



Centre for Death & Society

Newsletter

March 2021

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Director's Note

March 2021

So here we are in March 2021.

I wasn't even sure where to start the March Director's Note since so much of the Death World community spent the last year documenting and writing about the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, many of us will continue to spend time this way and will write about this past year for many decades to come. Books. Ph.D.'s. Seminars. Films. Songs. Arguments over Memorials. Special Edited Collections. University Chairs. Government Reviews. All of it. We will see all of it.



So let's set the last year aside, for a moment, and look towards the near future. Our friends and colleagues at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) are hosting the 15th International Conference on the Social Context of Death, Dying and Disposal (DDD15) Wednesday 1st September – Saturday 4th September 2021 online and I am genuinely looking forward to it.

DDD15's theme is **Diversity and Decolonisation** and I strongly suggest checking out the conference [website](#).

Even though DDD15 will be online this time, it is still an excellent opportunity for those of us working in death and dying to find a community of friends and colleagues. September will also be an opportunity for many of us to reflect with each other on what happened in 2020 and 2021, which I think is important.

The CDAS June 2021 conference continues to come together and we will send out more information about how everything will work as soon as we can. My enormous thanks to Rachel and Alice, who have done fierce battle with all kinds of institutional entities to make the conference happen.

Along these same lines, the CDAS *Alive and In Conversation* series will begin in mid-April with Zoom events featuring mass disaster and pandemic response planner Dr. Lucy Easthope and funeral director Hasina Zaman. Research Manager Rachel is doing *even more fierce battle* with various institutional authorities over Zoom things(!) so keep your eyes on CDAS social media channels for scheduling announcements.

And to think that most of us had never even heard of Zoom before March 2020....

One day soon enough we will possibly even run seminars like these again in person in rooms with people sitting near each other. But not yet. Not yet.

CDAS COVID-19 Resources, Events and Updates

Our [Centre for Death and Society \(CDAS\) team members](#) curate a monthly collection of resources relating to the effects of Covid-19 on death and society.

We include guidance relating to Covid-19 for:

- grief and bereavement support;
- funeral practices;
- social policy implications.

These resources are both written work produced by CDAS staff and general information on Covid-19 from other organisations. All the resources will be listed on our website [here](#).

March 2021 Covid-19 Information

Publications

[BBC Newsnight](#): Interview with CDAS Associate Lucy Easthope on managing COVID-19's impact.

[Free to read short commentaries](#) in Dialogues of Human Geography on initial Covid-19 impacts including:

Maddrell A. (2020) '[Bereavement, grief, and consolation: Emotional-affective geographies of loss during COVID-19](#)', *Dialogues in Human Geography*

Event Information

FutureLearn Free Courses

FutureLearn is offering a number of free online courses in themes related to Covid-19. Visit their [website](#) to find out more.

Call for Papers, Information & Funding Proposals

Bereavement During the COVID-19 Pandemic: New National Survey of Bereavement Services Now Open

Researchers at the University of Bristol and Cardiff University are conducting an important national survey to document how bereavement service providers have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic – please visit covidbereavement.com to find out more and complete the survey.

In the last year we have witnessed an unprecedented loss of life in the UK, with millions of people bereaved in exceptionally difficult circumstances. Bereavement services have faced many challenges and have had to adapt rapidly to meet the needs of the people they support. This survey provides an opportunity for staff and volunteers working in voluntary/community sector bereavement support services to have their voices heard and influence policy and future service provision. Only one person at each organisation needs to complete the survey (usually the manager or bereavement service coordinator).

Please visit covidbereavement.com for more information and to complete the survey, which is open until **30 April 2021**. The research team has already collected valuable data from over 700 people bereaved since 16 March 2020, but it is also vitally important that the views and experiences of those providing bereavement support are represented. The study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

We appreciate that this is a busy time for all those working in bereavement support and are really grateful for all those who take time to share their experiences and help with this important work.

