In Digital Death, distinctly different research philosophies meet. Compared to Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Human-Computer Interaction and Computer Science are less accepting of lived-experience reports and lack adequate ethical policies. We reflect on this, sketching-out ways forward.

4. The politics of death in times of crises

P4.1 Death during war

(In)visible deathscapes: Cemeteries and mass graves in post-war Prijedor, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Petra Hamer (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

The Municipality of Prijedor, in northwestern Bosnia-Herzegovina, is infamous for crimes committed between 1992 and 1995. War victims were buried in mass graves or graveyards and are now seen as political agents, their materiality and immateriality significantly influencing civil society.

Biometrics in the face of death: The changing scopes of facial recognition and dead body identification

Mareile Kaufmann (University of Oslo, Norway) (online presentation)

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.

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

Welmoet Wels (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

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 politicization process. International law protects the bodies of the dead, while also creating space for this socio-political existence of the dead.

(In)visible corpses: Hyperviolence and truth recovery in South Africa

Robyn Gill-Leslie (Oslo University, Norway) (online presentation)

This paper examines (in)visible dead bodies and truth recovery after violence in South Africa, asking whether the absence of hyper-visual corpses to transfix viewers during truth recovery moments, makes it possible to better interrogate accountability after violence in South Africa.

P4.2 Liminality and migrant deaths

Affective liminality: Grief across political and ontological borders

Zohreh Bayatrizi (University of Alberta, Canada)

Grief and immigration are both liminal states, which one can learn to navigate but never completely transcend. This paper looks at how these two liminal states intersects among immigrants who are haunted by the politics of their homelands.

Negotiating belonging in death: Chechen burial practices across borders

Kristina Kovalskaya (Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités, France)

This paper examines the politics of death in migration, focusing on Chechen burial practices in Europe. Through denied and realized repatriations, it explores tensions between identity, citizenship, and state authority, revealing how burial choices negotiate power, belonging, and cultural lineage.

Being deathworthy: The UK government and media's role in industrializing black death at sea

Helidah Ogude-Chambert (University of Oxford, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

This paper explores how Blackness was discursively and affectively constructed as "deathworthy," focusing on U.K. media and immigration policies during the European refugee crisis. It argues that these representations helped legitimize the UK and EU's imperial border regimes and Black deaths at sea.

P4.3 New approaches to necropolitics: Personhoods, legal deaths, and law's violence

Chair: Jolene Zigarovich

When is a river dead? Legal personhood for natural entities

Frans-Willem Korsten (Leiden University, Netherlands)

The question I pose is when such natural legal persons, who were granted rights to protect them, can declared to be dead. Yet since natural entities have been granted legal rights and personhood, death appears to be of the essence. I argue a river, a region, a mountain can never declare to be dead.

Jane Eyre's necropolitics

Jolene Zigarovich (University of Northern Iowa, USA; Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, Netherlands)

While Jane Eyre seemingly ignores the origins of her inheritance and the violence and exploitation associated with it, Zigarovich argues that Bertha Mason triumphs in the end, her trauma manifested in a reversal of imperial violence.

Death cell blues: On the criminal as a lyric subject

Yasco Horsman (Leiden University, Netherlands)

It reflects on a minor genre of popular music, the Death Cell Blues, and compares them with a body of texts that date back from an earlier period, the so-called hanging-ballads. How do we understand the voice of a criminal subject that anticipates on its own imminent death politically and legally?

The culture of life and the culture of death: Necropolitics and the personhood movement

John Troyer (University of Bath, United Kingdom)

With the backdrop of the American Personhood Movement, this talk discusses legal debates surrounding fetal personhood, as well as how the proposed personhood laws alter both concepts of life and definitions of death for a new kind of necropolitical concept of death.

P4.4 Death, equity and (in)equality

Equality in death? Past and current claims for postmortem justice

Camille Collin (Sciences Po Paris- Cevipof, France) (online presentation)

This research addresses inequalities in post-mortem treatment of marginalized groups. By examining historical and modern demands for dignified death practices, it offers a critical claim for equality in death.

Caste dynamics in last rites and rituals in India

Minakshi Dewan (Independent Researcher, India)

This paper is based on my non-fiction book, *The Final Farewell: Understanding the Last Rites and Rituals of India's Major Faiths*. While researching, I discovered that the funerary spaces are not equal for everyone. The Dalit members, are denied access to common funerary spaces.

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

Audrey Rose Medwayosh (University of Alberta, Canada)

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

P4.5 The politics of death and law: Relationships, power and the obscurity of justice

Chairs: Imogen Jones, Heather Conway

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

Prue Vines (University of New South Wales, Australia)

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 politics of law and death: Contested funerals as sites of struggle

Heather Conway (Queens University Belfast, United Kingdom), Cheryl Lawther

Contested funerals are riven by ingrained family politics, partly because funerals speak to larger social issues beyond dealing with the dead. This paper bridges the gap between private law and transitional justice in resolving these disputes and dealing with contested pasts.

Creating social proof of mass death: Human remains, art, and the Cambodian genocide

Caroline Bennett (University of Sussex, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

I consider the role of art in transitional justice, arguing that as well as being important in cases where other visual evidence does not exist, art, with its ability to mobilize and communicate linguistically incommunicable affect, can be part of the evidentiary infrastructure in and of itself.

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.

P4.6 The politics of dying away from home

Disposable bodies: Migrant deaths and the politics of exclusion

Lel Khalesimoghaddam Ghaen (University of Calgary, Canada)

This paper examines the neglect of migrant deaths at Europe's borders, exposing how EU border regimes absorb migrant deaths as sources of legitimation. It explores how unacknowledged deaths reinforce state power and perpetuate exclusionary notions of national identity.

Dying away from home: Older adults' perspectives and practices of death and dying in the context of place transitions in China

Huiyuan Pang (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

The study explores how rural-urban resettlement influences older Chinese adults' perspectives and practices regarding death and dying. Despite living in a new urban setting, their home place continues to significantly shape the end-of-life experiences of these older migrants.

Death in a foreign land: Turkish exiles in the U.S. and reimagining sacred time

Kim Shively (Bethlehem, USA)

This paper examines how members of the Turkish Gulen Movement – many of whom are exiled from Turkey for political reasons and live in the United States and other countries – have created new interpretations of exile and new practices to deal with the prospect of death and burial in a foreign land.

Migrants in their own land: The politics of death on the Mexican-US border

Jacque Lynn Foltyn (National University, USA)

The US-Mexico border is the world's deadliest migration route. Between 1988-2024 nearly 11,000 individuals died attempting to cross. 80% were Mexicans. Since the 19th century, US expansion, policies, and political discourse have transformed Mexicans, Mestizo of Indigenous Americans/ Spanish ethnicity, into strangers in their ancestral land.

