**Fall 2022**

**Syllabus**

**Death and Ritual in the Past (ANTH-289)**

**Teacher: Aida Abdykanova**

**Course Schedule: Monday 17.00-18.15, 18.25-19.40**

**Course Description**

This course will share the knowledge and understanding of the relationship between death, ritual and material culture in the past through the study of burial practices in the archaeological context. The forms by which a deceased person may be brought to rest are as many as there are human cultures. In most societies the phenomenon of the death is accompanied by some form of celebration or ritual which may range from a simple act of grieving in solitude to the engagement of large masses of people in laborious and creative festivities. These materials might tell a lot about social structure and status, production and exchange, family and gender, architecture and landscape, memory and oblivion of the past societies.

During the course we will be focused not only on the examination of different funerary practices, their function and meaning, but also on the changes of such rituals - how and when they occurred and how they may be explained. Based on case studies from a range of geographical regions and from different prehistoric and historical periods, we will study a range of key themes related to the death ritual practices. Also, we will deal with the problem of reading these burial practices within the context of our own culturally-determined beliefs.

**Course Objectives and Achievements**

1. Develop the idea of the phenomenon of death in human history;
2. Understand the set of beliefs and ways of thinking of past communities;
3. Realize to what extent the death reflects the life.

As a result of successful completion of the course students will be able to

- know the variety of death treating strategies throughout the world;

- understand of the impact of the death in reconstruction of the human history

- connect the death rituals with communities’ mentalities and cultures in the past and present.

**Course content**

Introduction: An overview of the course

Theories of Death

In the field and in the lab

The Materiality of the Death

Treating the dead

Ancestors, cemeteries and local identity

Death and Rebirth

Commemorating the Dead

The Living and the Lead

**Course Readings**

All required readings and other course materials can be found on e-course.

**Course Requirements**

In-class activities (20% plus attendance 10%) Attendance is mandatory. Each student is expected to come to class prepared and to contribute to class all discussions and activities. You can expect to lose some participation points if you miss more than one class for any reason. Please also be ready for weekly home and class assignments on the base of lecture materials and readings.

Quizzes. There will be two quizzes, at the start and end of the semester and only second will be graded. The first will cover the level of your knowledge in the field of biological anthropology in order to reveal gaps and better organizing of the course material.

The second quiz (10%) will be on the last day of class and will address the course objectives.

Review (20%) should be written for one book or scientific article by students’ choice.

Lab work (20%) will be devoted to study of human skeleton remains and reveal such information as sex, age, traumas and possible causes of death.

Final Exam (20%)

**Grading Scale:**

А 96-100%

А- 88-95%

В+ 84-87%

В 77-83%

В- 74-76%

С+ 70-73%

С 64-69%

С- 61-63%

D+ 56-60%

D 51-55%

D- 46-50%

F <45%