CDAS Conference 2018
The Politics of Death

08-09 June 2018
The Edge, University of Bath

Book of Abstracts
The postmortem monitoring of legality: assisted dying and corpse removal

Marc-Antoine Berthod, Professor, and Alexandre Pillonel, Researcher, University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Western Switzerland (EESP – Lausanne)

Death and dying issues have been subject to renewed attention in the last few decades. This is not only due to demographic and social changes, but also to the increasing presence and engagement of professionals within the global socio-medical context in which dying persons and their proxies are taken care of. Accordingly, many individuals in their daily professional practice are on the front line, assuming duties – often referred to as the ‘dirty work’ – to make sure that everything will happen as best as possible for individuals at the end of life; to remove corpses in institutional places or at homes; to counsel bereaved people. In so doing, these professionals not only contribute to herald contemporary representations and values about death through their practice and contact with families, but they also follow procedures and conform to legal obligations: to some extent, they incarnate State power.

To explore the potential effects of such an incarnation, this presentation will focus on a specific object: the removal of corpses resulting from an assisted suicide in Switzerland and the role of the involved professionals in this process: coroners, policemen, prosecutors and funeral directors. Drawing from an ongoing ethnographic research funded by the Swiss Science Foundation, it will first expose the unique legal framework in which assistance with dying in Switzerland is possible. It will then present and comment on salient aspects taken from direct observations and from formal and informal interviews conducted with all these different actors. The objective consists in discussing their perception of such an event and in analyzing the role each one of them plays in their daily work, ensuring among other things that everything has remained legal.

Earning the Right to Live through Death: the African-American Funeral Home and the Civil Rights Movement

Dr. Candí K. Cann, Associate Professor of Religion, Baylor Interdisciplinary Core, Baylor University, USA

This presentation examines the African-American funeral home and its relationship to the American Civil Rights movement through fieldwork, oral interviews and textual analysis. I argue that because whites did not want to handle bodies of color, black funeral homes were able to become cornerstones of African-American communities, and centers of black identity, which continues even, and especially, today. The significance of my project is two-fold: 1) it unveils a rich history of the African-American funeral home as a locus for reclaiming bodies of color through both rituals for the dead, and civil rights movements for the living, and 2) it reveals that the African-American funeral home industry has remained mostly invisible to whites with current studies of the funeral home industry continuing to examine death primarily from a white and protestant point of view.
“I want Explosions or a Fresh Cosmos”: The Politics and Poetics of Life and Death in Black Lives Matter and Contemporary African-American Poetry

Philippa Chun, Doctoral Student, Department of English, Cornell University, USA

The Black Lives Matter Movement has mobilised around the killings of African-Americans by police officers, drawing attention to police brutality and systemic racism. BLM can be loosely defined as an attempt to reveal the reality of white supremacy and the precarity of Black lives in contemporary America. As such, the movement has strived to treat the avoidable deaths of African-Americans not as accidents or individual tragedies, but rather as evidence of deeper, structural racism. A substantial body of literature has attended to the movement’s political stakes. However, whilst people take to the streets to claim that black lives do matter, a group of African-American writers has begun to create its own accounts of the precarity of black life and the reality of black death. Moreover, these writers ask a question whose answer seems less obvious with every senseless shooting: in what world does a black life matter?

My paper focuses on African-American poetry in conversation with BLM, poetry that, whilst still political, finds new possibilities in the poetic form. I read the mass movements and public mourning of figures such as Eric Garner and Michael Brown alongside the poetry of Joshua Bennet and Danez Smith to argue that the BLM movement and the literature it has engendered are not simply acts of commemoration. Whilst the movement and these poets reveal the lethality of racism in America, they also use mourning to perform aesthetic interventions into political debates, create spaces for communication between protesters and opponents, and imagine ways of thinking through blackness that challenge the legacy of slavery and its afterlife. Death becomes a way of revealing the precarity of black lives whilst also envisioning worlds both real and imaginative—religious, cosmological, or otherwise—in which death is not the end but an epiphanic moment of political and cultural transformation.

Australian Ways of Dressing the Dead: The Body, Social Practice, and Material Culture in Contemporary Australia

Dr Jo Coghlan, Senior Lecturer, Sociology, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia

We have all heard the expression “I wouldn’t be caught dead in that!” We all express our identity in how we dress. But do we have an identity in death? If so, is identity expressed in the clothes we are buried in? Regulations in Australia require the dead body to be dressed either to contain the decaying body or to avert the gaze. This paper presents research on the changing trends in deathwear in Australia, noting the shifts from traditional shrouds to everyday clothes to biodegradable infinity suits. It analyses the shifts via the framework of material culture.

This research is theoretically grounded in a view that the body is meaning-making and that the body in death is highly regulated by both government policy and social and cultural attitudes. How the dead are dressed can be argued as stripping the body of meaning-making when it is dressed in clothes counter to lived identity. Alternatively, freeing the body from materiality may posit the body is finally free from social coercion and forms of governmentality.
Social theory posits that the body has a social and cultural function. When the body is positioned in death research as the central actor (rather than as a focus on the living, as in the case of grief research) new approaches emerge. The body in death becomes a social paradox (Berger & Luckmann 1966), is liminal (Turner 1992), is no longer controlled by social authority (Goffman 1956), and has contested social identity (Shilling 1993). It is in that latter that this research adopts a modernist turn.

Based on archival research, surveys, and interviews with funeral directors, it examines how deathwear practices engage with gender, class, age, ethnicity and sexual identity. It considers how popular culture shapes attitudes about ‘acceptable’ deathwear. It also considers emerging trends in deathwear – notably the increased use of biodegradable deathwear (mushroom suits) and the commissioning of environmentally-friendly ‘Garments for the Grave’ by Australia fashion designer Pia Interlandi.

Fighting fire with fire: Promoting and opposing cremation in Israeli society

Zohar Gazit, PhD, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

This paper examines a cultural struggle by analyzing the discourse regarding an innovative and controversial manner of disposing of the dead in present-day Israeli society. A uniform rigid model concerning the legitimate manner of handling dead bodies is prevalent in Israel. The vast majority of the Jewish population, including secular Jews, shows conformity to the hegemonic practice, in which religious burial societies are responsible for laying the deceased to rest. However, alternatives have recently been emerging. Since 2005, a company called “Autumn Leaves” offers cremation, which is utterly forbidden according to Jewish law. Based on qualitative data that include wide media coverage, various websites that address the topic, and parliament discussions, this paper explores the claims and the activities of those who support cremation – for example, commercial companies and individuals who would rather be cremated than buried – and those who oppose the practice – e.g., religious authorities. The analysis reveals that both promoters and objectors strive to fill the void that resides at the core of the issue—a void created by the immediate and complete annihilation of the corpse and the lack of norms regarding a practice that is unfamiliar in the context of the examined society. In order to do so they recruit similar resources from a shared cultural reservoir that serves them in their framing contest over the meanings attached to cremation. Thus, the contemporary and local practice is connected to the past – cremation of the Holocaust victims; the future – social life or death of those who choose this option; and to the conduct and preferences of Jews in other societies. The case study addresses a seldom-researched issue in contemporary Israel. Additionally, the analysis illuminates efforts to maintain hegemony over death-related issues as well as attempts to promote innovations and alternatives and undermine prevalent perceptions and practices.
Martyr, Martyrdom and Nation State: The Politics of Death in Contemporary Iran

Hajar Ghorbani, Independent researcher, Iran

Shahadat or Martyrdom is distinguished from the phenomena of death in Iran under a sacred form by the nation state. In this paper, based on the fieldwork in the biggest and the most important martyrs’ cemetery of Iran, Tehran, I will show how the nation state discriminated martyr and martyrdom from the other kinds of death and established a context to legitimate itself through three historical periods: Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran-Iraq War in 1980 and Post-war era from 1988 up to the present.

