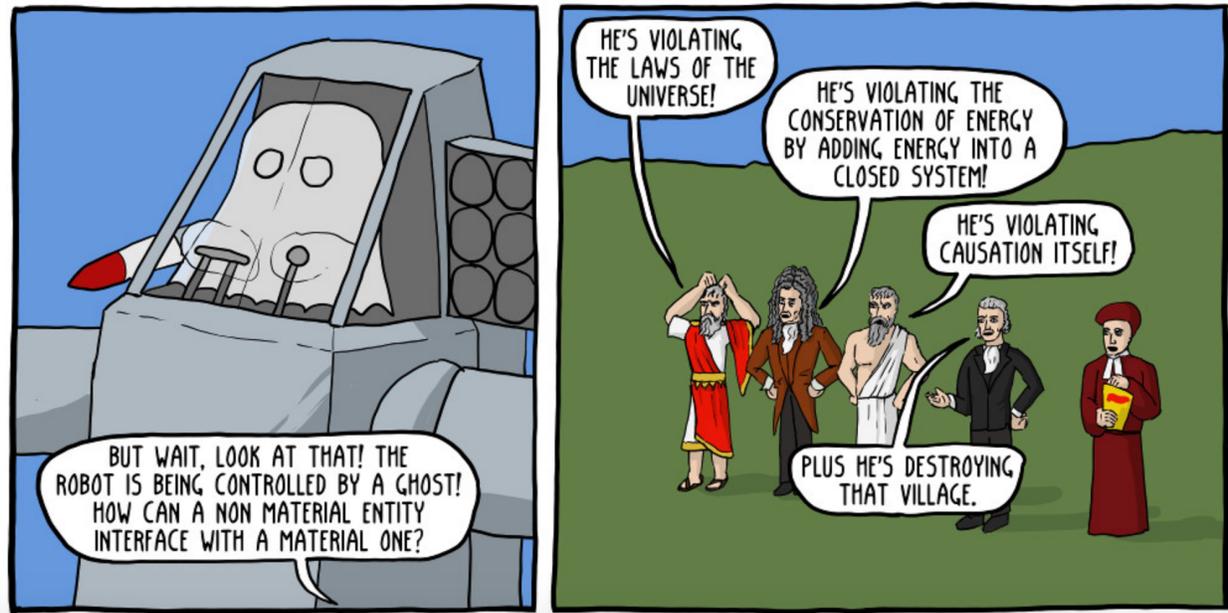


ANT 395/REL 399
Afterlives of Empire:
Caring for the Dead in the Wake of Mass Violence

Instructor: L. June Bloch
Class time: M & W 3:10 – 4:25 PM
Classroom Campbell G17

Email: lbloch@agnesscott.edu
Office Hours: Th 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM
Office Location: Buttrick 321



Existential Comics

Course Description

Different ways of being dead can ground radically different moral and ethical sensibilities, or senses of what kinds of social movement might be desirable and feasible. Is the afterlife a space liberated from mundane social inequalities like white supremacy that govern the living? Or are the bones of the dead also vulnerable to state violence? How does one adequately care for the dead in the wake of mass trauma, such as settler colonialism or genocide? And when do relationships between the living and the dead exceed the reach (and metaphysical foundations) of the nation-state, sustaining alternative ways of being alive (and dead)?

This course investigates how people across the globe care for the dead in the wake of mass violence, such as war, colonialism, slavery, and genocide. We will place frameworks from the anthropology of religion into conversation with the anthropology of care in order to extend a critique of biopower (the governance of life and populations) into the afterlife, grappling with forms of violence and care that exceed the life/death binary. Of particular interest will be how embodied practices of caring for the dead—and the different affective needs that the dead express in different settings—can sustain competing moral and political projects that may reinforce, negotiate, or subvert state power. We will investigate the metaphysical assumptions and everyday practices of modernist projects to govern life, as well as alternative ways in which people make life with the dead.

Prerequisites

This course is an advanced seminar in the humanistic social science of anthropology. Students must have a background in anthropology or related fields.

