Sociology of Death: Deaths that Count and Lives that Matter
SOCI 3000 (4 credits)

IHP Death & Dying: Perspectives, Practices & Policies

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description
Death comes to us all -- but not equally. This course examines how social determinants of death reveal deeper inequalities that lead to slow deaths, invisible deaths, mass deaths, and necropolitics that value some lives over others. Deep dives into global, national, and local mortality rates and leading causes of death will provide insight into whose lives matter, prompting a closer examination into the policies that preserve life for the privileged few and perpetuate death for the marginalized masses. But while these socio-political structures may enact their "rights to death" onto others, communities respond with "rights to life" unto themselves – rejecting invisibility and creating life-affirming social movements. In this course, students will look deeper at how data reveals differences, how deaths diverge by inequalities, and how death and mourning drive social movements as we seek to revalue lives lost to quiet violence.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Draw data-driven comparisons about the social determinants of death across countries and contexts
- Delineate how social inequalities can become de facto social determinants of death
- Assess the impact of public policies, embedded with societal values, on mortality and morbidity rates
- Revalue invisible deads in the politics of mourning and remembrance
- Discover how life-affirming social communities and advocates resist structural violence
- Analyze how death drives social movements

Language of Instruction
This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of locales.

Instructional Methods
SIT's philosophy of education is rooted in experiential learning model, which drives the design of this class. Each module allows for experience, reflection, and application. Experiences

range from critical analyses of datasets to site visits and conversations with local activists. These experiences are framed by readings, multimedia texts, and class discussions. Reflection occurs throughout the learning process in various forms, such as verbal debriefs after learning on location experiences to reflexive components in papers/projects. Through reflection, students are encouraged to become aware of their process of learning, to make sense of their experiences, and connect the learning acquired on the program with previous experiences and information. Application activities reinforce learning by practicing communication skills, experimenting with theories, and preparing to transfer learning to future contexts.

Required Texts

Articles on Course Reserve

Assignments and Evaluation
Structural Violence Profile (Infographic): 75% (3 @ 25%)
Site Prompts: 20% (4 @ 5%)
Attendance: 5%

Structural Violence Profile (Infographic):

In this assignment, students will investigate disparities in a specific social determinant of death, often observed through mortality and morbidity rates, and use it to reveal the social structures at work. Differences in national and organizational statistics on mortality, morbidity, and other quantitative data reflecting different social determinants of death may reveal deaths driven by deeper structural violences at work. Students will examine how patterns in social determinants of death reveal these deeper social structures. Students may work in pairs to prepare the infographic, but will write their own paragraph descriptions.

For this assignment, you will create a multi-component digital infographic displaying quantitative data on mortality, morbidity, and their social determinants, visualizations of the data, and paragraph descriptions that walk through the connections and findings.

Components

- **3 total structural violence profiles examining a social determinant of death, mortality rates, and social disparity (one for each country after Launch).** The posters can be completed individually and/or in a group of two.

- **5-8x data visualizations per infographic.**

  Examples of quantitative data to be visualized may include but are not limited to:

  o Deep dives into differences in morbidity/mortality rates
  o Differences in life expectancy between groups

- o Infant or maternal mortality disparities
  - o Maps showcasing geographic clustering of preventable deaths
  - o Changes over time following policy shifts
  - o Decline in funding of facilities over time
  - o Exposure to pollution risk, environmental hazards, etc.

- **Briefly highlight one group** working to address the social determinant of death or cause of death to create a better future and summarize their efforts.

- **500 – 1,000 word description explaining your infographic** including a brief description of the quantitative data, the quality of the data, the patterns the data reveals, primary causes of death encountered, and comparison between countries.

Students will be evaluated on their engagement with the topic, collaboration, and inclusion of assignment components.

Site Prompts

Site prompts are short written assignments about SOC site visits. These are designed to help students think through how features, memorials, and exhibits of our host communities and the social movements they embody resist structural violences revealed by the social determinants of death.

Prompts will be uploaded for each country. For each prompt, students will take 1 photo of an exhibit and provide a 1 paragraph response on how the social movements we encounter tackle issues of social disparity and enact people's rights to life. 20% (4 @ 5%).

