



Centre for
Death & Society
(CDAS)



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

Centre for Death & Society

Newsletter

November 2019

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Director's Note

November
2019



This essay was first published in the November 2016 issue of *Bath Magazine* and appeared in the December 2016 CDAS newsletter. I continue to receive e-mail messages about it from both members of the general public and former students so I decided to re-run it this year as a means of acknowledging the hard work the students in Sociology of Death 2019 put in.

My entire life has been spent around death, dying, and dead bodies. And when I say entire, I mean from before I was born to this very second. I grew up in the American funeral industry, where my father, Ron Troyer, was a funeral director for three decades. Indeed, some of my earliest childhood memories are of bodies in caskets coupled with my parents explaining what 'dead' meant.

Through a series of intellectual twists during my postgraduate education, my research focused on the relationship between the dead body and technology. In 2008 I accepted a post in the University of Bath's Centre for Death and Society (CDAS), the world's first and only interdisciplinary research Centre dedicated to exploring the intersections between death, dying, and the dead body.

CDAS was founded in 2005 and in June 2015 celebrated ten years of world-class research, public engagement, and educational work as a death and dying studies hub.

What intrigues me most about the Centre for Death and Society's public engagement work is that right now, in October 2016, death, dying, and dead bodies have never appeared more popular. It's difficult to keep track of all the different Death Cafes, Death Salons, and Death Meet-ups regularly happening across the US, UK, Europe, and Australia. Some groups simply gather in cafes to drink tea, eat cakes, and talk about death, while others create full-blown weekend long events complete with speakers and death-themed fairs.

What's important to keep in mind, however, is that death's current popular interest and fashionability isn't actually new.

On the one hand it's easy to say that humans have 'discussed' death since the dawn of civilization, but what death 'meant' in those earlier times isn't as clearly defined as we technologically sophisticated modern humans might like to think. Definitions of death change and will continue to change in the future. The shift from cardiac to brain death criteria remains a key moment in the broader history of human mortality and demonstrates that supposedly stable concepts can quickly change.

Images of human mortality and death itself have also changed over-time as many westerners now fear representations of cancer or dementia more than the actual Grim Reaper. The medical profession has played a big part in these changes as 'dying' became something that doctors could diagnostically explain, even if life support technology made the moment of death far murkier.

I've been thinking about the current popular interest in death for many reasons, but especially when it comes to my undergraduate students. The University of Bath offers a final year class that I teach on "The Sociology of Death" and Bath is one of the few

universities in the UK to do so. The course has run for many years and is extremely popular with the students, e.g., there is always a waiting list for a seat. Students are required to write short, weekly essays about the material we cover in class and 'engage with death' in any way they see fit. In the beginning, many of the students think that the weekly writing will be a real pain and just another silly tick-box exercise that enables them to graduate.

Then everything starts to change.

To a student, the more they think about the Sociology of Death the more they want to write about what death and dying means in our modern age. Indeed, many of the students tell me that they experience sadness at the end of the semester knowing that the final weekly essay is the last one that they will write. One big takeaway for the students that is often noted in the weekly writings is how everyday death is – they just never saw it staring them in the face.

I also always have students in the class who either went through the death of a loved one (usually a parent) before entering University, or watched someone they care about die during the course of their studies. At least one or two grandparents die during the eleven-week semester – verified, in case you are curious, by an obituary. For these students, writing about the experiences of watching someone die becomes both an academic assignment and deeply cathartic.

All of this is to say that, when given the chance by the University of Bath to take a class called the Sociology of Death taught by the Director of the world's only Centre for Death and Society, the students love it. It is the kind of educational opportunity offered by Bath that helps students see the bigger picture of life, the universe, and everything (to quote Douglas Adams).