In the conclusion it will be shown that not only Karbala event or, as Fischer have stated, Karbala paradigm in Shia culture have had an important role in constructing these two concepts and legitimizing other nation states in the history of Irano-Shiite culture but also it have had a very important function in legitimizing nation state in the contemporary Iran.

In addition, we will witness strengthening of these concepts to the extent that it caused synchronization of martyrs’ funeral with political and religious conflicts, celebration of memorial days and martyrs commemorations, symbolic funerals and recently caused creation of new burial places.

*This paper will be presented as a filmed presentation. The author can be contacted at hajar.ghorbani64@gmail.com

Self-determination over the body, collective deliberation and shaping of political subjectivities: The case of the requests for euthanasia in Belgium

Natasia Hamarat, Aspirante F.R.S.-FNRS, METICES-ULB, Belgium

In Belgium, since 2002, a patient has the right to file a request for euthanasia and doctors have to objectify the ‘state of need’ of this request. Considering this objectifying work as co-produced amidst the moral agency and the social determinisms that weigh on the actors (Foucault, 1984), especially the delegation of ‘biopolitics’ to institutions and individuals (Memmi, Taieb, 2009), my work aims to explore values and ‘regimes of truth’ in the enactment of euthanasia. This problematization is based on an ethnographical fieldwork in two Belgian hospitals; one is part of the secular network, the other of the Catholic network. This division reflects the phenomenon of ‘pillarization’ which characterises the Belgian political organisation: all Belgian social institutions are structurally organized around ideological cleavages (secular, Catholic, socialist...). Since the 1990s, the question of the recomposition of these pillars has often been analysed from a theoretical point of view, although the sociological impact on daily life is relatively little studied, especially in the field of health care (Dobbelaere, Voyé, 2015). For this conference related to the ‘politics of death’, I propose a discussion of some figures of the politization of the euthanasia law, especially concerning the ‘collegial’ regulation of the euthanasic gesture. Historically, the progressive Catholic milieus have pleaded for an ‘a priori’ regulation of euthanasia (legal security is guaranteed by a ‘collegial’ committee composed of doctors, nursing team members, patient’s family and local ethics board members); in the secular network, people defend the ‘a posteriori’ regulation (the act is elaborated in the doctor-patient relationship and the legal security is guaranteed by the official declaration of the act after the completion). If this contrast was relevant in the 2000’s, at the time of the implementation of the law, I would argue that the differences
in these two sensibilities is now much less marked. Indeed, in their daily practice, Catholic caregivers emancipate themselves more and more from the institution (from a logic of help with the decision to a logic of help with the reflection) and, conversely, the secular caregivers are further aware to the social dimensions of care (from a strict doctor-patient relationship to an enlarged therapeutic relationship).

This analysis will be fed by a discussion of the politization of the euthanasia law in these two services, the trajectories of the caregivers, the daily care organization, the relations with the families, the relation to ‘agony’ and, finally, individual and collective forms of ‘rituals’ in euthanastic gestures.

**Bibliography**


---

**Human Mortality in the Context of Social Work: a Neglected Issue**

*Prof. Dr. Johanna M. Hefel, FHV - University of Applied Sciences Vorarlberg, Austria*

Undoubtedly loss, death and dying identify itself as a subject matter for social work. Social meaning and practices involving the experience and survival of loss, death and dying are subjected to historical changes. The power and influence of religious authorities and traditions are diminishing, whereas the financial and economic paradigms are becoming increasingly meaningful. Discourses concerning suicide, assisted death, the commodification and medicalisation of death and dying have a vital significance within the conflicting fields of help, control, power and politics.

The study is concerned with loss, death and dying within the context of social work.

Scientific literature provides the orientation, identifying professional social work within research, practice and education. In this regard exploration, debates and visualisation of loss, death and dying identifies itself as a subject matter for social work on three distinct levels: Within the framework of social work education, within social work science and its related scientific disciplines and within social work practice.

Within the framework of a qualitative survey of the Austrian social work curriculum the findings highlight how future social workers are prepared, accompanied and educated within the context of a generalist undergraduate education regarding the themes of loss, death and dying. The question is asked whether, and in what manner, loss, death and dying - as defined by practice, research and education - forms a part of the curriculum.

The primary findings show that loss, death and dying are hardly ever mentioned and, when they do surface as an issue, they are primarily presented from a medical viewpoint - a reflection of a societal perception.
The analysis of the four dimensions of social work knowledge, skills/action competence, communication, and personal/social competence demonstrates that loss, death and dying is restricted to the field of suicide. They point to a current trend: The viewpoint occurs primarily from a medical and psychological perspective and does not prepare students for social work activities in a variety of differing fields of loss.

The absent dying patient; a study of patient records

Laila Hov, Nurse/PHD-scholar, Center of Diaconia and professional practice, VID Specialized University, Norway

Patient involvement and participation are highlighted in Norwegian health care policy, also in end-of-life care. To examine patient participation in end-of-life care in hospital medical wards, we have analysed the electronic patient record (EPR). The patient record is a unique source of information about the social and technical structure in contemporary health care practices. In the EPR, health care professionals convert their clinical perception of the illness, treatment and care into text. This process “...involves both selection and interpretation, and although intended by clinicians to lay bare the course of illness and therapy, much else is often revealed” (Risse, G., Warner, J.H 1992 p 185). The EPR is the central tool for documentation and communication within and between health care professionals, and in 2001, the name of the record changed from “Physicians’ record” to “Patient’s record”. With the name change, the government wanted to signal the patient’s position in relation to the patient record. In this study, we have analysed 42 records from the patients’ last 4 days before death. The records were retrieved from 10 medical wards, from 3 hospitals in Norway in 2016-2017.

Our preliminary findings suggest that the EPR is a document where patient participation is poor. In 24 out of the 42 records, there were no references to conversations between the physician and patient regarding the severity of the situation or treatment level. In contrast, the patient’s next of kin were more frequently addressed on topics of treatment decisions in the records. In the nurse documentation, a total of 457 notes were made on the patients’ respiration/circulation. In contrast, a total of 11 notes were made on patients spiritual and cultural needs. These results will be further elaborated in the presentation.

Good and Bad Death as Agencies for Social Control among the Igbo

Chuu Krydz Ikwuemesi, (painter, art critic and ethno-aesthetician), Reader, Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria

The theory of good and bad death is one of the phenomena employed in Igbo culture as agency of social control. While good death includes dying at a ripe age (old age) and dying peacefully, bad death includes tragic and violent deaths (including suicide) or death caused by unusual diseases. Since the way one becomes a corpse determines how one fares in the ancestral world, people tried to live in such a way that their life and death would locate them in the realm of good death, not only to enjoy a good place in ancestrality, but also to leave their survivors with a sense of pride in the community. In other words, this feeling of pride among the survivors is as important as the place of the dead in...
the otherworld and thus informs the essences of Igbo thanatology and mortuary acts and arts. This is so because Igbo believe that the future and the past are a continuum as implied in such names as Iruka and Azuka. While the Igbo recognize that one must face up to the future at all times, they also acknowledge the potency of the past as encapsulated in the kind of legacy one leaves in that past, ukuta, and its capacity to influence the future. This paper, therefore, explores the meanings and social significations of good and bad deaths and their capacity to influence the legacies of the past and promises of the future for the dying, the dead, and bereaved among the Igbo and how the phenomenon has evolved through postcolonial realities as an agency for social control and factor in vernacular thanatology.