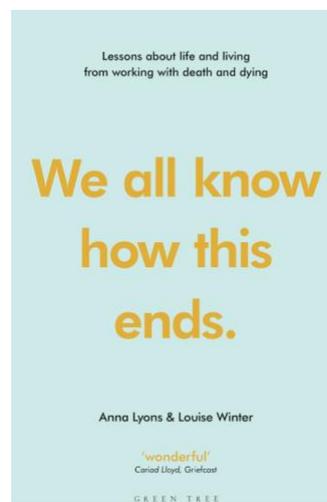
CDAS NEWS

Recent publications

New Book: We All Know How This Ends

Written by end-of-life doula Anna Lyons and progressive funeral director Louise Winter, *We All Know How This Ends* is a collection of heart-breaking, surprising and uplifting stories of the ordinary and extraordinary lives they encounter every single day.

There is a bespoke discount code which is **LIFE25** and will allow 25% off (rrp) at www.bloomsbury.com/WeAllKnow (discount available when pre-ordering too).



CDAS Community News

Death and Culture Book Series has a New Home

Back in the summer of 2020 the Death and Culture Book Series was faced with finding a new publishing home as Emerald Publishing was no longer able to house the series. We are delighted to announce that Bristol University Press will now be publishing the book series.

The Death and Culture Book Series welcomes proposals for monographs and edited collections. Do visit the [website](#)

BEYOND THE MASK (60 mins) – The Good Grief Project launches a new film exploring approaches to grief during the Covid pandemic.

Online Premiere: Thursday 25th March 7-9pm GMT

The COVID-19 crisis has prompted us all to think a bit more about death and what it means for us and our loved ones. It has also provided an unparalleled opportunity to place the importance of talking about dying, death and bereavement firmly on the national agenda.

Demystifying Death Week: Bringing dying into the limelight

10-16 May 2021

Demystifying death week is about shining a light on death, dying and bereavement in Scotland.

People usually want to do the right thing when someone they know is caring, dying or grieving. But often they can feel awkward offering help, or worry about making things worse.

People often have questions about serious illness or death. But often they don't know who to ask.

Making plans when you are healthy means there is less to think about when you're ill. But often people put off making plans until it is too late.

Demystifying death week is about giving people knowledge, skills and opportunities to plan and support each other through death, dying, loss and care.

More information is available here: [Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief :: Demystifying Death Week \(goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk\)](http://goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk)

Cautious New World. Fieldwork in Pandemic Times - Off the Beaten Track

"In the upcoming summer, we will be hosting three summer sessions in our basecamp, where we will be integrating everything that we learned in our curriculum. We formalize this by incorporating it as a dedicated project: *"Cautious New World. Fieldwork in Pandemic Times"*."

There are only few slots left, but applicants can already get approved for one of the 2022 sessions, or a possible earlier session yet to be announced.

More information can be found on the [website](#). Applications can be made online through this [form](#).

Contact sam.janssen@xpeditions.be for any further questions.

Annual Review of Death and Society

Volume 1 will be published by in print and as an Open Access publication in 2022.

The *Annual Review of Death and Society* gives space to publications that deal with the phenomena of dying, death and bereavement from a sociological perspective or from the perspective of related disciplines. In addition to empirical contributions, theoretical discussions are also welcome. The aim of the *Annual Review* is to further develop the current thanato(socio)logical level of knowledge and to achieve national and international networking on a high scientific level.

The *Annual Review* is the result of a collaboration between the *Arbeitskreis Thanatologie* (Thanatology Working Group), which has organized several conferences and workshops since 2018 and presented various thanatological publications as well. Published at the University of Passau with editorial members at the Universities of Bonn, Hildesheim, Osnabrück, Weimar and Zurich, the *Annual Review* is supported by the following Scientific Advisory Board: *Clemens Albrecht* (Bonn), *Ronald Hitzler* (Dortmund), *Hubert Knoblauch* (Berlin), *Thomas Klie* (Rostock), *Gesa Lindemann* (Oldenburg), *Werner Schneider* (Augsburg), *Ursula Streckeisen* (Bern) und *Tony Walter* (Bath).