P4.7 Dying at the margins (I)

Reforming death care policy in the United States: Addressing funeral poverty and advancing environmentally conscientious deathcare

Philip R Olson (Virginia Tech, United States Minor Outlying Islands)

Radical reform of U.S. public death care policy is required to address two major problems: funeral poverty and the need to increase and track the use of environmentally conscientious disposition methods. The political bases of three proposed policy revisions are reviewed, interpreted and compared.

Rethinking refusal: Sudden death as a necropolitical event

Tanya Zivkovic (University of Adelaide, Australia)

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.

Effigy: On femicide and the nation

Ellen Marie O Sullivan (University College Cork, Ireland)

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.

When hospice isn't a choice: (Post)colonial politics, anxiety, and contested futures near end of life in the U.S. Virgin Islands

Devin Flaherty (University of Texas, USA) (online presentation)

In the U.S. Virgin Islands, individuals who have no plans of dying become hospice patients due to (post)colonial politics that foreclose other care possibilities. This paper traces 'anxiety' near death among patients in this situation, arguing that it is a manifestation of (post)colonial politics.

P4.7 Dying at the margins (II)

Unclaimed bodies in contemporary Brazil: Deaths without dead in the infrastructures of death management

Leandro R de Castro (University College London (UCL), United Kingdom)

This article discusses state practices of managing deaths understood as unclaimed in Brazil, which alienate the social person from their dead body, creating a figure of dying characterized by the presence of the body but by the absence of the self.

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

Glenys Caswell (Independent social researcher, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

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.

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 (University of Calgary, Canada)

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.

Indigenous insiders and Anglo outsiders in Australian burial disputes

Kate Falconer (University College Cork, Ireland)

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.

P4.8 Thanatological sovereignty: Advocating for Native American and Indigenous deathcare autonomy

Chairs: Rye Purvis, Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner

Don't fear Nibowin: The politics of death in Anishinaabe communities

Niiyokamigaabaw Deondre Smiles (University of Victoria, Canada)

This paper will speak on how the concept of death plays into Anishinaabe modes of governance and land relations. Rather than viewing death as the terminus of political life, I argue that a whole new set of political relations are unlocked by death.

Tribal-centered deathcare: Overcoming a Western death system towards a land-informed future

Rye Purvis (University of California, USA)

Tribal-Centered Deathcare explores from the ground up what it would take for Tribal communities in the US to build, foster, and maintain frameworks in the care of our loved ones at the end of the life cycle. This includes centering land-informed practices and frameworks.

Thanatological sovereignty in the classroom: Indigenous feminist pedagogies of death, autonomy, and land-based knowledge

Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner (University of Maryland, USA)

This paper explores how Indigenous feminist pedagogies integrate death education with plant knowledge and land-based teachings, offering frameworks for sovereignty and relationality across life stages.

P4.9 Bodies on the move: Death, mobility and post-mortem care

Chairs: Marlene Schäfers, Annika Schmeding

Moving to care: Negotiating burial in/to Afghanistan

Annika Schmeding (NIOD, Netherlands)

This paper explores how Afghan migrant communities manage post-mortem care, organizing repatriation through social networks instead of institutions. Shaped by decades of conflict, their practices reveal how refugee populations navigate death and belonging through adaptive strategies across borders.

Caring for the unclaimed: Migration and post-mortem care in Turkey's borderlands

Marlene Schäfers (Utrecht University, Netherlands)

This paper explores postmortem care practices at Turkey's largest unclaimed cemetery, where migrants who died crossing the Turkey-Iran border are buried. It examines how acts of care—by locals, migrants, and municipal workers—challenge the effects of border securitization and systemic abandonment.

Death and (im)mobility at the borderland of Lampedusa

Alessandro Corso (Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway)

Based on long term ethnographic research on Lampedusa Island, one of the deadliest borderlands in the world, I will discuss how ongoing migrants' death in the Central Mediterranean is both the outcome of a certain form of mobility and a widespread immobility towards life and after death occurs.

Enacting human dignity in migrant death: Human rights claims as grief work

Amira Fretz (Leiden University, Netherlands)

The paper interrogates the instrumentalization of human rights discourse in civil society activism on behalf of drowned migrants as a form of transborder grief work and post-mortem justice. It reads this narrative against the absence of the corpse as a subject in international human rights law.

P4.10 The Mediterranean deathscape: Politics, practices and infrastructures

Chairs: Sarah Spasiano, Mareike Gebhardt

In the wake of a boat: The politics of mourning the 18th of April 2015 shipwreck

Giorgia Mirto (Columbia University, USA) (online presentation)

On April 18, 2015, a vessel shipwrecked between Libya and Italy, killing over 1,100 people. This paper analyzes the "translation" of its human and material remains—the stages of exhumation, naming, wake, and burial—revealing through their political lives how actors claimed ownership over mourning.

On board with the dead: Necropolitics and civil deathcare in the Mediterranean border death regime

Sarah Spasiano (University of Bonn, Germany)

The article focuses on deathcare practices of Search and Rescue NGOs on board their ships. The array of practices include material hands-on care work, visibilization and complex decision-making. By analyzing disobedient care practices of dead bodies, necropolitical structures become perceptible.

On waves and wakes: Navigating the Mediterranean deathscape towards more democratic futures

Mareike Gebhardt (Muenster University, Germany)

Referring to M. Foucault and A. Mbembe, the paper introduces the notion of thalasso-power as a technology to govern 'migrant others' through water. With a postcolonial and feminist lens, it focuses on wake and waves to unpack both thalasso-power's necropolitics and sites of haunting resistance.

P4.11 Decolonizing "good death"

Chairs: Shahaduz Zaman, Natashe Lemos Dekker

Decolonising dignity in palliative care: A Sri Lankan perspective

Lihini Wijeyaratne (University of Colombo, Sri Lanka) (online presentation)

This study examined dignity in Sri Lankan palliative care among advanced cancer patients, families, and healthcare workers. Dignity was tied to respect, kindness, and independence, but challenges included financial insecurity and cultural variations in its definition and implementation.

On friendship with death in Buddhist philosophy and practice: A decolonized perspective

Janaka Jayawickrama (University of Shanghai, China) (online presentation)

This presentation explores Buddhist views on death as part of life's impermanence, emphasizing mindfulness, compassion, and preparation. Meditation on death fosters spiritual growth, reduces attachment, and inspires a meaningful, compassionate life by embracing death as a natural process.

Decolonising and enabling anatomy education: Sociocultural determinants and psychosocial implications of cadaveric dissection in medical schools

Suhad Daher Nashif (Keele University, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

This presentation explores how medical students' sociocultural backgrounds shape their cadaveric dissection experiences. Using ethnographic methods in UK medical schools, it examines psychological, spiritual, and professional impacts to promote equity and inclusion in anatomy education.