Banks as deathscapes for the bereaved

Annika Jonsson, Karlstad University, Sweden

Based on a small study conducted in Sweden, this presentation explores the position of bereaved individuals when managing bank accounts of the deceased. The empirical material consists of interviews with bereaved and bank tellers, and blogs where people write about their experiences of visiting banks as executors of an estate. Taking care of an estate tends to be arduous work for a number of reasons, not least when it involves face-to-face interaction with bank tellers. Three issues has been identified – the spatial arrangements which generally does not allow for privacy, the attitude of bank tellers and uncertainties when it comes to how bank accounts and safe deposit boxes can and cannot be accessed. Taking the notion of grief-related vulnerability seriously, bank practices that appear to be fairly common risk violating the bereaved by forcing them to administrate the deceased’s bank account in an unsafe environment governed by seemingly arbitrary rules. There is also a financial side to this as several of the interviewees were told to pay the bills of the estate with their own money, when bills in fact cannot be inherited. The bank tellers, on the other hand, talked about the general lack of training and confusion in relation to estates. Banks, it is argued, constitute a form of bureaucratic deathscapes, where the loss is shared with strangers in a context coloured by corporate effectiveness and power relations.

Between Life and Death: Constructing 'missingness' in Israel

Ori Katz, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel

This presentation focuses on the construction of the category of 'missingness' in relation to missing persons in Israel. As an ambiguous category in-between life and death, missingness makes the classification and categorization processes difficult. Moreover, while missing soldiers in Israel stimulate public resonance and the state offers wide resources in order to trace them and to support their families, missing civilians do not get the same institutional and organizational underpinnings. Thus, in addition to the ambiguity and uncertainty concerning missing civilians' fate, the people who have been left-behind have to deal also with the absence of cultural scripts.

In 2015, a voluntary association named 'Bil'adeihem' ('without them') was established, following the founders’ son disappearance few months earlier. For the first time in Israel, a few dozen families of
the missing came together, to raise public awareness and to construct cultural scripts of missingness and coping with missingness. Based on ethnographic field work of ‘Bil’adeihem’, I will draw the negotiations over the missingness category, its character and its public acceptance. Among other activities of the association, the analysis focuses on public displays, meetings of families, legislative efforts, negotiations with the media, and in-depth interviews with main activists. Other than the families of the missing, different actors take part in these activities, such as parliament members, public relations persons and so on. Thus, a relational network negotiates meanings and practices of missingness, both inside the network and outside - towards the state and the public. In contrast to a common viewpoint of scholars who frame families of the missing in passive terms, such as the ‘frozen grief’ framework, this research highlights the families’ active attempts to construct cultural scripts in this field. Findings reveal how this relational network uses assumptions concerning life and death to undercut and reconstruct these assumptions themselves.

**Appropriating the Living and the Dead: the “Martyred Heroines” of the American Civil Rights Movement**

*Victoria Knierim, Samford University, USA*

On Sunday morning, September 15, 1963, a bomb exploded at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Minutes before the blast, five young girls, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, Denise McNair, Addie May Collins, and Addie May’s younger sister, Sarah, were giggling in front of the mirror in a downstairs restroom as they primped for the youth worship service that was about to begin. About the time Addie Mae reached over to tie the sash on Denise’s dress and Sarah turned to head upstairs to the service, a bomb planted outside the restroom window by members of the Klu Klux Klan was detonated, killing four of the girls and severely injuring the fifth. In his “Eulogy for the Martyred Children,” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. assured mourners that the girls “did not die in vain.” He proclaimed that “they died nobly” as “the martyred heroines of a holy crusade for freedom and human dignity.”

While it is true that this tragic event did mark an important turning point in the American Civil Rights Movement, this paper seeks to look beyond the more general outcomes to take a closer look at the collateral damage that occurs when children unwittingly become martyrs for a cause. In this paper, I will examine the criteria for martyrdom as it relates to social and political capital. I will address the following questions: What constitutes a noble death? Why were the four young girls memorialized when the two boys killed later that day were not? What happens to the living when we appropriate their dead? What is our responsibility to our martyrs, both living and dead?

**Politics of Human Value: Death Suggested by Collectivity**

*Jana Králová, Centre for Death and Society, University of Bath*

In his essay, *The Physical Effect on the Individual of the Idea of Death Suggested by the Collectivity*, Marcel Mauss (1979) reported that it is possible for a person to die simply because they know or believe (which is the same thing), that their social group wishes them to be dead. He suggests that
that it is the fact that a person’s death is wanted by their community and that the excluded person is fully aware of this desire, that may lead to their physical death. At the time he was referring to witchcraft, prohibitions, and taboos which he believed to have disappeared.

Following the introduction of relevant conceptual framework/s, I will present up to 3 empirical examples of identity politics of race, citizenship, gender, class and/or their intersections threatening life of an individual, groups or populations. That is those who routinely find themselves having their life chances profoundly restricted, compromised or down right diminished due to the reduction of their human value ‘by collectivity’. I will also discuss the social dynamics employed in the process of this devaluation and expose collectively perpetuated structural violence which in its most extreme circumstances leads to physical death.

In the concluding part of the paper, I will consider various forms of resistance and agency which may mitigate some of these devaluations. Equally, I will also expose circumstances under which agency as well as resistance cease to be theoretically and practically operative. Thus, leaving those concerned dying in the ‘onto-epistemic non-space’: that is outside of structure-agency nexus.

**Theories of biopolitics and bioeconomy: implications for assisted death issue**

Anna E. Kubiak, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland

The concept of biopower, according to Foucault, is a broadly defined system of power-knowledge expressed in discourses, penetrating and supervising social behaviour. Combining Foucault’s and Agamben’s theories we can say that life has been politicized and economized, and that ‘bare life’ dominates public discussion. The main political problems of our times concern private life (which becomes public): conception and birth, reproduction and sexuality, illness and death. Normalizing power reduces the subject to a corporeal life. The norms become more important than the juridical system of law. In ‘societies of control,’ existence itself becomes the object of impersonal logic and the reign of calculability and instrumental rationality. The individual who wishes to act on his/her body has to go through procedures in which authorities such as doctors and lawyers expect him/her to discover the truth about his/her decision. In the case of end-of-life issues, one has to convince the physician that what one is demanding for oneself is a ‘rightful death,’ a ‘good death,’ or a ‘death with dignity.’ The ability to express one’s wishes requires special knowledge about the sorts and ways of arguing, about special formulas. One has to convince authorities that one is going to use one’s body reasonably. It is not a question of broadening individual autonomy but rather a different form of social control in which individual decisions must be congruent with social norms. Bioeconomy is not only a general strategy of power over life (in the works of Michel Foucault) but also produces and reproduces life in old and new hybrid forms. The challenging status of the life sciences comes on the one hand from its revolutionary results, and on the other, from its connectedness to the processes of economization of this knowledge and commodification of life (blood, embryos, genes, organs, stem cells) and practices (transplants, cloning, genetic modification, reproduction, tissue engineering, stem cells technologies).
The Politics of Postmortem Altruism: Willed Body Programs, 1940-1980