New York

- National Museum of the American Indian
- African Burial Ground National Monument
- Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire memorial

Ghana

- Memorials at Elmina or Cape Coast castle
- Exhibit at the Nkyinkyim Museum.

Mexico

- Guelatao Autonomous Community

Indonesia

- Diorama at Bajra Sandhi.

Participation:
Participation means completing all assigned readings before each faculty session, engaging in discussion in class, and asking questions in class. Always come to class with 1- 2 critical questions about that week's readings. Be prepared to speak about what you found most interesting, important, or challenging about the reading assignment and how it does or does not connect to program activities.

Note on Attendance: Due to the nature of this experiential program, full participation in all classes and program activities is required. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the Program Director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, which may impact grades. Excessive, unexcused absences could result in program dismissal. Alternative work for absences will be expected.

Note on Late Assignments: IHP programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis with approval from the Program Director or other designated staff person. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. Students who do not submit their work within the extension period will receive a failing grade.

Grading Scale
94-100%   A
90-93%   A-
87-89%   B+
84-86%   B
80-83%   B-
77-79%   C+
74-76%   C
70-73%   C-
67-69%   D+
64-66%   D
below 64   F

Program Expectations
In order to make the most of the opportunities presented in program, communicate respectfully, prepare for student success, and demonstrate best possible engagement, SIT has the following expectations of students:

● **Content Considerations:** The texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will

flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.

- **Learning Community:** Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across differences and consider other perspectives with respect.
- **Presence.** Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- **Engage**. Ask questions in class. Interact with the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- **Be Honest.** Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- **Store Your Work:** Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- **Personal Technology Use**: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- **Course Communication:** Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- **Recording Policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use. Documented academic accommodations may supersede this policy.

SIT Policies and Resources
SIT Policies and Resources
Please refer to the Policies section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as Library resources and research support, Accessibility Services, Counseling Services, Title IX information, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion resources.

Course Schedule
Note that this is a "living" syllabus with required and recommended readings. Readings are likely to change to take advantage of new opportunities or schedule changes. Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs

Readings Key:
Required Text – This reading will be part of a class discussion
Recommended Text – This reading reinforces and clarifies a site visit or guest lecture
Further Reading – This reading expands on topics that may relate to individual student interests
Reference – This reading is a classic work or database whose content may be referenced in class

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MODULE #1: NEW YORK, NY

Session 1 : Death by Numbers, I: Necropolitics
When is a death natural? When is it political? And when does it result in social change? This session introduces necropolitics as an understanding that socio-political structures dictate the rights of life and enactments of death differentially in a society. Deaths that come across as natural or invisible – perhaps first apprehended in mortality and morbidity rates – may then actually result from the systematic creation of vulnerabilities that lead to slow deaths over time. This session will look at how mortality and morbidity data capture existing structures of social harm – and what new trends in research reveal about "deaths of despair" in America.

Required Texts:
- Geller, P. (2021). What is necropolitics? In P. Geller (Ed.) *Theorizing Bioarchaeology,* Sections 5.1-5.3; 5.6
- Case, A., & Deaton, A. (2015). Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among white non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st century. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *112*(49), 15078-15083.
- Summary article for Case and Deaton (2015) also found here: https://www.thecut.com/2016/12/america-is-failing-the-bad-break-test-and-people-are-dying.html
- Adair, T., Mikkelsen, L., Hooper, J., Badr, A., & Lopez, A. D. (2023). Assessing the policy utility of routine mortality statistics: a global classification of countries. *Bulletin of*

the World Health Organization, 101(12), 777–785. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.2471/BLT.22.289036

Recommended Texts:
- Video: Vox. (2021). How this New York island became a mass grave. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SF3eddIIy3U&ab_channel=Vox
- Truong, N., & Asare, A. O. (2021). Assessing the effect of socio-economic features of low-income communities and COVID-19 related cases: An empirical study of New York City. *Global Public Health*, 16(1), 1–16. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.1080/17441692.2020.1850830

- Edwards, F., Esposito, M. H., & Lee, H. (2018). Risk of police-involved death by race/ethnicity and place, United States, 2012-2018. *American Journal of Public Health*, 108(9), 1241–1248. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304559

Reference Texts:

- Mbembe, A. (2003). *Necropolitics* Public Culture, 15 (1) 11–40.
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the postcolony.* "Introduction" and "Out of this World."