Workload

This is a 4-credit course. Students should expect to complete an additional nine hours of work each week in addition to class meeting times (class meeting time includes participation in asynchronous activities as detailed below).

Grading

Your grade will consist of the following elements:

Participation	40 points
Term Project Part 1	15 points
Term Project Part 2	15 points
Term Project Part 3	15 points
Term Project Part 4	15 points

A: The student consistently makes creative contributions to discussion and moves the conversation forward in significant ways. The student draws connections between course materials and extends key concepts by applying them to new situations. Engages with both the instructor *and* with fellow students.

B: The student consistently contributes to class discussion and demonstrates a solid understanding of course materials. The student thinks through the readings, other students' comments, and one's own points well. Engages with both the instructor *and* with fellow students.

C: The student sometimes participates in class discussion and understands most of the facts of the readings, but perhaps not the big picture.

D: The student only infrequently participates in class discussion or makes statements that are unrelated or do not advance the project of the course. Only has a partial understanding of the materials. Spotty attendance.

F: The student does not consistently come to class, does not participate in or disrupts class discussion, or misses the point of course materials. This is a failing grade.

Participation

This seminar will be primarily discussion based, although I will lecture at times to explain difficult concepts from the reading. As such, students must come to class having completed the readings and be prepared to discuss them. The goal of the discussions is to interpret, extend, draw connections between, and critique the readings. Departing from a "banking" model of education in which knowledge is "deposited" in students' brains and "withdrawn" in tests—primary teaching students to regurgitate information—the goal of these discussions will be to practice the tools of critical analysis. This will be less focused on discovering a singular "right

answer” than deepening our ability to critique of interlocking systems of domination and structural violence, particularly with respect to issues of death, care, and state power.

Course Assignments

Written work must be proofread, double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins and numerated pages. I will hand out prompts for essay assignments at least two weeks before the deadline so that you can manage your time appropriately. Course work will be submitted via Canvas.

Term Project

For this project, students will complete a project geared towards a public audience. Your project could take the form of a blog series, a podcast, artwork with artists statements, a comic, or something else. You may opt to work in groups – email me if you want help getting into a group with other students.

The project will be due in four parts:

Part 1: Defining biopower

Part 2: Death and the limits of the State

Part 3: The corpse and the metaphysics of empire

Part 4: Application of course concepts, frameworks, and questions to a new ethnographic context – either from your own personal experience or a context that you’ve conducted library research on.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be docked one-quarter of a letter grade (2.5 points) for each day they are late.

Absences

Attendance will be run on an honor system. You’re an adult and I assume you want to be here. I may take attendance each class meeting and if I do not see you in class for several sessions, I may follow up with you to make sure you are doing OK.

Communications

To attend office hours, please schedule an appointment on COMPASS.

I will respond to reasonable email inquiries within a reasonable timeframe: Usually within 24 hours. If you don’t hear back from me after that time, feel free to follow up. I expect your emails to be courteous and professional: It is good etiquette to include a salutation and signature and to make the subject line relevant to the content. Proofread all emails before sending. Although grammar and email etiquette standards are ultimately a means of reproducing social hierarchies, these skills will make your life easier.

Changes to the syllabus, accommodations for snow days, and other logistical issues for the course will be communicated via email.

Mask Policy

Everyone in the classroom must wear masks covering their mouth *and* their nose. The instructor may lecture without a mask to allow for lip reading only if they are wearing a face shield and remain six feet or more distance from everyone else. Anyone who does not comply with the mask policy will be required to leave.

Remote Classes

In the case that the class must move to a remote format for one or more class period, I will notify students by email and provide instructions for the class. Remote classes may be synchronous or asynchronous.

Agnes Scott Zoom Policy

To preserve the integrity of the classroom experience and to protect students' privacy, which we are legally required to do, only students registered in the course may attend a Zoom class meeting.