Susan C. Lawrence¹ and Susan E. Lederer². ¹Department of History, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 43210, USA; ²Department of Medical History & Bioethics, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, 53706, USA

Between 1940 and 1980, the anatomical cadaver population in the United States underwent dramatic transformation. Whereas anatomists had once relied on state anatomy acts that made the bodies of the indigent and unclaimed dead available for research and education, these medical professionals in the 1950s reluctantly embraced using bodies made available through pre-mortem arrangement and wills from a diverse group of Americans. Prompted by concern over acute cadaver shortages, medical schools in California led the nation in developing willed body programs to formalize the transfer of the dead body to a medical institution. The rapid success of these programs and the spontaneous willingness of individuals to donate their bodies to “science” took anatomists by surprise. Some were reluctant to accept donated bodies, uneasy about the extra attention required to keep in touch with relatives who wanted cremains returned to them. Others were nervous about the legal status of “willed” bodies. At mid-century, no state laws unambiguously permitted individuals to make such postmortem gifts. As more and more people volunteered to donate their eyes for corneal transplants and their bodies for dissection, however, activists in a few states started to lobby for legislation that would make pre-mortem arrangements for post-mortem gifts explicitly allowed. By 1954, eight states, including California, had passed such laws. The need for cadavers meshed with demand for legal clarity around donated body parts between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s, until the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws drafted the first Uniform Anatomical Gift Act (UAGA) for states to consider. Most states with medical schools had adopted a version of UAGA by 1970. This paper analyzes the changing politics of death, dissection, and organ donation in mid-century America.

Lives worth living: Moral and political entanglements in death and dying with dementia

Natashe Lemos Dekker, PhD Candidate - University of Amsterdam, Postdoc Fellow - Leiden University Medical Centre, Netherlands

The question which lives are ‘worth living’ is a moral and political one that points at how lives and deaths are normatively framed. The value placed on a life, as well as moral considerations of which lives and deaths can be considered ‘good’, is inherently political.

These dynamics become most visible in instances where life and death fail to conform to normative expectations or are relegated towards the margins of society. In this paper, I discuss how the end of life with dementia is managed through such moral and political frames, by paying attention to the voices of people with dementia and their family members who consider the end of life with dementia as undignified. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork in nursing homes for people with dementia in the Netherlands, I explore how they welcomed death over a life with dementia or even sought forms of assisted dying within legal and institutional frameworks.
Post-Mortem Politics in the Post-Heroic Condition: Heroic Capital, Leadership Capital and Loss Framing

Udi Lebel, Ariel University, Israel, Begins-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Israel

The Israeli military bereaved families are classified as a unified, exalted community, whose personal loss was given national meaning, while ensuring the recognition, appreciation and dissemination of the meaning of the trauma they have experienced they hold "Heroic Capital" which ascribe them "Symbolic Capital" in the public discourse.

Upon Israel’s entry into the "post-heroic" New Wars era, more and more groups began coping with "the asymmetrical war" and its prices: families of civilians victims which died in terror attacks, some of were murdered after taking an active part in attempting to stop the attacker with their own bodies; families of civilians’ casualties which were part of private policing organizations, security contractors and companies, rescue organizations, and even state organizations as the Israel's Red Cross, Fire & Rescue Authority, and even Palestinian collaborators' casualties which were assassinated by the Palestinian authority.

As losses among these groups became more and more prevalent, their families began demanding equal heroic and national framing and positioning as given to fallen military soldiers (via legal status, memorialization, belonging to medical and psycho-social treatment and rehabilitation). Families began to feel that only such official framing measures would enable provision of the necessary level of meaning required to them in processing their loss. These requests were met with a sweeping opposition by the Defense Ministry, who sought to preserve the national heroic capital of national loss exclusively for the 'prestige' military deaths.

This research examines the various "bereavement clashes" in the New Wars era and introduce the terms Loss re-framing and counter-hegemonic bereavement into the field of recovery, rehabilitation, relative deprivation and post-traumatic growth.

*This paper cannot be presented at conference but the author welcomes interested delegates to contact him: ulebel@gmail.com

The Politics of Death Ritual in Urban China: Religious Variations on Secular Socialist Funerals

Huwy-min Lucia Liu, Assistant Professor, Division of Humanities, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

In contemporary Shanghai, the default death ritual for ordinary people is memorial meetings”—a secular civil funeral. The defining part of memorial meeting is a memorial speech. In this speech, everyone is memorialized as model socialist citizens who are “comrades” and who are selfless, enduring bitterness, diligent, and frugal. Despite its being a secular socialist civil memorialization, however, I found that urban Chinese in Shanghai have created religious variations out of these memorial meetings. Yet, how do people create religious variation out of a secular socialist funeral that deliberately denies any recognition of spirits or the afterlife? What do religious variations of secular
socialist funerals look like? How do seemingly incommensurables ideas of persons and death could become commensurable without silencing some of them in one single ritual?

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Shanghai between 2010 and 2011, this paper explores the politics of death rituals through three different kinds of religious variations of memorial meetings: folk religion, Buddhism, and Protestantism. Specifically, I found that there are two approaches to create religious variations out of secular socialist rituals: a “preface-appendix” approach and a “reframing” approach. The first approach is usually associated with folk religions and Buddhism and the second is more likely to appear in some Protestant versions of memorial meetings. While the former allows pluralist understandings of self who are socialist and religious in conjunction, the latter leads to more controversial, singularly defined subjects who are religious first and socialist second. Ritual thus facilitates pluralism when it is “merely” a public commitment to social convention instead of when it serves as personal testimony.

Precarious Lives: An Exploration of the Politics of Female Death by Suicide

Sharon Mallon, The Open University

The gender based nature of suicide and suicide related behaviour is now largely accepted. Over the past two decades, studies have made a significant contribution to our understanding of issues relating masculinity and suicide. Theories exploring what is referred to as the ‘crisis of masculinity’ have linked the male gender to increased levels of suicidality in a variety of ways; including an increased biological fragility, increased levels of stress in men’s lives and reluctance to seek help. Furthermore, depictions of men as being reluctant to seek help for emotional distress have resulted in high profile campaigns which specifically target this gender.

By contrast, female only theories of death by suicide, and those which apply existing theories to female only cohorts, are harder to identify in the literature. In this paper, I will argue this lack of studies highlights how the significance and understanding of female suicide has stalled as male studies have increased. In particular, in contrast to male suicide little attention has been paid to issues relating to female identity or the particular issues facing women and how they contribute to female deaths.

Examples from the literature, supported by brief case study examples of female suicides, will be used to illustrate how the treatment of issues such as help seeking and suicide, allude to the notion that the behaviour of women in this regard is less meaningful than their male counter parts. I will demonstrate how these representations of female suicide persist in academic language and emerge into popular discourse. In concluding I will argue that the de-politicisation of female suicide is particularly concerning because a discourse which ‘others’ or ignores female suicidality reinforces the idea that it is less of an issue than male suicide at a time when levels of female suicide are also rising.
Ideal breakdowns: infrastructure and necropolitics in modern Russia

Sergei Mokhov, Laboratory of death and dying social research (CISR), Russia

The death care industry in contemporary Russia, which inherits the Soviet infrastructural model, has a number of continuities with the Soviet experience of death. The main features of post-Soviet death culture are spatiality and the dysfunctionality of funeral infrastructure: ownerless or illegal cemeteries, the lack of roads, absence of refrigerators in mortuaries, grave digging in ice and so forth.