Session 2 : Postcolonial Melancholia and the Politics of Mourning

Mourning is a valorization of the right to life, and who we choose to mourn is who we choose to value. Paul Gilroy, expanding from Stuart Hall, argues that nations have not moved beyond the colonial, but live in melancholia of it. "Melancholia" is not a nostalgic sadness but a historic diagnosis of a manifest pathological condition. New racisms are continuously invented and forwarded, such as the recent invention of British noble whiteness to lament the loss of the empire. Rather than being the lasting "side-effects" of colonial histories and enslavement systems, racism also operates as a replacement for those physical systems extending from modern Postcolonial Melancholia. Mourning is working through loss, accepting change, and incorporating the past into a new identity, but melancholia is a refusal to acknowledge loss and idealization of what is gone. This frame not only alerts people to the active workings of necropolitics today, but the role of affect in nation-making and the making of necropolitical categories. This session will look at the political of mourning, and the question of who becomes memorialized, and why activist efforts are launched to mourn the dead as part of greater social movements.

Required Texts:

- Blakey M. L. (2010). African burial ground project: Paradigm for cooperation? *Museum International*, *62*(1-2), 61-68
- Pool, H. (2012). The politics of mourning: The Triangle Fire and political belonging. Polity, 44(2), 182–211

Recommended Texts:

- Gilroy, P. (2005). *Postcolonial melancholia*. Columbia University Press. Chapter 1.
- Video: PBS. (2019). The Fire of a Movement. https://www.pbs.org/video/the-fire-of-a-movement-wwhbxf/
- Milstein, C. (2019). *Rebellious mourning: The collective work of grief*. AK Press. (Introduction and Chapter 4)

Further Reading:

- Barrett, A. R., & Blakey, M. L. (2011). Life histories of enslaved Africans in colonial New York: a bioarchaeological study of the New York African Burial Ground. *Social bioarchaeology*, 212-251.
- Seeman, E. R. "Reassessing the "Sankofa symbol" in New York's African burial ground." *William & Mary Quarterly* 67.1 (2010): 101-122.

Reference Texts:

- Hall, S. (1996). New ethnicities. In D. Morley & K.-H. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 441–449). Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. K. (Ed.). (1990). *Nation and narration*. Routledge. (Selections)
- Stepan, N. (1982). *The idea of race in science: Great Britain, 1800–1960*. London, UK: Macmillan. (Selections)
- Verdery, K. (1999). *The political lives of dead bodies: Reburial and postsocialist change*. Columbia University Press.

Learning on Location:
- The African Burial Ground National Monument
- Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

Session 3: Indigenous STS, Statistics, and Resistance
Statistics and scientific racism had a role in the creation of necropolitical categories – but indigenous communities in recent years have pushed back against the idea that scientific

methods are inherently antithetical to indigenous lifeways and argue that science was always a part of community lifeways. Indigenous knowledge systems challenge and elaborate scientific operations to develop greater transparency by thinking about *why* questions are asked, *who* collects and interprets the data, and *how* results are used in subaltern contexts? What makes the difference between how quantitative data is used as eyes of the state, and used instead to reveal social disparities and structures of harm secretly at work? This session will look at how indigenous science and technology frameworks revalue indigenous lifeways and increase the rigor of both scientific and quantitative method.

Required Texts:

- Andersen, C., Walter, M., Kukutai, T., & Gabel, C. (2025). *Indigenous statistics: From data deficits to data sovereignty* (2nd ed.). Routledge (Chapters 1 and 3).