Content Warnings

I will do my best to provide content warnings when reading about or discussing things that may trigger past traumas. I encourage you to do the same if you raise such an issue in discussion. If a discussion triggers a past trauma for you, you are welcome to leave the class until you feel ready to return without penalty. If you wish to discuss why you left after class, I accept those conversations as an important engagement with course materials and learning objectives. However, you are not required to do so.

Honor System and Plagiarism

Students are expected to adhere to the principles of the Honor Pledge in all aspects of this class. One of the most important things you will learn as an Agnes Scott student is how to use the writings of others in combination with your own ideas and research to create thoughtful papers that make contributions to the world of knowledge with full credit to all the minds that have participated. If you directly (direct quotations) or indirectly (paraphrases, other borrowings) borrow ideas from others—whether those ideas appear in books, articles, or online, or develop during conversations—you must give proper and full credit to the original sources.

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas or words without giving them credit. This can mean using someone's ideas without proper acknowledgement in papers you are writing for class, copying a sentence directly from a book or journal without citing the source, or turning in the same paper or assignment for different classes without the professors' knowledge. In the United States, there are specific requirements for documenting sources and ideas. You can learn about these standards by consulting your professors or by visiting the Writing Center. Plagiarism is a serious offense and the penalty ranges from warnings to probation or 5 suspension. I do not mind if students work together and discuss their ideas, but students are expected to prepare assignments and write papers independently unless otherwise instructed.

Academic Honesty Statement from the Committee on Academic Standards and Admission

“The Agnes Scott College honor code embodies an ideal of character, conduct, and citizenship, and is an important part of the College’s mission and core identity. This applies especially to academic honesty and integrity. Passing off someone else’s work as your own represents intellectual fraud and theft, and violates the core values of our academic community. To be honorable, you should understand not only what counts as academic dishonesty, but also how to avoid engaging in these practices. You should:

- review each course syllabus for the professor’s expectations regarding course work and class attendance.
- attribute all ideas taken from other sources; this shows respect for other scholars. Plagiarism can include portraying another’s work or ideas as your own, buying a paper online and turning it in as if it were your own work, or not citing or improperly citing references on a reference page or within the text of a paper.
- not falsify or create data and resources or alter a graded work without the prior consent of your professor. This includes making up a reference for a works cited page or making up statistics or facts for academic work.
- not allow another party to do your work/exam, or submit the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from the course instructors. Cheating also includes taking an exam for another person, looking on another person’s exam for answers, using exams from previous classes without permission, or bringing and using unauthorized notes or resources (i.e., electronic, written, or otherwise) during an exam.
- not facilitate cheating, which can happen when you help another student complete a take home exam, give answers to an exam, talk about an exam with a student who has not taken it, or collaborate with others on work that is supposed to be completed independently.
- be truthful about the submission of work, which includes the time of submission and the place of submission (e.g., email, online, in a mailbox, to an office, etc.)

“You should understand that penalties resulting from dishonest conduct range from failure of the assignment to expulsion from the college. You should speak with your professors if you need clarification about any of these policies.”

Modified Pledge

Students pledge that they have completed assignments honestly by attaching the following statement to each test, quiz, paper, overnight assignment, in-class essay, or other work:

I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this assignment.
(Signed) _____

Title IX

Agnes Scott is here to help if you have experienced any form of sexual harassment or violence, dating or domestic violence, or stalking. Please talk to any faculty or staff member with whom you feel comfortable. Faculty and staff members want to support you and have been trained to help. They also will inform the Title IX office so that you can learn about the options available to you. If you do not want college administrators to know what you have experienced, you may talk to the chaplain, as well as nurses or counselors in the Wellness Center in complete

confidentiality. They will not tell anyone what you share with them unless you give your express permission.

Please note that I am a Required Reporter. This means that if you discuss a Title IX violation with me, I am required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator. That person will reach out to you to offer resources and explain your options, but you are not required to accept their offer to talk.

Inclusion

This course adheres to the principles of diversity and inclusion integral to the Agnes Scott community. We respect people from all backgrounds and affirm people's decisions about gender expression and identity. Please inform me if your name is different from the one listed on the class roster and feel free to correct me if I ever use the wrong name or pronoun.