As a result of the Soviet experience, people understand infrastructural dysfunctionality as a “normal” condition and have come to interpret it as a kind of game of “quest” in which solving the infrastructural problems in itself becomes part of the death ritual. This infrastructural dysfunctionality produces the specific social order and cultural form of contemporary Russian funerary rites.

In a situation of legal uncertainty, the death care industry in modern Russia may be described as an informal network of various agents — local officials, service providers, business owners — selling and buying access to the infrastructure. Infrastructural dysfunctionality is supported by different actors (local government and business) and start to be a part of trading and soft political control.

The paper is based on ethnographic 2 years fieldwork in several funeral agencies.

Delusions and lies: death denial in Mexico’s war on drugs

Dr Claire Moon (LSE) and Dr Javier Treviño-Rangel (CIDE, Aguascalientes, México)

This paper explores the phenomenon of social denial in the context of Mexico’s war on organised crime, which began in 2006. This ‘war’ has killed around 200,000 Mexican citizens and disappeared around 30,000, not including (unknown numbers of) undocumented migrants. It continues to kill and disappear over 800 people per month. Perpetrators include organised criminal gangs and state security personnel. Official investigations are rare and impunity rules. News and other media regularly circulate descriptions of executions and mass killings, including images of publicly displayed corpses and dismembered body parts. In addition, international and national human rights organisations produce high profile and widely-publicised reports on the violence. No-one can claim not to know.

The problem we explore in this paper is cast around the question posed by Stan Cohen of ‘how ordinary, even good people, will not react appropriately to knowledge of the terrible. Why, when faced by knowledge of others’ suffering and pain—particularly the suffering and pain resulting from what are called “human rights violations”—does “reaction” so often take the form of denial, avoidance, passivity, indifference, rationalisation or collusion’? (Cohen, 1993). This paper analyses social denial in Mexico by drawing on qualitative interviews with 68 ‘ordinary Mexicans’ out of which around half knew, directly or indirectly, one or more people who had been killed or disappeared. It shows that social denial of death and violence in Mexico is complex and contradictory, and has two distinguishing features. First, it operates as a psychological defence mechanism which simultaneously puts those in denial at risk. We call this the ‘denial paradox’. And second, we show that denial has particular social function insofar as it draws a symbolic boundary around the victims. The paper concentrates on two important consequences of this: the stigmatisation and estrangement of the victims, and the collusion of bystanders in ongoing atrocities. In shifting the focus to the bystanders,
it challenges the regular optic of atrocity research which concentrates primarily on victims and perpetrators.

**Collective grief across groups embedded in intractable conflict**

*Cathy Nicholson, London School of Economics*

Grieving for a close relative killed by the enemy during intractable conflict, gives rise to both personal grieving for the loss of a loved as well as embarking on a difficult journey that positions the conflict on a particular personal footing. Using data from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the political bereavement model reflects how grieving Israeli parents search for meaning about their loss against the backdrop of a national hegemonic meta narrative. This encompasses how collective historical representations of a perceived existential threat from the Palestinians, sets the stage around soldiers being killed in exceptionally heroic and unavoidable circumstances. Through this process, a collective mobilisation of loss ensures that the memories of those lost is commanded into a permanent political living reality, mediated across national media and other channels of communication. Thus, the intractability of the conflict becomes even more entrenched, as the memories of those lost become symbols closely related to the national ethos of conflict. However, in recent years a move away from this positioning has emerged, whereby some relatives from both Israeli and Palestinian communities have come together to explore the possibilities of closure with each other. Coming face to face with the enemy, whose countrymen have been responsible for the death of a close relative, opens opportunities to grieve together in search for alternative meaningful narratives that attempt to resist the meta narrative of intractability. The Parents Circle Families Forum is one such example, where members painfully discuss switching from an imagined future embedded in conflict, to one where hopes for a more peaceful future becomes a desired alternative. This phenomenon will be discussed through the lens of social psychology with the emphasis on a dialogical epistemology of meaning making, reflecting the experiences of this joint endeavour.

**The role of medical examiners in the standardization of assisted suicide in Switzerland. An expression of biopower?**

*Alexandre Pillonel, Researcher, and Marc-Antoine Berthod, Professor, University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Western Switzerland (EESP – Lausanne)*

In Switzerland, according to article 115 of the Penal Code, assistance with suicide is not punishable as long as three conditions are met: that the assistance was not provided for a selfish reason, that the person requesting assistance is capable of discernment, and that the person him or herself accomplishes the final act. Assistance with suicide is thus not a guaranteed right. Its fulfilment is tolerated if the abovementioned conditions are met and if recommendations concerning good practice are respected. Recommendations are specified by associations committed to “the right to die with dignity”, of which the main active association in French-speaking Switzerland is EXIT A.D.M.D. (association pour le droit de mourir dans la dignité), which recently enlarged its criteria of inclusion to age-related incapacitating polypathology, as well as to cases of intolerable suffering. Faced with this
legislative vacuum, different cantonal authorities nevertheless verify whether each case of assisted suicide conforms with those recommendations, by way of forensic medical examiners, and police officers, who make official reports at the scene of death, subsequently sent to the state prosecutor (Cantonal). These different actors appear as agents monitoring the “best practices” put in place around assisted suicide.

According to Foucault, one of the main functions of medicine is normalization. Warden of morality, it also plays a judicial role by dividing up the normal from the abnormal, the licit from the illicit, in a society where power is no longer based exclusively on law. Thus medicine became the necessary base for the establishment of biopower. Yet in Switzerland, in the case of assisted suicide where normative standards are still not completely established, it remains to be seen to what extent and at what level normative standardization of this manner of dying, across populations, operates.

On the basis about twenty interviews conducted with forensic scientists and realized within the framework of ongoing ethnographic research on assisted suicide in Switzerland, this presentation describes first of all the ways these practitioners estimate the conformity of the indications of death by assisted suicide with the recommendations formulated by medical associations, as well as by the associations who facilitate the “right to die with dignity”. Moreover, the presentation then shows how this evaluation may contribute both to the construction of standards and to the protection of morality. The objective is to highlight the role played by post-mortem medical examination in the standardization of assisted suicide.

States of Mourning: A Quantitative Analysis of National Mournings across European Countries

Mihai Stelian Rusu, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania, Department of Sociology and Social Work

Despite their growing incidence over the last three decades, national days of mourning received curiously sparse attention throughout social sciences in general and death studies in particular. This study investigates the 327 national mournings observed across European countries between 1989 and 2017 in terms of their national variance, temporal dynamics, typology of events that led to their declaration, and victimology of the persons mourned in these situations. In terms of regional variance, we found that countries from the Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and the Balkans have declared significantly more national days of mourning in comparison to countries from Western and especially Northern Europe. Most national mournings have been declared following accidents (38%) and the death of a public figure (25%). Terrorist attacks (15%), political and military violence (12%), and natural disasters (10%) represent the other causes of instituting national mourning. In terms of the victims’ characteristics, in 65% of the cases, those mourned were nationals who died at home, while 15% were nationals who died abroad. Although only in 1% of the cases those mourned were non-nationals who died on the territory of the country who declared national mourning, 19% were instituted to honor non-nationals who died abroad, such as in terror attacks (9/11) or international disasters (the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami). Drawing on a Durkheimian-inspired conceptualization of national mournings as political rites of solidarity and reconciliation, this paper finds empirical support for the thesis that the frequency with which European countries declare national mourning is a
negative function of a society’s level of social integration. The series of linear regression models we developed show that the variance in terms of frequency of declaring national mournings is accounted by indicators such as the Social Cohesion Index, Gini coefficient, GDP per capita, and the Human Development Index.