But, and I think that this is fundamentally important, the students learn to respect death and the power it has to turn everything upside down. For them, death and dying aren't just fashionable or cool—they're forces of nature that they should discuss with parents and next-of-kin before it is no longer possible. I know this because many parents come up to me at Graduation and thank me for giving their daughter/son the intellectual and emotional tools to discuss what should happen before a family member ends up on life support.

In this way death's current cultural fashionability can play an important role in transforming how individuals think about death and dying long before they suddenly need to. My main advice for the current popular death movements is to quickly establish and make permanent the institutional changes that many groups called for a generation ago and continue to discuss today: greater individual autonomy in end-of-life care decision making, increased discussion about funerals, and an everyday personal embrace of death.

In the event all of these changes don't happen, it's only a matter of time until a new generation discovers death and picks up where the previous groups left off. I, for one, look forward to seeing what's happening with death in another forty years – when I am elderly and preparing to die.

John Troyer, Director

CDAS NEWS

Message from a CDAS Visiting Research Fellow

"My name is Aki and I am a Researcher at the University of Tsukuba in Japan.

I am currently a CDAS Visiting Research Fellow, where I am extending my studies to examine natural burial in the local area. Now I am exploring how people in the UK regard natural burial. I am keen to speak with professionals who are involved in the natural burial or funeral industry. I am writing this to see if I could have an interview about your thoughts on natural burial practices and perceptions based on your experience.

If you are keen to participate to this research project or you would like to know more about it, please do not hesitate to contact me. This research is approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Japan. Please be assured that anything you say to me during the interview will be strictly confidential and anonymized.

My contact details are: s1430001@u.tsukuba.ac.jp

Many thanks in advance for any help you may be able to provide."

Aki Miyazawa

School of Humanities and Social Sciences,

University of Tsukuba, Japan

Visiting Research Fellow at Centre for Death & Society, University of Bath

Early Careers Visiting Fellowship

Applications have been coming in for the NEW CDAS Early Career Visiting Fellow's Programme. This opportunity extends our programme of welcoming visiting scholars from around the world. Applicants must be an ECR in Death Studies (broadly defined) **without permanent employment** in a University.

To apply please send a one-page research proposal (no more) and a current CV to cdas@bath.ac.uk.

CDAS Community News

Good Death Week 2020

Good Death Week runs each year in May across Scotland. Led by [Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief](#) the week gives individuals and organisations the opportunity to promote the positives of living in a society where people can be open about dying, death and bereavement. In 2020 it runs May 11-17.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/awareness-week/>

Events

Before I go Accredited Training in End of Life Care Plan Facilitation

January 2020

Applications from every country are invited for the next intake of this online course, beginning end January 2020.

Primarily of interest to health professionals, counsellors, coaches, educators, celebrants or others interested in enabling others to create good end of life plans.

The course is spread over 7 months, and graduates will be licensed to facilitate Before I Go Method® courses and individual sessions with those wishing to take care of their end of life matters, but who are not getting round to it (that is 80% of everyone who say they are interested in doing something!)

For further information please visit: <https://beforeigosolutions.com/big-training/>

Paying for Child and Baby Funerals

16 January 2020

An Educational Seminar providing details of funding from the Childrens' Funeral Fund, charities and other funding sources.

A full day of talks and discussions with exhibition. £35 fee includes: All talks, workshops, refreshments and lunch and car parking

The day will examine what is now available in detail and answer questions around fees and payments. Speaker's details will be posted on the Child Funeral Charity website.

Who is this event for? Any professional working with families who have lost a child, including: crematorium staff, registrars, hospice staff, funeral directors, hospital bereavement officers, bereavement counsellors, charity staff, celebrants, faith representatives, bereavement midwives, researchers and many other professionals. To book your place, complete and send the booking form on www.childfuneralcharity.org.uk or call 01480 276088

PABBS evidence-based suicide bereavement training

22 January and 10 March 2020

PABBS training was informed by a three year study, conducted at the University of Manchester, funded (£243k) by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), led by Dr. Sharon McDonnell and her team and first of its kind internationally. This training is a one day highly interactive workshop, delivered by two trainers, who have considerable

experience working with those bereaved by suicide. There is no role-play during the training. Lunch and refreshments are provided.