Over the course of the semester, we will talk about multiple forms of oppression and structural violence, including colonialism, race, class, gender, and sexuality. If you experience discomfort discussing these topics, I encourage you to "lean in" to that discomfort as part of the learning process. These conversations are not about whether you as an individual are a good or bad person, but about understanding broader social structures and processes that shape the world we live in. At minimum, I expect all students to work to understand the arguments of the readings and the course – even if they disagree with them.

Accessibility

I strive to make my classes accessible to all students. Please communicate with me early in the semester to let me know what your needs are and what kinds of accommodations I can provide. These conversations are confidential. If you have not already done so, contact Rashad Morgan in the Office of Academic Advising (X6174) to complete the registration process. If you have an accommodations letter, please provide me with a copy.

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations will be completed online. Near the end of the semester, you will receive an email message that will provide a link to complete the evaluation. These are very important to me because they provide critical feedback that I use for improving the course and my teaching.

I also ask that students complete a mid-semester feedback form. Information from your responses are exclusively for my own use (the end-of-semester evaluations are also used by the administration). The mid-semester feedback form is important because it lets me adapt and tailor my courses to your needs during the semester.

Assigned Texts

Brown, Vincent. 2008. *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Colwell, Chip. 2017. *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America's Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Stevenson, Lisa. 2014. *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1:

August 23: Introduction to the Course

1. Read the syllabus

August 25: Opening Questions

1. Taylor, Vanessa. 2017. "Chance the Rapper's Religious Themes Transcend Theism." *Zine*, April 12.
2. Bloch, Leigh. 2020. "Animate Earth, Settler Ruins." *Cultural Anthropology*
3. Thich Nhat Hanh. 2012. "Free From Fear." *Tricycle*. <https://tricycle.org/magazine/free-fear/>
4. Ofgang, Corinne, and Erik Ofgang. 2020. "More Than 250,000 Are Dead. Why Is There So Little Collective Grief?" *Elemental*, December 2. <https://elemental.medium.com/more-than-250-000-are-dead-why-is-there-so-little-collective-grief-dd33c547ca09>

Week 2

August 30: The Biopolitical Fracture: Life, Death, and State Governance

1. Foucault, Michel. 2003. "From the Power of Sovereignty to Power over Life." In *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, edited by Mauro Bertani & Alessandro Fontana, 239-264. New York: Picador.
2. Foucault, Michel. 1979. "On Governmentality" *Ideology and Consciousness* 6: 5-21.
3. Ursula Le Guin. "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"
4. Optional: Foucault, Michel. 1990. "Right of Death and Power Over Life" in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*. Robert Hurley, trans. New York: Vintage Books. (pp. 133-159)

September 1: The Biopolitical Fracture: Life, Death, and State Governance

1. Mbembe, Achille. 2003. "Necropolitics." Translated by Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15 (1): 11-40.
2. Mbembe, Achille. 2021. "The Universal Right to Breathe." Translated by Carolyn Shread. *Critical Inquiry* 47: S58-S62.
3. Optional: NK Jemisin. "The Ones Who Stay and Fight"
4. In class: Agamben *Homo Sacer Animatic*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGUxQmRNhtk>

Week 3:

September 6 (Labor Day)

1. No readings

September 8: Afterlife and State Power

1. Stonington, Scott. 2011. "Facing Death, Gazing Inward: End-of-Life and the Transformation of Clinical Subjectivity in Thailand." *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 35: 113-133.
2. Nelson, Christopher. 2013. "Dances of Memory, Dances of Oblivion." *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 11 (2).