The contents comprise scientific articles in German or English. Manuscripts are double-blind reviewed. There will also be book reviews, conference reports, statements and presentations of classical standard works. In the long term, interviews with well-known actors from the field of thanatological research as well as a ›forum‹ are planned in which current articles, related counter-positions and replicas of these positions will be compiled.

Contributions in the field of tension between dying, death and bereavement are welcome, both theoretically and empirically. Interested authors submit an abstract with 2 pages (max. 3 pages). Based on the abstracts, the editors decide within four weeks if the proposal is suitable for the *Annual Review of Death and Society* and will let the authors know about their decision. A stylesheet is then submitted. The peer reviewed manuscripts should contain approximately 45.000 characters.

For abstracts and correspondence please contact: tod-gesellschaft@uni-passau.de

Arbeitskreis Thanatologie / Thanatology Working Group:

Thorsten Benkel • Ekkehard Coenen • Ursula Engelfried-Rave • Matthias Meitzler • Melanie Pierburg • Miriam Sitter • Michaela Thönnies

Events

Upcoming Down to Earth training:

[Let's talk about funerals | 15 April](#)

Some conversations aren't easy, and conversations about funerals can often be challenging, or even actively avoided. But there are ways for us to start having more positive conversations about funerals.

[Raising money for funeral costs | 13 May](#)

Gain skills and knowledge to better support your clients in this new practical and interactive online workshop from Down to Earth. For those supporting and advising people who have a funeral to arrange, this practical workshop enables you to support your clients better to find funds to meet the cost.

Postvention Assisting those Bereaved By Suicide



Evidence-based Suicide Bereavement Training

Evidence-based • Evaluated • Engaging • Effective

Postvention Assisting those Bereaved By Suicide (PABBS), one day training is evidence-based and evaluated suicide bereavement training and has been informed by a three-year study, conducted by Dr. Sharon McDonnell and her team, at the University of Manchester. Funded (£243K) by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the first of its kind internationally.

This training will help those implementing:

- the suicide prevention strategy (locally, regionally and nationally);
- developing postvention services;
- NICE postvention guidelines in the community and custodial settings; and
- key objectives in the NHS Long term plan etc

For training availability dates visit the website:

<https://suicidebereavementuk.com/pabbs-training/>

Over 150 testimonials: <https://suicidebereavementuk.com/testimonials>

Cost: £299 +VAT per person

Please note, we also deliver in-house training, upon request, across the UK.

For more information or to register contact: Paul Higham

Email: paul.higham@suicidebereavementuk.com, Tel: [01706 827359](tel:01706827359)

Call for Papers

Call for Papers for The 15th International Conference on the Social Context of Death, Dying and Disposal

In increasingly fractured and confusing times, this conference seeks to locate death as the one intersection that truly touches us all.

We are now seeking papers and panels on a range of topics connected to our main theme of 'Diversity and Decolonisation'. As ever, this 'Social Context of Death, Dying and Disposal' conference is multi-disciplinary and open to all, including artists, academics, professionals and practitioners of all kinds, whose interests and/or practices are related to death and dying.

Due to the ongoing Corona Virus pandemic, DDD15 will be an entirely virtual event. The conference will take place in line with the time zone (GMT) of the conference organisers, Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) but we welcome and encourage papers from around the world.

A limited number of free places will be available for successful applicants who indicate in their submission that they cannot afford to pay a fee to attend.

Please click [here](#) to view our full Call For Papers and submit your abstract.

Please contact us if you have any questions: DDD15@mmu.ac.uk

Paper Invitation: Special Issue “Working with Death: Psychosocial Risks and Protective Factors at Work among Funeral Industry Workers”

In the [International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#)

In this Special Issue, we invite authors to contribute with research that examines funeral operators' work conditions, with attention to risk and protective factors of wellbeing and of health at work. Papers investigating the role of compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, compassion satisfaction, exhaustion, coping strategies (e.g., humor), stigma, and emotion management among operators of the funeral industry will be especially welcome.