Decolonizing "awareness of dying": Experience from Bangladesh

Ilias Kamal Risat (Independent University, Bangladesh)

This presentation explores "awareness of dying" in Bangladesh, contrasting family-centric caregiving with Western models emphasizing patient autonomy. Based on interviews and ethnography it advocates for culturally sensitive palliative care that honors diverse understandings of a "good death."

P4.12 Death, violence and the afterlife

Recovering the death from elsewhere: Forced disappearance and popular sanctification in Colombia

Lizeth Ortiz-Carreño (Independent researcher, Germany)

This paper examines the politics of death in Colombia by focusing on forced disappearance, the handling and recovery of victims' bodies, and popular sanctification practices in local cemeteries, as ways of making sense of life and resisting decades of internal armed conflict and structural violence.

Geography of the post-genocide agency of the dead

Miram EAM Mencej (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia)

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.

Politics of death in Palestine: Martyrdom and ritualicide

Nina Gren (Lund University, Sweden)

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.

Necromobility: Necro/sovereign power and the securitization of dead body transportation and forensic autopsies in the Turkish-PKK conflict

Erdost C. Akin (Milestone Institute, Hungary)

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.

P4.13 Death and activism

Death on campus: A decolonial walk around the McGill campus

Eyup Ozkan (McGill University, Canada)

This paper examines five sites at McGill University, contrasting visible colonial sculptures with unmarked Indigenous graves. Through themes of medium, chronology, and reaction, it critiques McGill's colonial legacy, revealing how death underscores the need for decolonization on campus land.

"Closure is for cupboards": Troubling the closure mandate & grief aversion through accidental activism

Chris Bobel

Based on interviews with 70+ "accidental activists"—bereaved individuals who channel their pain into purpose-- I demonstrate how their activism not only prevents future tragedies, but also serves as a potent survival strategy that refuses closure of the grieving process.

Border burners in Europe: The other-than-dead narratives

Yousra Sbaihi (University of Bayreuth, Germany; University of Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdullah, Morocco)

I argue that the mobilization of Moroccan border burners' successful illegal migration journey through the Mediterranean retrieves a anterior necropolitical state of living that renders physical death less horror-inducing. Death is then related to social disenfranchisement and political repression.

James Baldwin on death denial and white supremacy

James K Rowe (University of Victoria, Canada)

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.

5. Death, culture and the politics of representation: Past and present

P5.1 The historical governance of death

Crisis management strategies at the military hospital of São Jorge Castle in the context of a post-medieval cemetery

Susana Henriques (University of Évora, Portugal) (online presentation)

In the late 16th century, a Military Hospital was founded in São Jorge Castle, Lisbon, part of it was later converted into a cemetery. In 1694, health issues from buried soldiers led to a two-year ban. Can the historical and archaeological data confirm the administrators' compliance?

The impact of political change in 1989 on dealing with death in emergency medical services in the Czech Republic

Olga Nesporova (Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic)

The paper reveals the main changes in terms of dealing with death that have emerged in line with the transformation of emergency medical services based on the political change from socialism to democracy (1989) in the Czech Republic.

"All that modern science knows": Embalming, segregation, and the politics of the corpse in Mississippi, 1906-1930

Jennifer Ford (The University of Mississippi, USA)

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.

P5.2 Historical infrastructures of death

Hidden relatives: Burial boundaries and burial strategies in 18th-century Amsterdam

Erik Schmitz (Amsterdam City Archives, Netherlands)

This paper analyses burial strategies in 18th-century Amsterdam by combining burial and tax registers from one year, 1743. Socio-economic status, family ties and neighbourhood cohesion prove to be important factors behind a hidden social pattern in one of Europe's largest pre-modern cities.

“Unknown woman”: The (in)visibility of Victorian women in Southern Cemetery, Manchester

Emma Liggins (Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom)

This paper explores the (in)visibility of dead Victorian women in Southern Cemetery, Manchester, UK (a multi-denominational burial-ground opened in 1879). Through an analysis of headstones and burial records, it examines the ways in which women's lives were memorialised and often half-erased.

Power, Consumerism, and the Commodification of the Deathcare Industry: A view from historic New Orleans, Louisiana

Kerry L. Boutte (University of New Orleans, USA) (online presentation)

Using historical data, this paper explores notions of power bias as represented in the deathcare industry in New Orleans from the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, as well as, contemporary manifestations of socioeconomic power imbalances through cultural appropriation.

Exploring social history through the lens of death announcements (1950-2009)

Murat Ergin (Koç University, Turkey)

Obituaries can serve as a data source for examining societal patterns. This study examines close to 300,000 obituaries over a 60-year period to identify transitions regarding the symbolic manifestations of secularism and religiosity, focusing on hierarchies, personalization, and status symbolism.

P5.3 Cultural mediations of death (I)

Mediation and mediatisation of death: A scoping review of the literature based on a decolonial perspective

Bruno Frutuoso Costa (University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal; Cardiff University, United Kingdom)

Considering the central role played by the media in communicating information and meaning of the shared world, this communication aims to map the scientific production on the mediation and mediatisation of death based on a decolonial perspective to describe the state of this field of media studies.

Visual representations of the cut-off low (DANA) in Valencia and the politics of death

Rebeca Pardo (Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, Spain), Montse Morcate (Universitat de Barcelona, Spain)

This paper explores the visual representation of death and grief in photojournalism related to the cut-off low (DANA climatic effect) in Valencia, Spain. It examines the political implications of those images and its visual narratives within the broader academic framework of the politics of death.

The politics of embodied expression at funerals

Rosalie Kuyvenhoven (Rituals Today, United Kingdom), Kathryn Edwards (Independent Ritualist, United Kingdom)

UK funeral practices, rooted in religious traditions, often exclude dance due to historical associations with impropriety and potential challenges to political order. Yet, as illustrated by a Pilates teacher's funeral, expressive movement could deepen grief expression, renewal and community bonding.

“The room next door”: Pedro Almodóvar and the cinematic reimagining of non-normative death

Mateo Sancho Cardiel (Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC); City University of New York (CUNY), USA)

This paper explores Pedro Almodóvar's *The Room Next Door* (2024) as a portrayal of non-normative death through cinematic influences and social science theories. It examines how Almodóvar reimagines dying as a vital experience, engaging with themes of queerness, gender, privilege, and social taboos.

The politics of sound and the funeral of an American president

Deborah L Jaramillo (Boston University, USA) (online presentation)

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.