Recommended Texts:

- Stemwedel, J. D. (2011, October 4). *Drawing the line between science and pseudo-science*. Scientific American. Retrieved from https://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/doing-good-science/drawing-the-line-between-science-and-pseudo-science/

Reference Texts:

- Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed editions. (Selections)
- Chambers, D. W., & Gillespie, R. (2000). Locality in the history of science: Colonial science, technoscience, and indigenous knowledge. *Osiris*, *15*, 221-240.
- Seth, S. (2009). Putting knowledge in its place: Science, colonialism, and the postcolonial. *Postcolonial Studies, 12*(4), 373–38

Learning on Location:
- National Museum of the American Indian

MODULE #2: GHANA

Session 4: Death by Numbers, II
This class session examines the structuring of mortalitity/morbidity data and begins the conversation of potential social patterns behind data. Who is dying? How are they dying? Who is collecting and how reliable is the data?

Required Texts:
- WHO. Global health estimates: Life expectancy and leading causes of death and disability. *Global Health Observatory*. https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates
- WHO Data. Ghana: Health data overview for the Republic of Ghana. https://data.who.int/countries/288
- Afele, M. (2011). Volunteers vital for counting births and deaths in Ghana. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 89(5), 322–323. https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.11.020511
- Owusu, A. Y., Kushitor, S. B., Ofosu, A. A., Kushitor, M. K., Ayi, A., & Awoonor-Williams, J. K. (2021). Institutional mortality rate and cause of death at health facilities in Ghana between 2014 and 2018. *PLoS ONE*, 16(9), 1–15. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.1371/journal.pone.0256515

Session 5: Deep Dive: Healthcare, Economics, and Intervention

This session looks at the major socio-economic and historic factors that influence mortality and morbidity rates. Intervention is often framed as tackling natural discrepancies in development levels – but very often these discrepancies are influenced by both historic events and active processes in the present. Very often, the imagined categories do not fit the situation or cultural contexts on the ground – partly a result of naturalizing necropolitical categories. Even more, these making of intervener and subject categories also distracts people from factors important to the success in these regions – such as the role of African spirit "ancestors" in facilitating public health deployment. At the same time, people still need to pursue cross-cultural partnerships. But what makes interventions life-affirming or death creating? This session will tackle these questions through quantitative and qualitative data to examine how inequalities become social determinants of death, how they are framed, and insights into social movements that demonstrate success.

Required Texts:
- Aidoo, T. A. (1982). Rural health under colonialism and neocolonialism: a survey of the Ghanaian experience. *International Journal of Health Services*, *12*(4), 637-657.
- Boachie, M. K., & Ramu, K. (2016). Effect of public health expenditure on health status in Ghana. *International Journal of Health*, *4*(1), 6-11.
- Adua, E., Frimpong, K., Li, X., & Wang, W. (2017). Emerging issues in public health: a perspective on Ghana's healthcare expenditure, policies and outcomes. *EPMA Journal*, *8*(3), 197-206.
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Recommended Texts:

- Uzondu, C. (2013). Theorizing necro-ontology, resisting necro-economics. *Atlantic Studies*, *10*(3), 323-349.
- Price, R. M. (1984). Neo-colonialism and Ghana's economic decline: a critical assessment. *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue canadienne des études africaines*, *18*(1), 163-194.
- Biehl, J., & Petryna, A. (2013). Critical global health. In J. Biehl & A. Petryna (Eds.), *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health* (pp. 1–22). Princeton University Press.

Further Reading:
- Blakemore, E. (2019, February 1). *How an enslaved African man in Boston helped save generations from smallpox. History*. A&E Television Networks. https://www.history.com/articles/smallpox-vaccine-onesimus-slave-cotton-mather
- Mavhunga, C. C. (2015). Guerrilla healthcare innovation: Creative resilience in Zimbabwe's Chimurenga, 1971–1980. *History and Technology, 31*(3), 295–323
- Ferguson, J. (1994). *Anti-politics machine: Development, depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. U of Minnesota Press. Chapter 1.
- Cueto, M. (2013). A return to the magic bullet? Malaria and global health in the twenty-first century. In J. Biehl & A. Petryna (Eds.), *When People Come First: Critical Studies In Global Health* (pp. 30–53). Princeton University Press.