Special Issue: Working with Death: Psychosocial Risks and Protective Factors at Work among Funeral Industry Workers

Deadline: 31 March 2021

Website: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph/special_issues/Working_with_Death

Call for Chapters for Edited Collection

Difficult Death: Challenging Cultural Representations of Death, Dying and the Dead in Media and Culture

Deadline: Monday 1 May 2021

You are invited to submit 300-word abstracts for the forthcoming edited collection provisionally titled *Difficult Death: Challenging Cultural Representations of Death, Dying and the Dead in Media and Culture*. The interdisciplinary collection seeks to examine a range of representations of and engagement with death and dying across different media and cultural forms including film, television, new media, journalism, performing arts and literature. With a media and cultural studies focus, the collection will examine some of the difficulties and challenges of representing death, dying and the dead whilst also exploring 'difficult' and 'challenging' representations of these subjects as important objects of analysis in themselves. We welcome contributions from all disciplines and approaches and from those working within and beyond academia.

Context

Death and dying are difficult to avoid both in the global media and in popular culture. At times the representation of death, dying and the dead can be especially challenging for viewers. Yet at other times it can offer solace, escapism, or provoke engagement with mortality. Penfold-Mounce (2018) has examined how different popular cultural texts can promote both 'safe' and 'provocative' morbid spaces for engagement with death and the dead. For those who create cultural texts, ranging from novels to journalism to film and television, how to engage with and represent death, dying and the dead also represents particular challenges. Often, texts can themselves be challenged by those who engage with them for the difficult, revealing or problematic ways that they represent death. For example, as Luckhurst (2016) has argued, the representation of the living dead in zombie horror can be read as a form of social realism with its own necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003). From depictions of real or 'natural' death in documentary, journalism or narrative to dramatic depictions of violent deaths and the (un)dead in literature, film and television, there is ample opportunity to explore the ways in which death can be represented in difficult ways, can raise difficult questions, and can be difficult to engage with in media and culture.

Writing on death spans and transcends all academic disciplines, though much writing has recently found a locus in the developing field of Death Studies. Within

Journalism Studies, more might be written about the interactions with death that many journalists encounter and must, as part of their career, prepare for. From the 'death knock' to reporting sensitive and traumatic events, investigations into this aspect of reporting tend to offer ethical guidance (see Luce, 2019) rather than a full exploration of the area. More research and discussion has taken place around photographic journalism and its encounters with death, with Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) and Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (2000) offering widely cited explorations of the effect of photographic representation of the traumatised, dying and the dead. There are also photographers noted for their work in this area including Joel-Peter Witkin, Andreas Serrano (Morgue Series), Luc Delahaye and Robert Capa, all who have explored death through the camera lens.

Contributions

Contributions might focus on:

- Representations of death and the dead in film, television and new media that can be read as 'challenging', or that might benefit from being 'challenged'
- The challenges of reporting on death and dying
- The ways media can shape and inform responses to death and dying
- Cultural engagement with and representations of deaths often positioned or perceived as especially 'difficult' or 'challenging' (suicide, migrant deaths)
- Representations of ageing as a 'problem' in ways that conflate ageing and death
- The representation of difficult choices around euthanasia and palliative care

At this stage, we have initial interest from two global publishers and will be submitting a full proposal once chapter abstracts have been collated. Authors will be contacted by 1 June to confirm whether their chapter has been selected and will be kept informed throughout the process.

300-word abstracts along with a brief biography of no more than 150 words should be sent to difficultdeadbook@gmail.com by 1 May 2021.