P5.3 Cultural mediations of death (II)

200 years of talking to children about death: Saving souls to saving minds: From exposure to protection

Maggie J Jackson (Teesside University, United Kingdom)

This paper looks at how the language used in children's books over the last 200 years has shifted from a focus of the need for exposure to death to protection from the very notion and also tracks how this is also seen in English Education Legislation since schooling became compulsory.

Exit pursued by a bear: Paddington's polysemic political power as the "new grim reaper"

Matthew Hilborn (University College Dublin, Ireland), Jennifer Riley (University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom)

Paddington Bear's curious promotion to cosy contemporary Grim Reaper is profoundly political. This paper argues that his emblematic yet contentious embodiment of 'Britishness' exemplifies how death can provoke (re)negotiation of national identity in transnational, vernacular, 'memetic' culture.

"Wombs and tombs": Birth, death, and biopolitics in the gothic novel

Ellesse Patterson (University of Sheffield, United Kingdom)

This paper explores death's role in acts of Gothic reproduction. By analysing the collapse of Michel Foucault's biopolitical hierarchy during childbirth, it argues that death is used to illustrate the severity of contemporary reproductive discourse as both a deterrent and an act of resistance.

Death and colonial hangover in "The Vampire Diaries": A study of visual representations in the fantasy genre

Sanghita Dey (Independent Researcher, India), Agnidh Baruah (National Institute of Technology, India) (online presentation)

This paper looks at how media and the fantasy genre in specific might portray death, dying, and bereavement, and how people view it. The study is of The Vampire Diaries, a popular vampire fiction show, the portrayal of death in which seems congruent with colonial ideologies. The visual medium will be looked at by a Jungian psychological lens in this article.

6. Death and/of the more than human

P6.1 Politics of death beyond the human

Donkey hides, human lives: The politics of death in a cultural quest for youth

Tamlin Watson (The Donkey Sanctuary, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

Examining the donkey skin trade, we explore the complexities of what the politics of death may mean in socially stratified, culturally disparate societies. For those chasing status at any price, to the marginalised communities finding death commonplace, and for the donkeys with no agency to choose.

Muskrats, beavers, crayfish: politics of death in the management of invasive and protected species in Dutch waters

Sam van der Lugt (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Why are some animals tolerated while others are killed? We compare how three differently classified species—muskrats, beavers, and crayfish—are managed in Dutch waters. We conclude that classification is a context-dependent phenomenon that shapes the politics of multi-species cohabitation and death.

Killing the immortal tree: Contrasting human and olive life and death temporalities to generate better landscape relations

Efe Cengiz (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

I critically examine how plans for making sustainable and climate resilient olive plantations disregard the unique characteristics of olives' vital temporalities. I show how the oscillatory lifecycle of olives, in comparison to the teleological human death, can inform better Land relations.

P6.2 Caring beyond the human

Where do animal bodies go? Cultural and legal perspectives on the death of companion animals

Camilla Tumidei (University of Turin, Italy) (online presentation)

Through ethnographic research, this presentation examines current norms regulating the treatment of animal bodies and how these regulations create a cultural space that fosters diverse funerary practices and acknowledges animals as meaningful beings.

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

Lucja Lange (University of Lodz, Poland) (online presentation)

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.

"A part of me died": Exploring pet loss and grief in the digital sphere

Adriana Teodorescu (Babes-Bolyai University, Romania)

This study examines how pet loss is represented on social media, exploring grief expressions and the evolving cultural status of pets. It highlights social media's role in shaping mourning rituals, normalizing pet grief, and fostering artistic yet normative narratives about loss and human identity.

Finding deeper meaning: Hunting as a way of life

Maija Khandro Butters (University of Helsinki, Finland)

My ethnographic research with Finnish hunters explores how contemporary hunting, as a lifestyle, counters the disembodied digitised lifestyles of modernity. I demonstrate how the visceral nature of hunting fosters meaning and a sense of belonging, and influences personal attitudes towards mortality.

7. Body politics and disposal: Parts and wholes

P7.1 The corpse as object-subject: Technological, legal and ethical challenges

Timing the useful and meaningful death: New Technologies for Heart Transplantation

Joel Ferrall (University of Southern California, USA)

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.

The legal status and protection of the corpse: A comparative perspective on scientific use

Hanne Dielis (Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium)

This presentation examines proposals to redefine the legal status of the corpse, evaluates existing protective measures in the context of body donation to science, and compares legal frameworks to identify better approaches for protecting the deceased.

Redesigning respectful disposal: Rethinking incineration of anatomical specimens through participatory design approaches

Mark Shtanov (University of Manchester, United Kingdom)

To challenge the biopolitical regimes of defining respect towards human remains in clandestine and technological environments, the article uses participatory workshops with specialist focus groups to redesign the current approaches to the disposal of anatomical specimens at the UK waste incinerators

P7.2 Corpses and their afterlives: Navigating innovation, choice, and constraint (I)

Blue death studies: Theorising the water-corpse interface

Jesse Peterson, Kate Falconer (University College Cork, Ireland)

In this article, we theorise a blue death studies approach, which highlights possibilities for rethinking death as 'watery' and mobile rather than sedimentary and sedentary. We apply this theorisation to liquid and frozen deaths, underscoring the ir/retrievability of matter and meaning in death.

Skeletons in the closet? The afterlives of human ash in domestic spaces

Tamara Kohn (University of Melbourne, Australia)

The popularity of cremation in Australia and public uncertainty around what options are permitted for dispersal contributes to an excess of ash stored in domestic spaces. This paper analyses interviews charting diverse domestic storage choices and commemorative practices with bodily remains.

The dark side of anatomical illustration: Should we still be utilising artistic depictions of cadavers from unethical or unknown sources? A UK perspective

Lucy Hyde (University of Bristol, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

Anatomical study is long tied to unethical practices; from the use of executed criminals and the bodies of the poor, until modern day body bequeathal programmes brought in explicit consent. Yet today many historical illustrations are still remain in regular circulation- in 2024 what should be done?

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.

P7.2 Corpses and their afterlives: Navigating innovation, choice, and constraint (II)

Making death sustainable: Sustainability work and crisis preparations in Swedish cemeteries

Mai Ive Brissman (Lund University, Sweden) (online presentation)

This paper explores how The Church of Sweden, the principal for Swedish burial management, faces the challenge of implementing sustainability policies, protecting cultural heritage, and, as part of Swedish total defence, preparing for crisis with contingency land for emergency burials.

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

Sarah Carter-Walshaw (University of Leeds, United Kingdom)

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?

Death by regulation for nature's funerary advocates? The case of the German green death start up MEINE ERDE

Jana Paulina Lobe (Otto-Friedrich-Universität, Germany) (online presentation)

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?