There’s No Place for Death in a New City: The Creation of a Hospice

Zana Saunders, PhD Candidate, The Open University

Milton Keynes, the much misunderstood new city that sprawls across Buckinghamshire countryside, growing to a population just under 300,000 in 2018 holds a dark secret. When it was planned, there was no room for death and dying. Developers focused on the young, the employed, the upwardly mobile. They aspired for a youthful, active, socially aware community living together and sharing social, educational, industrial, retail and leisure spaces. They were less concerned about the sick, the elderly, the marginalised, the dying (Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1970).

Using primary and secondary sources, this paper investigates the origins of Milton Keynes, uncovering the early stages from the original plans and early development. It will also uncover how this neglect of acknowledging and providing for the dying empowered two women to create a hospice. Set to infiltrate and dominate the local population and society for the next 30+ years, this paper includes the barriers and helpers along the way to their current position as a charitable organisation, firmly established in the local community through its highly vocal and pro-active fundraising campaigns locally leading it to become one of the most popular hospices for inpatient death in the country.

Milton Keynes Development Corporation (1970a) The Plan for Milton Keynes Volume One City Print Bletchley

Pushing Up Mare’s Tails: Using Creative Writing and the Essay to Argue for Access to the Good Death & Dignity in Death for All

Amy Shea, University of Glasgow

When someone dies in the United States, who is homeless, in serve poverty, disenfranchised from society, or without family or friends, there is no easy route to resting in peace.

If you die in an alley, on the street, or in an orchard you will be held in the county morgue for up to thirty days while the coroner tries to confirm whether you have family, an estate to pay for disposition, or any pre-planned funeral arrangements. If no one claims your corpse or there’s no money to be had, you’re given a direct cremation. You’re then put into a 6 x 9 x 4-inch box, labeled with identifying information, and logged in the county database. You’ll be kept in a locked cage with other unclaimed or unfinanced souls until the morgue acquires enough of your kind to bury you together in a mass grave. There will be a quiet multi-denominational ceremony that may be advertised, you may have family present who’s been found and notified; but, once you have been interred, you cannot be removed or dug up.1
My essay combines personal observations and research that bring to light indigent deaths, and how they are handled in the United States. This paper attempts to make the unseen seen; the voiceless heard. The presentation will focus on how creative writing and the personal essay is an effective vehicle for delivering important messages, engaging in political activism, and presenting research to enlighten the general public.

Reference:

1. Matlock, Kelly A. Lead Deputy Coroner at the Fresno County Sheriff’s and Coroner’s Office. Personal Interview. 12 Jan 2015

Prolonged Grief Disorder in Childhood? Politics of Knowledge on how long a Child should mourn over Deceased

Dr Miriam Sitter, Sociologist and political scientist, University of Hildesheim, Germany

By the 1960s, bereavement support in Germany was shaped by the assumption that children are too young to confront the topics of dying, death and grief. More than forty years later it has become clear that child grief is different from adult grief. Therefore, grieving children require a special form of consciousness. This growing consciousness is reflected in the founding of numerous social institutions like Grieving Centers and Cafes, Psychological Counseling Facilities as well as Outpatient Hospice and Palliative Care Centers. There, children individually or in groups are supported in their loss experiences according to their age. There is no doubt that the professionals and volunteers predominantly gain their knowledge from a recognized Development Psychological Knowledge Culture. In particular, Piaget’s work sets the standard for a sensitive understanding of childlike perceptions and ideas of death. The preferred use of this knowledge determines the current debate about the relevance of the mourning processes of children not being tabooed, but rather carefully ‘decrypted’. However, this attentive decryption and its open understanding of mourning runs could be limited by the current consideration of including the prolonged grief disorder (PGD) in the International Classification of Diseases’ 11 (ICD-11). Because of the inclusion of this diagnosis, which could be given to grieving people and possibly to children who mourn longer than six months, conflicts with the de-stigmatizing attitude of regarding the (temporal) variability of child grieving as normal and healthy. Finally, “grief varies widely in its nature, intensity and duration” (Walter 2005, p. 72).

The presentation builds on the conference topic Debates around life and death and personhood: A look into the German debate will reveal how different politics of knowledge of a medicalpsychiatric discipline versus social-voluntary practice, contribute to child grieving being increasingly interpreted along the respective lines of norms, negotiations and meaning-positings. In the sense of Foucault, not only death, but also the duration of child grief is a “vertical, absolutely thin line” (Foucault 2003, p. 173), which can be interpreted differently. Therefore, prolonged child grief can either be pathologized as a grief disorder or communicated as an expression of a deeply human, intensive and personal bond of a child to his deceased.
When science fails: ‘extreme forensics’ and the politics of postmortem identification

Kathryn Smith, PhD candidate, Face Lab/School of Art and Design, Liverpool John Moores University

Being identified in death is recognized as a basic human right, and has significant legal, social and cultural implications. Yet increasingly, narratives about unidentified deaths are reaching us via the media, usually a result of a single-event mass fatality, and less frequently as a result of concentrated, clandestine attempts to cross national borders.

Adopting a participant-observer perspective, this paper examines the politics of what it means to enter the medico-legal system in South Africa as an unidentified individual, and how the system – and those tasked with carrying out its policies and practices – copes with its enormous case load.

Ultimately this raises two questions: ‘Who forms part of the large post-mortem population residing in the country’s mortuaries?’ and ‘What practices might be introduced to address the crisis?’

This paper takes the view that the numbers of unidentified dead in South Africa are akin to a mass fatality event (and should therefore be addressed according to Disaster Victim Identification protocol) yet the situation does not attract the same attention, despite the fact that many of the country’s forensically-trained specialists are on the national response team register. I consider two contexts that offer useful parallels (and possibly lessons) for the South African context: the campaign to identify those who perish attempting to cross the Mediterranean led by Dr Cristina Cattaneo (LABANOF, Milan) and Operation ID at Texas State University, supporting the investigation of unidentified deaths in the US/Mexican border zone, led by Dr Kate Spradley. Both represent initiatives set up in the face of political apathy, with barely minimal resources, but which may end up innovating practices of forensic human identification more broadly.

This research is supported by a National Research Foundation (South Africa) Freestanding Doctoral Award.

Death with Dignity and the Politics of the Right to Die after Auschwitz

Jared Stark, Professor of Comparative Literature, Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, FL, USA

This paper focuses on the concept of death with dignity and its decisive role in the politics of the right, drawing on my book, A Death of One’s Own: Literature, Law, and the Right to Die, Northwestern University Press. The political salience of the concept of death with dignity has derived largely from its emergence as an alternative to the tainted vocabulary of euthanasia, despite the fact that dignity remains notoriously undefined in key legal and political contexts. However, as this paper...
demonstrates, the concept of death with dignity, as it becomes central to the legal and political history of the right to die, is nonetheless haunted by the murderous notion of “life unworthy of life,” which provided the ideological framework for the Nazi “euthanasia” killing centers as well as for the death camps. Whereas the Nazi state deployed a biopolitical (or thanatopolitical) logic in the extermination of those categorized as unworthy of life, in the post-war period it is ironically Auschwitz and the conditions of existence it has come to represent that occupy the position of the “unworthy of life” against which the image of death with dignity is defined. To assess the implications of this persistent and unsettling connection between death with dignity and Holocaust death, I turn in the last section of this paper to the thought and testimony of Holocaust survivor and philosopher Jean Améry, whose writings, I suggest, undertake a vital reconceptualization of the concept of death with dignity.