If you would like further information please visit

<https://suicidebereavementuk.com/pabbs-training> or if you wish to enrol, please contact Paul Higham 07850 710555 email: paul.higham@suicidebereavementuk.com

Histories of Death: An International Symposium

19 – 21 February 2020, University of Turku, Finland

Our understandings of death come with long and complex histories, shaped by culture, place, time, power, and identities. Historical analysis allows us to better understand the paths that have led to the recent move toward “death positivity,” and the popularity of death doulas, “death cafes,” alternative and ecological burial solutions, and new understandings of grief. The interdisciplinary and rapidly growing field of Death Studies raises awareness about how we die and mourn, and the ways social factors – class, migrant background, and gender, among them – can result in unequal access to “good death” in many countries and communities today. This International Symposium seeks to delve into the many varied and interwoven Histories of Death to further explore the traditions, ideologies, and institutions that shape our experiences with death.

Death sets people into action, caring for the dying, the deceased, and the grieving in ways that range from the intimate to the professional. The Histories of Death Symposium invites researchers to share their work and engage in dialogue about the different ways people have approached dying, death, and mourning from everyday, cultural, and structural perspectives.

The Symposium is hosted by the John Morton Center for North American Studies at the University of Turku’s Department of Philosophy, Political Science, and Contemporary History. The Symposium is funded by the Academy of Finland.

More information here: <https://sites.utu.fi/jmc/histories-of-death/>

Awareness of Trauma & Dissociation Continued Professional Development (CPD) Course

28 March 2020

The day will cover:

The link between trauma, attachment & dissociation

- Understanding the spectrum of dissociation & dissociative disorders (incl. Dissociative Identity Disorder)
- Identifying & responding to dissociation when it happens in the room
- Working with trauma related-dissociation
- Understanding the perspective of someone who experiences dissociation/DID
- How we can help in counselling

For who: Counsellors/therapists & other mental health practitioners who want to develop their understanding of trauma & dissociation & how to work most effectively with people affected by it. When: March 28th 2020 10 am – 4 pm

Where: All CPD courses are held at GCS, Alma House, Stroud, Glos, GL5 1AP * We require proof of your volunteer work & role at application stage.

Fees: Trainee/Volunteer*: £60, GCS staff: £70, External: £110, Groups of 3 or more: £95 per delegate

For more information visit: www.gloscounselling.org.uk/product/cpd-workshops-and-short-courses

Dying Matters Awareness Week 2020 – Dying to be heard

11 – 17 May 2020

The 2020 theme of **Dying To Be Heard** will focus on how to help by listening. How many people want to talk about death, but feel they have no one to talk to about it? How many people are Dying To Be Heard?

We'll have some tips on active listening, and reassure people that you don't need to be an expert on wills, funerals or advance care planning: the Dying Matters website has signposts to all the relevant information.

Active Grief Weekend

15 – 17 May 2020, Manifold Farm, Derbyshire

Registrations for our next ACTIVE GRIEF WEEKEND are now open.

Run by and for the bereaved, these retreats are available to all who have suffered the death of a child of any age, from any cause and no matter how long ago. They are also extremely popular and we recommend early booking.

For more information, please visit: <https://thegoodgriefproject.co.uk/active/>

Cremation and Burial Communication Education (CBCE)

29 June 2020

The Cremation and Burial Communication and Education (CBCE) event is the national forum which brings together local councils and Private companies from across the UK. CBCE is jointly organised by The Cremation Society of Great Britain and the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities.

As the bereavement sector continues to grow, this key annual event provides a unique opportunity to acquire the most up-to-date and relevant information. Keynote speakers will equip you with insights into the issues facing your services, exhibitors will show you the latest services and products available and networking opportunities will provide the space to engage with fellow professionals.