P7.3 Death and remains in public history and community archaeology

Chairs: Katie Clary, Carolyn Dillian

Decolonizing death for Indigenous communities

Katie Clary, Carolyn Dillian (Coastal Carolina University, USA)

This paper explores how state-recognized tribes confront colonial pasts in death traditions under US Law with Waccamaw Indian People of South Carolina as a case study. The Waccamaw are not federally recognize, so face challenges including an inability to practice traditional burial and death rites.

Navigating NAGPRA: Politics of repatriation and Native American identity in North America

Sydney James (Arizona State University, USA) (online presentation)

This paper will discuss the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), examining the impact of the Act on collaborations between archaeologists, museum professionals, and Indigenous communities in the U.S. It will also discuss and explore solutions to some of its challenges.

Community archaeology and burial landscapes in New Perlican, Newfoundland and Labrador

Robyn S. Lacy (Independent Researcher, Canada)

Through community burial archaeology, this paper explores development of burial spaces within New Perlican, Newfoundland and Labrador, which has seen settler occupation for nearly 400 years. Working collaboratively with local heritage group, public archaeology steered the direction of the project.

Native American burial sites and archaeological ethics

Carolyn Dillian (Coastal Carolina University, USA) (online presentation)

After more than a century of unethical collecting practices and scientific excavations, Native American communities are wary of working with archaeologists, particularly when human remains are found. Using Waccamaw Indian People as an example, this paper discusses ways to collaborate on this topic.

P7.4 Governing disposal: Between ethics, aesthetics and the socio-legal

Wildlife among the remains: Death positivity and the environment in burial grounds

Anna Wilde (University of Birmingham, United Kingdom)

This paper examines environmental work and activism in burial grounds and asks how death positivity has contributed to changes in caring both for how we bury our dead, and the places in which they are interred.

To dress the corpse like a body: Controlling and perfecting the dead body. a brief Colombian perspective

Lucia Hernández (The New School Parsons Paris, France)

In reinstating their identity, embalmers impede the marginalization and de-socialization of the corpse by meeting the expectations of capital production in accumulating value through investing time, money, and attention in actions like postmortem surgery, dressing, styling, and grooming.

Boundaries of goodbye: Navigating legislation and practice in crematoria

Anneminne Frère (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)

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

P7.5 Corpses resurrected: The politics of commemoration in East Asia

Chairs: Anru Lee, Dat Manh Nguyen, Huwymin Lucia Liu, Robert Weller

The affect of haunting: Gender, industrial work, and postindustrial memory in Taiwan

Anru Lee (City University of New York, USA)

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.

Recovering remains of the wetland: War dead, aquafarming, and spirituality in postwar Vietnam
Dat Nguyen (NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Netherlands)

This paper focuses on the recovery effort of soldiers' remains from a wetland area in southern Vietnam upon which aqua-farming has taken place. It sheds light on the different entanglements between necropolitics, economic development, and spirituality surrounding the care of the war dead.

Ancestors, comrades, and individuals: The politics of commemoration in contemporary urban China
Huwymín Lucia Liu (George Mason University, USA)

This paper explains the politics of commemorating the dead in urban China. After China adopted a market economy, ordinary people in Shanghai rejected the state's promotion of personalized funerals. Instead, they preferred commemorating the dead as comrades and ancestors in the same ritual.

8. End-of-life: Planning and caring in practices and politics

P8.1 Care of/for the carers

Virtual simulation for emotional safety: Navigating end-of-life care in the ICU
Louise Chartrand (University of Manitoba, Canada)

A virtual simulation designed to teach emotional safety in ICU end-of-life care, emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration among healthcare professionals. This tool helps build emotional resilience, improve communication, and navigate ethical challenges in a safe learning environment.

Grieving inside: The experience of supporting bereaved women during and after incarceration
Julia Spiti (Flinders University of South Australia, Australia)

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.

Death of the self: Grieving past and future in the caring present
Zhaoxi Zheng, Emma Kirby (University of New South Wales, Australia)

This paper explores the loss of and grief over selfhood amongst informal carers. Findings from interviews with carers suggest caregiving is often at cost of the erasure of carers' past and future selves: a slow death resulted by biopolitical violence and institutional neglect of care.

How to accompany a patient in death: Life politics and palliative care in Mexico City
Elyse Ona Singer (Southern Methodist University, USA)

Based on ethnographic research in the palliative care ward of Mexico City's National Cancer Institute, we consider a central moral tension in Mexican palliative care, which is defined by seemingly conflicting ethical imperatives to foster psychological preparedness for death and a will to live.

P8.2 Speaking for assisted dying: Evaluations and experiences

Interdisciplinary evaluation of the law on assisted dying in Austria: Methods and initial insights of the multi-year project

Klara Doppler, Julia Fischer (University of Vienna; Medical University of Vienna, Austria)

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.

Agency in choosing death: Experiences from considering seeking death assistance abroad
Ingvild Lalim Hanseid (MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Norway)

My Ph.D-project explores experiences and reflections from persons in Norway considering seeking AiD. The material consists of interviews with 13 persons considering seeking death assistance and is analyzed with perspectives from agency in relation to identity, relations and institutions.

Die, die must live? An institutional ethnography of palliative care in the necropolitical state

Hazirah Mohamad (University Of Toronto, Canada)

The paper addresses knowledge gaps and issues of domination surrounding decision-making and palliative care. Applying Foucauldian biopower and Mbembe's necropolitics in the examination of the healthcare financing structure, I present a normative analysis through Young's conception of social justice.

P8.3 Steering the final passage: Preliminary findings on end-of-life rituals and euthanasia in the Netherlands and Quebec

Chairs: Iline Ceelen, Thomas Quartier, Isabelle Kostecki, Jean-Thomas Chouinard

Rituals for whom? Distinguishing between mental and physical illness ritual behaviour in euthanasia

Iline Ceelen (Radboud University, Netherlands)

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.

Ritual creativity in assisted dying: Challenges and specificities in Quebec and beyond

Isabelle Kostecki (University of Montreal, Canada)

This paper paints a portrait of ritual practices and creativity around assisted dying in Western contexts, shaped by declining institutional religiosity and rising non-confessional ritual expertise. Through anthropological analysis, it highlights the challenges and specificities of these rituals.

Ritual creativity in end-of-life care: Bridging tradition and personalization in spiritual care

Thomas Quartier (Radboud University, Netherlands)

Ritual creativity plays an important role in spiritual end-of-life-care. In the Netherlands, spiritual caregivers facilitate it by combining tradition and personalization. This paper uses lab-impressions and theoretical reflection to provide a model that goes beyond the divide between old and new.

Lived experiences of medical aid in dying (MAiD) among bereaved families in Quebec

Jean-Thomas Chouinard (Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada)

After 10 years of legalized euthanasia in Quebec, new contexts for end-of-life rituals have emerged, reshaping socialization around death and grief. This study examines the experiences of bereaved loved ones, exploring how these rituals convey meaning and shape identity through personal narratives.