Please send any queries to difficultdeadbook@gmail.com

Call for Papers: *Religions*

Special Issue: Birth and Death: Studying Ritual, Embodied Practices and Spirituality at the Start and End of Life

Submission deadline: 01 October 2021

Special Issue Editors:

Dr. Joanna Wojtkowiak, University of Humanistic Studies, J.Wojtkowiak@UvH.nl

Dr. Brenda Mathijssen, University of Groningen, brenda.mathijssen@rug.nl

Details:

Birth and death are fundamental human experiences. Both life-transitions are meaningful and profound but can also lead to ambiguous feelings, negotiated in embodied, cultural, spiritual and symbolic practices (Hallam et al., 1999; Kaufman and Morgan, 2005; Mathijssen, 2018; Wojtkowiak, 2020). The study of birth and death as existential transitions, comparing and contrasting these two life-events from a ritual and embodied perspective, can reveal novel insights into spirituality and religiosity. In this Special Issue of *Religions*, we want to unravel these questions and explore new theoretical and empirical research on birth and death from multidisciplinary perspectives, such as cultural anthropology, religious studies, chaplaincy studies, medical and cultural psychology and psychology of religion and related disciplines.

The importance of studying birth and death from an embodied, ritualized and symbolic perspective relates to several observations. First of all, all humans are related to their own birth and death and often involved in the birth and death of others (Hennessey, 2019; Schües, 2008). However, entering the world, as well as saying farewell to loved ones, is not a linear transition. Liminal and ambiguous meanings accompany pregnancy and birth, as well as death and dying. Cultural, spiritual and ritual practices accompany this transition and accommodate possible ambiguous states. Secondly, both life transitions are related to spiritual and existential questioning, revealing what matters to us (Wojtkowiak and Crowther, 2018). Thirdly, rituals and embodied practices—varying from quotidian storytelling, performances, meditation and beautification practices to initiation rites and funerals—are grounded in the body, the senses and material culture. Gaining insights into the significance of embodiment, the physical and material dimension of spirituality has been underdeveloped in the literature (McGuire 2006). Fourthly, because of changing religious and cultural contexts, such as secularization, medicalization, migration and globalization, the way we frame and give meaning to birth and death are changing and leading to pluralistic and possibly conflicting meaning frames. Rituals at the start and end of life have also been changing (Grimes, 2002). What kind of challenges do we face in changing birth and death

contexts? What can we learn about meaning making and spirituality by studying birth and death rituals? How is embodied spirituality negotiated in birth and death rituals and practices?

We invite scholars to submit papers on the following topics:

- Rituals and ritualization of birth and/or death (such as pregnancy and birth, dying, death and mourning, commemoration, memorials, private, individual ritualizing);
- Embodied spirituality at birth and/or death from theoretical and empirical perspectives (such as midwifery, chaplaincy or personal practices);
- Social and cultural meanings and ambiguity surrounding personhood at birth or death from an embodied, ritualized perspective (when do we become a person/social being? And how is this manifested in embodied practices? See, for instance, Kaufman and Morgan, 2005);
- Philosophical perspectives on ritual at birth and death (e.g., phenomenological approaches to ritualizing pregnancy, birth, death and dying).

Manuscript Submission Information

Manuscripts should be submitted online at www.mdpi.com by [registering](#) and [logging in to this website](#). Once you are registered, [click here to go to the submission form](#). Manuscripts can be submitted until the deadline. All papers will be peer-reviewed. Accepted papers will be published continuously in the journal (as soon as accepted) and will be listed together on the special issue website.

Submitted manuscripts should not have been published previously, nor be under consideration for publication elsewhere (except conference proceedings papers). All manuscripts are thoroughly refereed through a double-blind peer-review process. A guide for authors and other relevant information for submission of manuscripts is available on the [Instructions for Authors](#) page. *Religions* is an international peer-reviewed open access monthly journal published by MDPI.

Please visit the [Instructions for Authors](#) page before submitting a manuscript. The [Article Processing Charge \(APC\)](#) for publication in this [open access](#) journal is 1200 CHF (Swiss Francs). Submitted papers should be well formatted and use good English. Authors may use MDPI's [English editing service](#) prior to publication or during author revisions.

Visit the [CDAS website](#) to view a full calendar of events

Contact us

Email: cdas@bath.ac.uk

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Facebook: www.facebook.com/centrefordeath

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