The Politics surrounding the administration of the capital punishment in India

Ninni Susan Thomas, Centre on the Death Penalty, National Law University, Delhi, India

This paper will explore how, in its administration, the death penalty in India is intrinsically political as the capital cases deemed worthy of being fast-tracked to execution have been centred around electoral gains than a pursuit for ‘justice’. Executions happen in cases where there is a perfect storm of intense public expectation and lowered procedural safeguards.

Alessandro Portelli postulated that in terror trials, the state machinery reduces the event to an isolated act, decontextualized from the social and political turmoil precipitating that event. The State constructs an official narrative of victimisation that flattens and reduces history, and imposes a single truth which is backed by righteous rhetoric. Although the death penalty has been imposed for a range of offences in the last decade, it is a curious statistic that despite most death row convicts belonging to social minorities, the only persons executed have belonged to a specific religious minority convicted of terror offences. This paper will traverse through the political context and examine whether anti-terror legislations have been implemented to disproportionately target religious minorities.

In India, there is violence that is founded in a rejection of the majoritarian order in many parts, like in Kashmir and the Naxalite belt but the State has responded to them differently. While terrorism is often invoked by the State to justify the death penalty, statistics have shown that the State rarely invokes the death penalty for terror offences in India’s conflict-ridden zones.

The paper will therefore explore how the death penalty, which is seemingly grounded in a neutral framework of matching the punishment with the crime, is nonetheless inescapably political.

What are palliation problems represented to be? Comparing two Norwegian policy documents on palliation

Lisbeth Thoresen, Nurse/Associate Professor, Department of Health Sciences, University of Oslo, Norway
In December 2017, the Department of Health and Care Services in Norway launched an Official Norwegian Report on palliation, named *On life and death* (in Norwegian: På liv og død). An official Norwegian Report is the outcome of the work of a committee, constituted by the government or a ministry, in this case, the minister of Health and Care Services, Bent Høie. Such reports, on different aspects of society, work as a background for political discussions and policy development, and are often referred to. The last time a report on a similar topic was launched in Norway was in 1999, 18 years ago. In the context of medicine and health care, this is quite a long period, and my assumption is that changes have taken place when it comes to what are described as challenges, as well as solutions in these reports. The aim of this paper is therefore to examine *what are the (palliation) problems represented to be* in the two reports, and what has changed? This approach to analysing policy documents is borrowed from Carol Bacchi and described in her book *Analysing Policy: What’s the problem represented to be?* (2009). Bacchi examines how governing takes place by analysing how problems are represented in political documents. Policy is very much about ‘fixing’ things. That something needs to be fixed or solved indicates that there is a problem, or as Bacchi claims: problems are created. Bacchi describes problematisation as the way something is put forward or represented as a problem. By studying how policy addresses solutions and actions to solve problems, it is possible to understand how something is created or understood as a problem. Of particular interest to Bacchi, as well as to this paper, is also to understand more of the roles of experts and professionals in these reports. Also; what is left unproblematic or silenced in the reports?

### Between the Dead Body and the Body-Politic: Exhumation in Singapore

*Ruth E. Toulson, Maryland Institute College of Art, USA*

Within anthropology of late, many scholars have focused on the corpse as a potent political symbol, addressing the state’s manipulation of dead bodies in contexts of violent regime change. Yet, even stable states make the manipulation of corpses a key strategy of governance. Without attention to this mechanism, we are left with an incomplete analysis of the quotidian strategies of political power.

In this paper, I address this lacuna by examining the case of Singapore. In this land-scarce city-state, the government has ordered the destruction of every cemetery but one. Even in the cemetery that remains in operation, burial is only guaranteed for fifteen years. In any context, to exhume the bodies of kin would likely horrify, but it is doubly horrifying for Chinese Singaporeans who believe that their fortune and health stem from the fact that the dead are appropriately buried.

While the state justifies its actions on grounds of practicality—that there simply is not room for a burial culture in this densely populated city-state—the order to exhume is, I argue, politically charged. By destroying graves, and therefore fracturing intimate relationships between the living and the dead, the state creates conditions of uncertainty, which are used to justify highly interventionist rule.

In this paper, I probe the scope and limitations of state power. Can a state, for example, really make a person forget a dead loved one? More broadly, I argue that mortuary ritual must be returned to the centre of scholarly focus if we are to truly understand the subtle operation of political power and what it means to live through a period of massive and forced religious change. As a whole, my discussion...
elucidates how the corpse and the state intersect, offering a new analysis of the connection between the dead body and the body-politic.

The politics of ageing in secure forensic settings: exploring the needs of Older Service Users

Renske Visser1, Fiona Parrott2, Douglas MacInnes2, and Janet Parrott1. 1 Oxleas NHSFT, 2 Canterbury Christchurch University

Recent legislation (The Care Act 2014) emphasises the importance of offering relevant services to older people irrespective of their location. People who have committed serious offences while mentally ill may be detained for many years in in-patient forensic settings and some enter such services in later life. It is noted that the prison population is ageing and it is predicted that service users in secure forensic settings will increasingly be older as well. Importantly, it is argued that the life expectancy of people with severe mental illness is much lower compared to other people. This prompts questions on how older service users reflect on their futures in a secure setting.

The paper will examine what is currently known about the views and experiences of older people in secure forensic services. Secondly, it will discuss the findings of a quality project conducted at Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, which explored the experience and needs of older service users (50 and above). The paper will discuss the temporality of being in an in-patient forensic setting and the need for people (independent of age) to ‘move on’ to other wards. Specifically, this paper will demonstrate how this need of ‘moving on’ impacts older service users’ everyday lives and routine. The temporality of forensic settings affects notions of place attachment. Furthermore, it will discuss the tension between current end-of-life care policy, which emphasises choice and the notion of ageing and dying ‘in place’, and the lived experience of older forensic service users who often have very little choice in terms of place of care and place of death.