P8.4 End-of-life care: Gap between policy, research and practice (I)

Policy-practice gap in English end-of-life care: Insights from examining how the ambitions framework has been used

Erica Borgstrom (The Open University, United Kingdom)

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.

Death by (data) politics: County-level approaches to the opioid crisis in upstate New York

Nilufer Akalin, Gabreélla Friday (Michigan State University, USA)

This article highlights the importance of quality data in addressing the opioid epidemic. It examines how government failures in data collection on stigmatized populations hinder effective policy responses, forcing community-led interventions that are later co-opted by officials.

The illusion of immortality and its political consequences

Kate Woodthorpe (University of Bath, United Kingdom)

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.

Death in the geriatrics conference: Appreciating the multiplicity of death and dying in medical research and practice

Luke Alan Stalley (University of Zurich, Switzerland)

In this talk I craft an ethnographic patchwork of what death and dying are made to be in geriatric medical research and practice. I suggest that appreciating the normative messiness of this multiplicity offers a more care-ful scholarly orientation to medicine's fraught relationship with mortality.

P8.4 End-of-life care: Gap between policy, research and practice (II)

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

Erica Borgstrom (The Open University, United Kingdom), John MacArtney (Warwick University, United Kingdom)

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

Relatively represented: Analyzing family considerations in the politics of dying

Julia Fischer, Klara Doppler (University of Vienna; Medical University of Vienna, Austria)

Shedding light onto the politics of dying, our qualitative study revealed that family members of patients lack adequate political representation - which leads to policies that do not account for the real-world implications of end-of-life care.

Queerness and politics in end-of-life care

Panagiotis Pentaris (Goldsmiths University of London, United Kingdom; Association for the Study of Death and Society, United Kingdom)

Gender and Sexually Diverse (GSD) older people experience political tensions in the frameworks of policy and practice in end-of-life care in England. This paper reports on such findings.

Death & dying in the queer family

Polly E Maxwell (Bath University, United Kingdom)

This paper will discuss findings from two studies that explore key concepts and definitions of family at the end of life. It will detail an analysis of family categorisation in UK palliative and end of life policies, and primary data from a survey on LGBTQ+ family forms and care practices.

P8.5 End-of-life planning

Old age, dementia diagnosis, and the role of advance decisions in Finland

Suvi Ronkainen (University of Lapland, Finland) (online presentation)

The role of advance decision in the end-of-life of older, demented people.

Beyond the dividing line of (in)capacity: A lifeworld approach to end-of-life trajectories of persons with dementia with an expressed death wish in a Belgian nursing home

Emma Gobiet, Khyati Tripathi (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)

The Belgian politics of death draw on the notion of (in)capacity to determine who has the right to a dignified death. Ethnographic participation in end-of-life trajectories of two older people with dementia prompts a lifeworld perspective to analyze and challenge the dividing line of capacity.

Perception of individuals living with multiple sclerosis on medical assistance in dying

Loralee Herter, Mir Nabila Ashraf (University of Regina, Canada)

This qualitative exploratory study aimed to better understand the perspectives of individuals living with multiple sclerosis (ILMS) regarding end-of-life planning, including medical assistance in dying (MAID).

Palliative sedation: A buffer against neoliberal thanatopolitics?

Jonathan Lambaerts (KU Leuven, Belgium)

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?

P8.6 Volunteers and death doulas at the end-of-life

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 (On Bright Wings End-of-Life Services, USA)

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.

Amicus Mort: Examining the role of end-of-life doulas within a person-centred framework for social wellbeing

Laura Dixon (Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom)

This paper examines the role of death doulas in the UK, following the re-centring of death in the public consciousness following the Covid-19 pandemic, in relation to wider frameworks of social wellbeing, which tend to focus solely on living and to ignore death and dying.

New secular faces at the bedside: The anthropology of death and dying in contemporary Poland
Zuzanna Nina Kierwiak-Włodarczyk (University of Wrocław, Poland) (online presentation)

In Catholic Poland, new secular professions like death doulas and care coordinators address emotional and relational care, diverging from traditional faith-based approaches. This work examines these emerging roles, highlighting their growing importance in reshaping care practices in Poland.

Carrying on while dying: Hospice organizations and the delivery of care at end of life

Melina A Economou (University of California, USA) (online presentation)

People with terminal illnesses can be described as living in "prognostic time," a period in which they negotiate complex medical care, grapple with their political and economic roles in society, and form intimate social bonds with hospice volunteers as they continue living while dying.

P8.7 Until untold: A multi-actor and interdisciplinary attempt to clarify the complex phenomenon of tiredness of life in nursing home residents

Chairs: Jessie Dezutter, John Troyer, Elisa van Wiele, Hannah Thys, Stefanie Meul

UNTIL UNTOLD: What is Tiredness of Life?

Jessie Dezutter (KU Leuven, Belgium)

The presentation provides an introduction to the field of tiredness of life and aims to discuss how completed life, tiredness of life, and death wishes might be positioned relative to each other in a field where empirical data is still limited.

UNTOLD: Unraveling the experience of Tiredness of Life in nursing home residents

Elisa Van Wiele, Jessie Dezutter (KU Leuven, Belgium)

The experience of tiredness of life in nursing home residents can be described as deep suffering characterized by a disconnection from life, a threatened sense of self and several loss experiences, such as a loss of mattering and a loss of hope for the future.

Understanding tiredness of life (ToL): Healthcare practitioners' insights into supporting nursing home residents struggling with ToL

Hannah Thys (KU Leuven, Belgium)

This study explores healthcare practitioners' (HCPs) experiences with tiredness of life (ToL) in nursing home residents. Interviews with 32 HCPs reveal varied interpretations and care approaches, with physicians often linking ToL to a death wish, reflecting the complexity of this phenomenon.

UNTOLD: UNraveling cultural historical Dimensions of contemporary experiences of tiredness of life
Stefanie Meul (KU Leuven, Belgium)

The historical component of the interdisciplinary UNTOLD project zooms in on the contemporary experiences of nursing home residents suffering from tiredness of life and their caregivers, and aims to provide cultural-historical understandings of these experiences.

P8.8 Where we live is how we die? Couleurs locale in euthanasia practices in the Netherlands

Chairs: Theo Boer, Janieke Bruin, Wieke Ligtenberg

Where we live is how we die: Regional differences in the incidence of euthanasia in the Netherlands

Theo Boer (Protestantse Theologische Universiteit, Netherlands)

This paper aims to gain insights in regional differences in the incidence of euthanasia in the Netherlands.