Session 6: Atlantic Slave Trade and Collective Mourning as Activism in Pan-Africanism

This session looks at the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade with an eye towards modern efforts to turn passed departeds into honored ancestors. Cape Coast and Elmina Castles are powerful remnants of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade imbued with histories of violence. During this period, the concept of race was systematically invented to excuse political embarrassment and justify enslaving systems. Both castles are some of the earliest examples of racialized architecture in the door of no returns that transformed humans into numbers. Nearby, the Nkyinkyim Museum highlights this history through artifacts, oral histories, and art, emphasizing the importance of collective mourning in Pan-African movements. By remembering and honoring those who died, these spaces reinforce the integration of the dead into the formation of collective futures.

Recommended Texts:
- DeCorse, C. (2001). *An Archaeology of Elmina: Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast, 1400-1900.* Smithsonian Press. (Selections)
- Apter, A. (2017). History in the dungeon: Atlantic slavery and the spirit of capitalism in Cape Coast Castle, Ghana. *The American Historical Review, 122*(1), 23-54.

Further Reading:

- Brantlinger, P. (1985). Victorians and Africans: The genealogy of the myth of the dark continent. *Critical Inquiry*, *12*(1), 166-203.
- Balakrishnan, S. (2022). Building the ancestral public: Cemeteries and the necropolitics of property in Colonial Ghana. *Journal of Social History*, 56(1), 89–113. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.1093/jsh/shac010

Learning on Location
- Assing Manso Slave River site
- Elmina Castle
- Cape Coast Castle
- Nkyinkyim Museum

MODULE #3: MEXICO

Session 9: Death by Numbers III
This class session examines the structuring of mortalitity/morbidity data and begins the conversation of potential social patterns behind data. Who is dying? How are they dying? Who is collecting and how reliable is the data?

Required Texts:

- WHO. Global Health Estimates: Life expectancy and leading causes of death and disability. *Global Health Observatory*.
- WHO Data. Mexico: Health data overview for the United Mexican States. https://data.who.int/countries/484
- Block, M. Á. G., Morales, H. R., Hurtado, L. C., Balandrán, A., Méndez, E., & World Health Organization. (2020). Mexico: health system review. https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/2fa96fb5-c888-4f67-9408-6b7b99874863/content

Further Reading:

- Phillips, M., & Salmeron, J. (1992). Diabetes in Mexico: a serious and growing problem. *World Health Statistics Quarterly*, *45*, 338-338.

- Murray, C. J., Dias, R. H., Kulkarni, S. C., Lozano, R., Stevens, G. A., & Ezzati, M. (2008). Improving the comparability of diabetes mortality statistics in the US and Mexico. *Diabetes Care*, *31*(3), 451-458.
- Canudas-Romo, V., Aburto, J. M., García-Guerrero, V. M., & Beltrán-Sánchez, H. (2017). Mexico's epidemic of violence and its public health significance on average length of life. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, *71*(2), 188-193.
- Mohar-Betancourt, A., Reynoso-Noverón, N., Armas-Texta, D., Gutiérrez-Delgado, C., & Torres-Domínguez, J. A. (2017). Cancer trends in Mexico: essential data for the creation and follow-up of public policies. *Journal of global oncology*, *3*(6), 740-748.
- Stevens, G., Dias, R. H., Thomas, K. J. A., Rivera, J. A., Carvalho, N., Barquera, S., ... & Ezzati, M. (2008). Characterizing the epidemiological transition in Mexico: national and subnational burden of diseases, injuries, and risk factors. *PLoS medicine*, *5*(6)
- Lomnitz, C. (2020). The depreciation of life during Mexico City's transition into" the Crisis" 1. In *Wounded cities* (pp. 47-69). Routledge.

Learning on Location

- Guest speaker from the National School of Anthropology and History

Session 9: Autonomous Communities of Oaxaca

The focus on "mestizo" identities subsumes and hides "indigeneity" in national statistics. However, autonomous communities practice their indigeneity as cultures of resistance. Very often, this results in the formation of collectivist social structures that become anchors for expressions of culture, economy, language, identity, and governance. In this session, students will examine the autonomous community of Guelatao its way of life embodied in the *comunalidad* concept. *Comunalidad, i*s an indigenous resistance ontology that originates in the history of dispossession; in the obligatory relationship that indigenous communities were left with by the conquest and voracious exploitation of the land. *Comunalidad* is the outcome of resistance to colonial history that reorganizes and affirms indigenous lifeways in contrast to larger socio-political systems.