The everyday micro-politics of encountering death in public space

Professor Craig Young, Manchester Metropolitan University

Literatures concerning the ‘politics of death’ have generally been concerned with the Politics of death, such as necropolitics, links to ‘the nation’, national identity and memory, and state regulation of death. In this paper I argue that there is scope for developing an understanding of the micro-politics of death in everyday and public space. Recent trends in death, disposal and commemoration – such as spontaneous or roadside shrines, ashes scattering, and different forms of commemorative practice – have been linked with a desequestration of death. In turn, these practices mean that death is increasingly encountered in public space – and importantly, it is other people’s death and mourning that is encountered. These trends are stretching understandings of private vs. public space, where death ‘should be’ located, and who is responsible for it in the everyday. This paper therefore explores some of the complex ways in which these emerging forms of marking death in the landscape are encountered and contested. If the construction of spontaneous shrines or ashes scattering is symptomatic of the ‘de-sequestration’ of death, then there is a complex politics surrounding making
private grief more visible in public space, the changing of space by unofficial and often unregulated forms of memorialisation, and the blurring of public and private space as ‘appropriate’ arenas for expressing grief. Literature in Human Geography directs us away from studying urban public space in relation to an assumed set of norms about what public space is or should be i.e. as space necessarily open to all. Instead, “the ‘public city’ is a product of the particular political labours which seek to make particular publics, rather than the product of a shared commitment to a normative ideal of city life as the ‘being together of strangers’.” (Iveson 2007: 208). This directs us to analyse the political struggles which go into making different kinds of publics and spaces. However, such literatures have failed to address the role of death and the dead in these struggles and encounters. While introducing spontaneous memorials into public space may provide a way for those who mourn to negotiate their grief and continuing bonds with the dead, encountering them can constitute something quite different for those unrelated to those dead and pursuing their everyday, mundane activities of commuting, visiting the beach or a National Trust property on holiday, or walking the dog. This paper considers the nature of encounters with the disposal of and spontaneous memorialisation of other people’s death. It will explore this as an issue in key areas such as: UK local authority attempts to regulate roadside/spontaneous shrines; issues surrounding the covert scattering of ashes in public space and leisure spaces; and an auto-ethnography of engagement with a spontaneous shrine on a beach in north Wales. Each case raises questions about the micro-politics of encounter with other people’s death and grief in public space, and how this reshapes our relationship with landscape, place and our mourning of humans and non-humans.

A Post Traumatic Death: The Devastating Impacts of Financial Poverty upon Victims of Murder & Suicide

Hasina Zaman, CEO, Compassionate Funerals

In September 2014, Tania aged only 26, was fatally stabbed in front of her six-year old child by a drug dealer who had broken into her home. National press outlets sensationaly covered the court proceedings that followed. But none dared take a peek behind the funeral director’s curtain to see the tragedies continuing to unfold long after her murder. If they had, they would have seen a battle to rival the drama of the courtroom: for it was there that I fought alongside Tania’s dazed mother, Mary, as she desperately approached charities to raise money for her daughter’s funeral. It was a process mired by confusion, delays and endless paperwork, taking four long and agonising months to complete. Because, despite Tania’s body being released in November 2014, it was not until March 2015 that the pennies and pounds needed finally came in: a fact that left Tania’s last wishes for herself eternally unfulfilled, and her family further traumatised.

As a Funeral Director, I help clients deal with a wide spectrum of trauma. But in most cases, the grieving process is made bearable, even beautiful, through the swift arranging of a funeral honoring their loved one’s wishes, as gifted by funds ready to be accessed.
But in cases of murder or suicide, the correlation between financial poverty, the abused lives lived and the dignity denied even in death is a far too-common trifecta. A lack of financial freedom not only continues to lead to the murder of a woman every 2.5 days and the suicides of over 400 women a year, but creates untold trauma post-death. And whilst the #MeToo movement hasn’t reached the doors of the funeral industry just yet, the time to address the financial inequalities suffered in death by women abused in life, is here.

Bioethics and pediatric Palliative Care

Susan E. Zinner, MSJ, MHA, JD, Professor, School of Public & Environmental Affairs, Indiana University Northwest

For providers, parents and family members caring for a child with a terminal illness receiving palliative care, there are a number of bioethical issues that may arise in this setting. I would like to discuss some of the legal and ethical challenges that may face young patients and their families in this setting in the U.S. and in Europe.

One potential issue involves medical scenarios where death is likely to result fairly soon and the parents may wish for an inappropriately-aggressive treatment that may not be in the best interest of the patient. These disagreements may involve the parents and the providers or the parents and the child. While the Netherlands has responded with the Groningen protocol which explicitly indicates when pediatric assisted death is indicated, no other country has chosen this route, leaving a case-by-case approach as the default solution in these cases. A case-by-case approach risks the possibility of errors and inconsistencies.

A second issue involves the distinction between active euthanasia and intensive palliative sedation. How do we know where this line of demarcation is?

Other issues include the concept of futility and the burdensomeness of life-prolonging treatments, especially those treatments that do not appear likely to benefit the patient much or which extend life only a few weeks or a few months. These two issues beg the question of what criteria is most appropriate to use in these cases. In the past, providers have relied on quality of life and family resources as important tools to parents and providers in making these very difficult decisions. Are these appropriate standards to use? Do better ones exist?
Posters

Posters will be on display in the Ensemble Room throughout the conference

Gender and Legitimacy in Alternative Death Care

Ara Francis

This project examines the professionalization narratives of 19 alternative death care pioneers in the United States. The author finds that participants characterize their work in ways that are implicitly coded as feminine, even as they deploy ostensibly gender-neutral language. This discourse emerges as actors attempt to reconcile the aims of the death-acceptance movement, on the one hand, and the pressures to professionalize, on the other.

Coffins, candles and cameras

Andréia Martins van den Hurk, Centre for Death & Society, University of Bath

This poster showcases Andréia’s research on virtual wakes in Brazil, created for the 2017 Images of Research competition at the University of Bath. It represents members of a Facebook group and their particular activities: watching the virtual wakes of strangers and compiling links to profiles of deceased Facebook users.

Improving Support for Families Bereaved by Alcohol or Drugs

Christine Valentine, Centre for Death & Society, University of Bath

This poster illustrates the first large-scale qualitative study of adults bereaved by the substance-related death of someone close. Interviews with 106 bereaved adults and 6 focus groups involving 40 practitioners from a range of services involved in dealing with these deaths highlighted the considerable challenges these bereaved people faced in the immediate aftermath. These included meeting with unkind and discriminatory responses from those working for these services, while having to navigate unfamiliar, often bewildering and time-consuming processes and procedures related to the death and involving a range of disparate organisations. From the findings we identified 5 key messages for service improvement, which have informed practitioner guidelines.

Mourning, Memory and Memorials: A study of people’s relating to collective loss at modern memorial sites

Brady Wagoner and Ignacio Brescó, Culture of Grief Research Centre, Aalborg University, Denmark

CDAS18: The Politics of Death Book of Abstracts 25
Since Durkheim’s studies of funeral rites, grief and collective memory have been seen as closely intertwined processes. A tragic death is interpreted and felt in the first person plural by a certain group (i.e., as a ‘we’ experience), whose members share in grief and may transmit it to future generations. In this way both grief and memory are culturally mediated practices, tightly connected to a society’s ways of giving meaning to a traumatic death vis-à-vis present and future challenges. This poster addresses the two-way dynamic between collective grief and memory, particularly through people’s modes of experiencing modern memorial sites. In contrast to classical memorials that convey a clear heroic meaning through a figurative representation, modern memorials are purposely built to generate different meaning-making processes and ways of interacting with them. Along these lines, we analyze visitors’ situated and evolving experience of two memorial sites (viz., ‘Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe’ in Berlin and the Ground Zero National September 11 Memorial in New York), highlighting the personal ways in which people relate to collective loss through material forms.

**Death and Devolution**

*Kate Woodthorpe, Centre for Death & Society, University of Bath*

The policy brief, ‘Death, Dying and Devolution’, launched in 2017 as part of a sabbatical with the University of Bath’s Institute for Policy Research, aims to raise the profile of death, dying and bereavement as a significant public policy issue. To this end the authors make cases for policy innovations to tackle a range of areas that shape what happens before death and immediately afterwards. These include: issues around end-of-life and palliative care; support for carers; organ donation; use of Lasting Powers of Attorney; concerns around the impact of funeral delays and high costs on the bereaved and the increase in public health funerals; the availability of emotional support for the bereaved, including bereaved older people; and issues around the shortage of new and managing historical burial spaces.