A closer look at regional differences in euthanasia practices in the Netherlands

Wieke Ligtenberg (Theologische Universiteit, Netherlands)

This paper aims to gain insight in the differences between euthanasia practices in high-incidence regions and low-incidence regions, by looking at (potential differences in) a) patient characteristics; b) timelines and the process of euthanasia; c) the setting in which euthanasia takes place; and d) morally relevant themes.

Regional differences in attitudes towards end-of-life care for people with dementia in the Netherlands

Janieke Bruin (Radboud UMC, Netherlands)

This paper focusses on end-of-life care (including euthanasia) for people with dementia in the Netherlands. It aims to gain insights into 1) existing attitudes towards end-of-life care for people with dementia in the Netherlands and 2) regional differences in these attitudes.

P8.9 Covid-19: Care, grief and politics

Grief at a distance: The role of agency and physical presence

Tram Thi-Bao Nguyen (Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand)

This paper provides an examination of migrants' grief at distance during the pandemic and how the social and cultural context influence migrants' grief at a distance.

Grief politics: COVID-19-related loss and collective action in Brazil

Natashe Lemos Dekker (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Brazil is one of the countries most heavily affected by Covid-19. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews with people who lost relatives due to Covid-19 in Brazil, and who have become politically active as a result, this paper discusses how grief is transformed into political action.

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

Bethany Simmonds (Aberystwyth University, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

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.

Naturalizing neglect: The politics of death in long-term care during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario, Canada

Hermanpreet Singh (University of Windsor, Canada) (online presentation)

This paper examines how neoliberalism frames COVID-19 fatalities in Ontario, Canada's LTC as "natural deaths," obscuring systemic neglect and inequalities. Drawing on a radical Durkheimian lens, it challenges these discourses and proposes a moral shift toward care over economic imperatives.

Reimagining bereavement: Perspectives from older adults and funeral directors during COVID-19

Samantha Teichman (Simon Fraser University, Canada)

This mixed-methods study explores how older adults in Greater Vancouver and funeral directors across Canada navigated bereavement during COVID-19, revealing the need for adaptable rituals, improved technology use, and better support systems for resilience in future crises.

P8.10 Ethics of good death and dying

Death as a gift: About the possibilities of a hospice ethic

Andreas Walker

Based on Hans-Dieter Bahr's concept of hospitality and with reference to a qualitative study on good dying, the paper explores the possibilities of a hospice ethic in which the dying and the nursing staff, therapists, pastors, and doctors working in a hospice are reciprocal guests.

Addressing the social determinants of end-of-life care in France

David Ansari (University of Illinois, USA)

What is a good death and how is it shaped by social, political, familial, and spiritual factors? This qualitative study examines this question by drawing on interviews with 16 health and allied professionals in France who support patients who encounter barriers to end-of-life care.

Resilient complexity: Moral experiences of seriously ill young people in the United States

Andrea St.Hilaire (University of Glasgow, United Kingdom) (online presentation)

By viewing pediatric palliative care in the United States through the lens of a complex adaptive system, the relational intricacy of moral experiences of seriously ill young people can be better appreciated. The insights can help providers to further support ill young people and foster resilience.

How can you talk about dying with people with intellectual disabilities? Co-producing a toolkit of resources for end-of-life care planning

Irene Tuffrey-Wijne, Jo Giles (Kingston University, United Kingdom)

People with intellectual disabilities are often excluded from knowing about dying. Together with people with intellectual disabilities, we co-produced an end-of-life care planning toolkit that helps them be involved in death conversations. We will show why we did this and what made it work well.

Roundtables

RT 1 The changing faces of immortality: Survival, endurance and mastering death

Marlene Schäfers (Utrecht University, Netherlands), Hanan De Sain (Utrecht University, Netherlands), Fartein Hauan Nilsen (University of Bergen, Norway), Sally Raudon (University of Cambridge, UK), Ida Hansen (Utrecht University, Netherlands), Maria Kastrinou (Brunel University, UK), Els Van Wijngaarden (Radboud University, Netherlands)

This roundtable invites discussion on evolving aspirations for immortality amid ecological crises and technological advances. It explores diverse desires for post-mortem endurance, ranging from subaltern struggles for collective survival to a commercialized afterlife industry. How can we make sense of such novel imaginations of immortality, where mastery over death is both desired and elusive?

RT2 Silenced losses: Interdisciplinary perspectives on the politics of disenfranchised grief

Korie Leigh (Marian University, USA), Rebecca A Reynolds (Marian University, USA), Luis Miguel Rojas-Berscia (Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands), Linde van Schuppen (Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands), Enny Das (Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands), Michael Erard
Political instability, systemic violence, and marginalization leads to disenfranchised grief that has no space in mainstream society, resulting in silent and often stigmatized experiences of loss. Drawing from global insights, topics of abortion specifically termination for medical reasons, the dismantling of indigenous languages and cultures, and biosocial losses entangled in ecological crisis will be examined from a holistic thanatological perspective

RT3 Politics of ecological loss and grief

Hans Alma, Evanne Nowak, Lisa Doeland, Stephan Huijboom (Vrije Universiteit, Netherlands)

We will engage with the audience giving input in four short presentations. We will start with a project on the Veluwe as a case study, in which ecological losses are highly politicized within a polarized political landscape. Furthermore, we will reflect on the politics of waste and on the role of love and consolation in coming to transformative change. We will integrate these elements in a reflection on cultural imaginaries that influence our politics of ecological loss and grief.

RT4 The politics of contemporary death rituals in Europe

Brenda Mathijssen (University of Groningen, Netherlands), Maija Butters (University of Helsinki, Finland), Ida Marie Høeg (Universitetet i Agder, Norway), Martin Hoondert (Tilburg University, Netherlands), Yvon Van der Pijl (Utrecht University, Netherlands)

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.

RT5 Legal frameworks for death practices: Roundtable discussion in response to the new Dutch “Law on Disposal of Bodies of Deceased Persons”

Martin Hoondert (Tilburg University, Netherlands), Brenda Mathijssen (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Netherlands), Edzo Doeve (Funerary Academy, Netherlands; DELA, Netherlands), Brigitte Wieman (BGNU, Netherlands), Frank Vandendries (funeral undertaker, Netherlands)

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.