Week 4:

September 13: Afterlife and State Power

3. Nelson, Christopher, 2008. "In a Samurai Village." In *Dancing with the Dead*, 126-170.

September 15: Between the Ruins of the State and Glory in the Eyes of God

1. In class: Film - Jesus Christ Superstar

Biopower Project Due Part 1 due September 15

Week 5:

September 20: Between the Ruins of the State and Glory in the Eyes of God

1. In class: Film - Jesus Christ Superstar

September 22: Suicide and the Colonial Imperative to Live

1. Stevenson, 1-48

Week 6

September 27: Bureaucratizing Life and Death

1. Stevenson, 49-102

September 29: Suicide and the Limits of State Power

1. Stevenson, 103-148

Week 7:

October 4: Guest Lecture on Memory in Post-Fascist Italy

1. Readings TBD

October 6: Care Beyond Biopolitical Control

1. Stevenson, Lisa. 2017. "Sounding Death, Saying Something." *Social Text* 35 (1 (130)): 59-78.
2. Stevenson, 171-174.
3. Optional: Stevenson, 149-170.

Biopower Project Due Part 2 due October 6

Week 8: FALL BREAK

Week 9

October 18: Necroviolence and the Corpse

1. Brown, 1-12

2. Start Brown, 13-59
3. Optional: de Leon, Jason. 2015. "Necroviolence." In *The Land of Open Graves*, 62-85.

October 20: Necroviolence and the Corpse

1. Finish Brown, 13-59
2. Brown, 60-91

Week 10

October 25: Plantations and the Stakes of Afterlife

1. Brown 129-156

October 27: Plantations and the Stakes of Afterlife

1. Brown 157-200

Week 11

November 1: The Metaphysics of Slavery

1. Brown 231-261

November 3: Mass Violence and Social Memory

1. Selection from Holsey, Bayo. 2008. *Routes of Remembrance*, 151-195

Week 12

November 8: Empire and the Scientific Accumulation of Corpses

1. Atalay, Sonya, Jen Shannon, and John G. Swagger. 2017. "Journeys to Complete the Work." <https://blogs.umass.edu/satalay/repatriation-comic/>
2. Colwell, 1-12, 67-95

November 10: Empire and the Scientific Accumulation of Corpses

1. Colwell, 96-131, 199-215

Week 13

November 15: Empire and the Scientific Accumulation of Corpses

1. Colwell, 216-162

November 17: Workday

1. Peer discussion of final component of biopower project

Biopower Project Due Part 3 due November 17

Week 14

November 22: Necroviolence, Repatriation, and Care

1. In Class: Film - So Long Asleep

November 24 (No Class)

Week 15

November 29: Repatriation as Care

1. Atalay, Sonya. 2019. "Braiding Strands of Wellness: How Repatriation Contributes to Healing through Embodied Practice and Storywork." *The Public Historian* 41 (1): 78–89
2. Karlström, Anna. 2005. "Spiritual Materiality: Heritage Preservation in a Buddhist World?" *Journal of Social Archaeology* 5 (3) :338–355.
3. Austen, Ian. 2021. "The Indigenous Archaeologist Tracking Down the Missing Residential Children." *The New York Times*, August 4.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/30/world/canada/indigenous-archaeologist-graves-school-children.html>
4. Hopkins, Ruth. 2021. "Unmarked Graves at Indian Residential Schools Speak to Horrors Faced By Students." *TeenVogue*, July 14. <http://www.teenvogue.com/story/indian-residential-schools-graves>

December 1: Funeral Strippers

1. In class: Film - Dancing with the Dead

Week 16

December 6: Course Conclusions – Love Beyond Life, Death, and Empire

1. Stevenson, Lisa. 2000. "The Suicidal Wound and Fieldwork among Canadian Inuit." In *Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*, edited by John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi, 55-76. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
2. Tuck, Eve. 2019. "Eve Tuck: I Do Not Want To Haunt You But I Will: Indigenous Feminist Theorizing on Reluctant Theories of Change." Indigenous Feminisms Workshop, Alberta. <https://www.artandeducation.net/classroom/video/253794/eve-tuck-i-do-not-want-to-haunt-you-but-i-will-indigenous-feminist-theorizing-on-reluctant-theories-of-change>

Final Component of Biopower Project due December 13 (if you are graduating in December, I will need your paper early)