Who should attend?

- Managers and staff of local authority cemeteries and crematoria.

- Owners and operators of private sector cemeteries and crematoria.
- Funeral directors, bereavement related charities and representatives from other kindred organisations wishing to have a better understanding of the services provided at cemeteries and crematoria.

Why should you attend?

- **Learn** - Hear about new legislation that will bring about **Death Certification** changes and amendments to the **Cremation Regulations** that are to be introduced. These legislative changes will impact upon all local authority service providers and the private sector and we want you to be fully prepared.
- **Connect** - Network with industry-leading practitioners, share views with the most experienced service providers in the UK to learn from their insights and forge new partnerships.
- **Discover** - Explore the most effective way of providing your service by seeing and discussing the most up-to-date technology and tools available within the sector
- **Professional Development** - The Cremation and Burial Communication and Education 2018 Event offered all attendees evidence of **Continuous Professional Development**, with certificates from the CPD Certification Service awarded to all attendees.

For more information, please visit: <http://cbce.org.uk/>

12th International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society

13-17 July 2020

Every three years, the International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society acts to foster international and multidisciplinary collaboration in research and clinical and community practice, across cultural and geographical boundaries. In July 2020, the conference will be hosted in Melbourne, Australia and will offer an opportunity to share the latest developments in grief, research, clinical and community work.

More information at www.icgb2020.com

Suicide Bereavement UK's 9th International Conference 'Suicide Bereavement: Using Our Collective Voice'

24 September 2020, Manchester

Suicide Bereavement UK and Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust are collaborating for the 9th year running to host Suicide Bereavement UK's International Conference. This conference will focus on vulnerable subgroups amongst those bereaved by suicide and taboo issues directly associated with such deaths. Please note, over 400 people from 9 countries usually attend this annual event and it is always over-subscribed.

Registration is now open for the 2020 Conference. Programme and Speakers: TBC

Cost - £140 + Booking Fee + VAT – To book, please visit

<https://suicidebereavementuk.com/suicide-bereavement-conference>

Call for Papers

Continuity and Disruption:

Death, Dying, Mourning, and Memorialization in Postcolonial African Cities

June 25 – 27, Lagos (Nigeria)

The 5th Annual Lagos Studies Association Conference. Theme: Postcolonial African Cities at 60: Continuities and Discontinuities

Existing narratives about, and attitudes to death, dying, mourning, and memorialization of the dead in postcolonial Africa are inextricably linked with complex encounters with the Western and the Near Eastern cultures. These encounters are characterized by major transformations in the colonial and postcolonial African cities. While these transformations are partly due to the introduction of new social ways of life and religious practices, a combination of factors such as urbanization, industrialization, and proliferation of scientific medicine explain why narratives and attitudes to death, dying, mourning, and memorialization in Africa remain complicated. This panel explores the concepts of continuity and disruption to understand how the ideas of death, dying, mourning, and memorialization in postcolonial African cities are framed.

The concepts of continuity and disruption provide analytical approaches to understanding intricate webs of the idea of death and the practices of mourning and memorializing the dead in Africa. It sees postcolonial cities as spaces of cultural continuity and ruptures. This panel seeks to answer the following questions: How does the socio-political and economic structure of colonial and postcolonial African cities affect the way African people think and frame ideas of death, dying, mourning, and memorialization? How do the features of postcolonial cities—modern technology, scientific medicine, sanitation, chaos, violence—redefine and reshape African practices and views of death? How does the postcolonial city-structure define and create social spaces for the living and the dead? What socio-economic and political conditions necessitate the making of these social spaces? How do continuity and disruption affect death management in postcolonial African cities? This panel welcomes contributions from scholars whose empirical studies focus on death, dying, mourning, and memorialization studies in Africa.