RT6 Care for unclaimed, unexpected and abandoned dead in cities and border zones

Kristine Krause (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands), Maria Hagan (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands), Wiebe Ruijtenberg (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands), Mika Toyota (MPI Berlin, Germany), Sally Raudon (University of Cambridge, United Kingdom), Evie King (council officer, United Kingdom), Bianca Boer (Lonely Funeral Rotterdam, Netherlands), Maël Galisson (Le Mémorial de Calais, France), Jakub Bieniasz (We Are Monitoring, Poland), Małgorzata Harasimowicz (We Are Monitoring, Poland), Amade M'charek (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Unclaimed, unexpected, and abandoned dead in cities and border zones mobilize support from the living. In two roundtables, we invite researchers and practitioners who concern themselves with those who die alone and/or out of place to exchange insights about how we may care for the dying, and unclaimed and abandoned dead. The first round will address practices relating to unclaimed dead in cities: aging populations, increases in single person households, social isolation and the increase of contactless socialities, mean that more people are dying alone in their homes. In some cases the dead may have severed all family ties, or family members may not be able to afford to bury them. The second round will zoom in on cases of death in border zones: reinforced policing has exacerbated the lethality of borders, as emphasised by rising numbers of people who attempt to cross borders losing their lives in opaque border landscapes including forests, mountains, rivers and seas.

RT7 Enacting and encouraging respect for the dead in work with human remains: A conversation for cross-sectoral learning

Vikki A Entwistle (University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom), Gert Olthuis (Radboud University Medical Center, Netherlands), Caroline Phelan (Flinders University, Australia), Abi Pattenden

This roundtable brings together practitioners who work with the bodies of the dead in different professional contexts to discuss how they enact and encourage respect for the dead. It invites reflection on the challenges of ensuring respect given a plurality of beliefs and cultural norms relating to death and the various social purposes of their work. Short opener presentations will be followed by a facilitated discussion of common themes and scope to learn across differences.

RT8 Politics of necrowaste

Mark Shtanov (University of Manchester, United Kingdom), Philip Olson (Virginia Tech, USA), Daniel Robins (University of York, United Kingdom), John Troyer (University of Bath, United Kingdom), Georgina Robinson (Durham University, United Kingdom)

Necrowaste has gained sufficient scholarly attention to merit its own intellectual forum. The roundtable will offer attendees an opportunity to discuss necrowaste as a lens for examining the political actors, practices, matters, and methods that shape final dispositions and their effect. The discussion will revolve around political actors (e.g. institutions, laws, regulations, technologies, humans, more-than-humans, and cultural norms) that shape how people define and live with necrowaste.

RT9 The decolonisation of death studies

Panagiotis Pentaris (Goldsmiths University of London, United Kingdom; The Association for the Study of Death and Society, United Kingdom), Hajar Ghorbati (University of Alberta, Canada), Mary Kate Clary (Coastal Carolina University, USA), Carolyn Dillian (Coastal Carolina University, USA), Bruno Frutuoso Costa (University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal; Cardiff University, United Kingdom)

Death studies/thanatology tends to be shaped by Western views, conforming identities, specific disciplines, and the English language. These are limitations that pose concerns in the applicability of knowledge in death studies. This roundtable will facilitate a debate/discussion about the colonization of death studies and the need for a decolonized approach to research and knowledge, drawing on the forthcoming volume "The Decolonisation of Death Studies" by Routledge.

Workshops

WS1 Do you see what you/I see? Collective “slow looking” at the politics of death in art

Tanya Walker (Rivendell Center for Theology and the Arts, USA)

We will use ‘slow looking’ observation strategies (Tishman, 2018) to examine artworks created in response to losses precipitated or exacerbated by the actions of those with political power. Collectively, we will uncover the insights that diverse disciplinary, experiential, and cultural perspectives bring to our own. Both scholars and practitioners are encouraged to participate; no prior knowledge of art is required, just an openness to exploring your presuppositions in conversation with others.

WS2 What is the meaning of ambivalence and hesitation in end-of-life choices? Reflecting on choices made in the context of (healthcare) policies emphasizing anticipation, controllability, and documentation

Marte Fleur Antonides, Carolien van Leussen, Thessa Thölking, Els van Wijngaarden (Radboudumc, Netherlands)

Currently, (healthcare) policy has a strong push towards (anticipated) decision-making regarding the end-of-life, originating from ideals of controllability and autonomy. The complexity of existential end-of-life choices is easily overlooked in these decision-making processes, neglecting the presence of ambivalence and hesitation. In this workshop, we want to explore the meaning of ambivalence and hesitation in end-of-life choices based on four cases from different end-of-life contexts.

WS3 Exploring death and frames of non-humans

Maite van Gerwen, Mariske Westendorp (Utrecht University, Netherlands)

To reveal the complex ethical distinctions in how we judge which animals deserve to live or die, this workshop examines attitudes toward rodents, specifically rats and hamsters. Together we experience how framing influences perceptions of their "killability," exposing broader hierarchies that determine whose lives are valued or dismissed, and whose lives (can) become "grievable."

WS4 Exploring death and dying through a community of philosophical enquiry: Thinking with Shaun Tan’s *The Singing Bones*

Joanna E Haynes (University of Plymouth, United Kingdom), Karin S Murrin (University of Oulu, Finland)

In this workshop, participants will be introduced to the practice of community of philosophical enquiry, as a democratic way to investigate notions of death and dying, through questioning. Artist Shaun Tan’s *The Singing Bones* (2015) provides a starting point for enquiry. During the workshop, participants will think together and create questions that are provoked through engagement with images and text selected from Tan’s collection. The review will discuss the political nature of the process.

WS5 Tarot as tool for transforming the overdose crisis

Jennifer Syvertsen (University of California, USA), Cynthia Huerta (Love with Joy Art, USA)

This workshop will be led by an anthropologist and a community artist, who will initiate a critical space of reflection on death and near-death experiences of overdose through an imaginative art activity. Using collage and mixed media, participants will create a death tarot card to honor the lives affected by the overdose crisis. Although the death card can be feared, our focus is on its divinatory symbolism for profound transformation in the context of a public health crisis.

WS6 Climate change as the work of mourning: How does loss of ecosystem health relate to existential health?

Hans Alma, Evanne Nowak (Vrije Universiteit, Netherlands)

In the workshop, it will be explored how ecological mourning holds potential for expanding climate change discourse in politically and ethically productive ways, through a recognition of shared vulnerability. Using the methodology of contemplative dialogue it will be explored how the loss of ecosystem health impacts our existential and spiritual health. This will offer the participants an experience of contemplation and collective mourning with potentially transformative power.

WS7 The researcher's role in the politics of death: A workshop on methodology, self-reflexivity, and epistemic (in-)justice

Gaudenz Metzger (The University of Manchester, United Kingdom), Eva Soom Ammann (Bern University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland)

This workshop fosters a self-reflexive dialogue on how researchers and their methods shape knowledge about dying and death, influencing not only what is known about the subject but also who contributes to this knowledge. We examine how research traditions and agendas create both knowledge and exclusions, inviting participants to critically assess their own research approaches and to collaboratively envision more inclusive, equitable methodologies and approaches in end-of-life and death research.