Likely topics

Cemetery and urban planning

Funeral ceremonies, social class, and consumer culture

Statue and memorialization

Of art and mourning: grave tombs and expressivity

Dying well: Death, honor, and respectability

Print culture and memorialization

Exhibiting corpse: Funeral homes, costuming, and class

Mourning in the age of social media and the internet

The political lives of dead bodies: Contesting corpse return and final resting place

War, Urban Violence and New Interpretations of Death

Urban Stress and Modern Suicide

Death and the Transfer of Properties

Anonymity and the Life of the Corpse

To participate in this panel, send a 250-word abstract and short bio to Shina Alimi (alimis@oauife.edu.ng) by December 31, 2019. Visit the LSA website for additional information about the Conference: <https://lagosstudies.wcu.edu/>

About Panel Convener:

Shina Alimi teaches history at Obafemi Awolowo University where he bagged his B.A., M.Phil. and PhD degrees. He is a Catalyst Fellow of Centre of African Studies, The University of Edinburgh. His research interests include the social and political history of Nigeria, decolonization, print culture, editorial cartoons and contemporary African history, and the history of death and dying in Africa.

1st International Conference Death Experience

20 – 21 March 2020, University of Latvia, Riga

Ars Moriendi, first festival dedicated to death will be held in Riga, Latvia on 20 - 21st March 2020, it will include an academic conference and detailed cultural programme. The conference, Death Experiences, will cover such areas of death studies as ethics and morals, celebration of death, impact on environment, social history of death, and erasing the dead.

In Latvian cultural environment death and its rituals have a significant role both within Latvian life perception and philosophy and within the context of religious notions. Until now there are little to very few studies on nations attitudes towards death. The main purpose of the conference Death Experiences is to popularise death studies within Latvian and Baltic academic environment and highlight specific Latvian death related traditions, dying and forming of nations cultural memory. As example in Latvian cultural space we can discuss changing but persistent traditions of taking care of cemeteries during the centuries. They reflect both the relation to people's religious practices and notions of living after death, and the secular respect towards the dead and their memory. Death Experiences will provide a comprehensive study of Latvian special attitudes towards death, dying and tradition of cemetery care, marking Latvia in thanatology, science and culture map of Europe.

Death festival is organised by Faculty of Theology of University of Latvia in cooperation with partners.

Researchers are invited to submit their papers in the following sections of the academic conference:

- Death morality & ethics
- Death experiences
- Law and death
- Death and environmental impact
- Celebrated death
- Death of cultures
- Death from social view point
- Erasing the dead

Time for presentation 20 minutes. Please submit your abstracts (max 300 words) and short curriculum vitae (max 200 words) all in one file electronically to deathexperiences@yahoo.com by 15th January 2020. Please ensure the paper is communicated clearly as the conference is multi-disciplinary. The cost of conference is €100, this will include participation, a meal and culture events.

Deconstructing Donation Study Group Conference

19 June 2020, City, University of London

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Dr Laura Machin is inviting abstract submissions for this interdisciplinary conference which aims to deconstruct 'donation'. Presentations that provide insight into the relationships that donation produce, with people, technology, body parts, fluids and tissue are particularly welcomed. Theoretical, methodological, and empirical papers will all be considered. Presentations can draw on the concepts and theories within the social sciences and/or humanities and can refer to all types of bodily, tissue, and fluid donations for a variety of purposes such as education, treatment, art, and research. The conference will have a number of themed sessions, which we invite potential speakers to consider.

THEMED SESSIONS

Contextualising Donation We are inviting contributions which critically address the contexts, politics and practices which both construct and transform donation. Donation does not happen in a social vacuum and contributors are asked to consider how various forms of donation are shaped, maintained and developed in particular contexts and at particular times, through, for example, considerations of political, economic, socio-cultural and policy concerns.

Researching Donation: Methodological Considerations and Contingencies We are interested in papers which address the particular methodological and ethical approaches and challenges to researching donation. Contributors may wish to consider the particular issues involved in gaining access to and studying donation in the 'field', and the research relationships that shape and make these activities possible.

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Please email abstracts of up to 300 words by 27th March 2020 to the Deconstructing Donation Study Group Convenor, Dr Laura Machin: l.machin@lancaster.ac.uk. You will be notified out of the outcome of your submission by 24th April 2020. In the abstract, please include your name, institution, title of presentation, and email address. Abstracts significantly over the word count will not be accepted. Abstracts significantly over the word count will not be accepted. Abstracts will be reviewed, taking into account the suitability of the topic, the stage of research process (if appropriate), and the significance of the findings or arguments proposed to the Group.

PLENARY SPEAKER AND PANEL EVENT

The plenary speaker for the fourth Deconstructing Donation conference will be Rosamund Scott, Professor of Medical Law and Ethics at the Dickinson Poon School of Law, Kings College, London. Rosamund's research centres on ethical, legal and policy issues in reproduction, with an emphasis on new reproductive technologies.

We will also be hosting a panel event with speakers working on donation from diverse perspectives. The panel will be addressing the question: 'What does donation mean to you?' Confirmed Panel Members include:

- Rachael Buchanan: Science and health journalist at BBC News
- Alexa Wright: Artist who has produced works on the psycho-social effects of heart transplantation
- Katie Morley: Lead nurse – Recipient coordinator at NHS Blood and Transplant
-

CONFERENCE DETAILS

The conference will take place in the Tait Building at City, University of London, Northampton Square, Clerkenwell, EC1V 0HB and is being hosted by Dr Jessie Cooper, Lecturer in the Sociology of Health.

Delegates and speakers will be welcome to join Laura and Jessie for drinks and/or dinner at a local restaurant on Thursday, 18 and/or Friday, 19 June. Details will be sent out nearer the time.

Nearby accommodation within walking distance of the conference is available at: Travelodge London Farringdon

REGISTRATION FEES

- Student BSA Member: £35
- Student Non-BSA Member: £40
- BSA Member: £45
- Non-BSA Member: £50

In the Year 2020: Death, Dying, Technology and Human Mortality **CDAS Conference 2020. Call for Papers**

26-27 June 2020, University of Bath

We are delighted to announce that we are now inviting abstracts for oral and poster presentations for next year's CDAS conference to be held at the University of Bath, on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 June 2020.

In a world... where over the last twenty-years, first world popular culture's interest in human mortality significantly expanded and death and dying achieved new levels of media attention.

What has the last twenty-years of death, dying, and technology produced for human mortality? And what might the next twenty-years hold? What role does technology now play in the everyday experiences of human mortality?

The June 2020 Centre for Death and Society Annual Conference will focus on Death, Dying, Technology and Human Mortality and what the discovery and re-discovery of human technology means for power, sovereignty, bioethics, the rule of law, and most importantly - death and dying.

Possible topics could include:

Assisted dying

Activism and death politics

Science and Technology Studies of Death and Dying

Death Technologies across time

Feminist critiques of death politics across time

The history of death focussed activism (e.g., AIDS and ACT-UP, Black Lives Matter, etc.)

Power relationships between the state and the individual

The economics of death and poverty

Future Technologies for Death and Dying Past/Present/Future Dead Body

Disposal Technologies

The politics of death nostalgia

Death and social class

Debates around life and death and personhood
State ordered executions and capital punishment
Death technologies of power, control, discipline, and preservation
Cultural appropriation and commodification
Isolation at the end of life
The commodification of death experiences
Political protests and dead political leaders
(Neo)colonialism and death politics
The politics of post-mortem evidence in policy making and with policy makers
Human Rights Law and genocide
Urban planning and deathscapes

Please send a 300 Word abstract to cdas@bath.ac.uk by 28 February 2020.

Happy Holidays

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

Contact us

Email: cdas@bath.ac.uk

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