Required Texts:

- Altamirano-Jiménez, I. (2020). Communality as everyday indigenous sovereignty in Oaxaca, Mexico. *In Routledge handbook of critical indigenous studies* (pp. 337-346). Routledge.

Recommended Texts:

- Aquino Centeno, S. (2024). Autonomies and the Construction of Communal Economies in Zapotec Villages in Oaxaca, Mexico. *Latin American Perspectives*, *51*(5), 81-100.
- Additional readings may be provided by guest speakers

Learning on Location
- Excursion to Guelatao Autonomous Community

Session 10: Deep Dive: Migrant Deaths, Missing Persons, and Neoliberalism

Migration stories tell of people leaving arduous lands for better pastures. They do not always tell us the full stories of who they are or how migrants are made. This session looks at the stories of missing persons in migration studies of Oaxaca. The US border is not only a line but a death-producing infrastructure where migrant bodies are intentionally exposed to death. Detention centers, deportation regimes, and militarized checkpoints create zones where life is administratively suspended. But what happens for families back home when someone goes missing in the US death zones? This talk will engage activist non-profits and their attempts relocating missing loved ones and their stories.

Required Texts:
- Reineke, R., & Martínez, D. E. (2014). Migrant Deaths in the Americas (United States and Mexico). *Fatal journeys: Tracking lives lost during migration*, *45*, 45-75.

Recommended Texts:
- Obinna, D. N. (2025). Death in the Borderlands: Necropolitics and migration-related mortality at the US–Mexico border. *Politics & Policy, 53*(3), 512–534.
- Giordano, A., & Spradley, M. K. (2017). Migrant deaths at the Arizona–Mexico border: Spatial trends of a mass disaster. *Forensic science international*, *280*, 200-212.
- McLean, L. (2020). A question that has no end: the politics of life and death in the search for disappeared migrants in Mexico. *Citizenship Studies*, 24(8), 994–1009. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.1080/13621025.2020.1769027

Further Reading:

- De León, J. (2015). *The land of open graves: Living and dying on the migrant trail*. University of California Press. Introduction, Chapter 3
- Kaplan, M. A., & Spradley, M. K. (2022). Lost in plain sight: How current burial practices impact migrant death investigation in South Texas. *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, 46(2), 122–139. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.1111/napa.12189

- Tracey, C. (2020). "Fértil Camposanto Llamado México": Contemporary poetry of U.S.-Mexico border deaths. *Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies* (JOLLAS), 10(2), 1–13. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.18085/1549-9502.10.2.1
- Soto, G. (2016). Migrant memento mori and the geography of risk. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 16(3), 335–358. https://doi-org.reference.sit.edu/10.1177/1469605316673171
- Nevins, J. (2008). In Age of Migration, Human Rights Declaration Falls Short. https://www.commondreams.org/views/2008/12/10/age-migration-human-rights-declaration-falls-short
- Dickinson, E. (2017). Globalization & Migration: a world in motion. Lanham: Rowman &Littlefield.- Chapter 3: The Global South
- Wilson, B. K., Burnstan, A., Calderon, C., & Csordas, T. J. (2023). "Letting die" by design: Asylum seekers' lived experience of postcolonial necropolitics. *Social Science & Medicine*, *320*, 115714.
- Business of Immigration. New York: Seven Stories.- Chapter 1: "The Border Crackdown"

Learning on Location

- Guest speaker and activist from migrant rights non-profit: MANOS, Migrantes Apoyados No Olvidados

MODULE #4: INDONESIA

Session 13: Death by Numbers IV

This class session examines the structuring of mortalitity/morbidity data and begins the conversation of potential social patterns behind data. Who is dying? How are they dying? Who is collecting and how reliable is the data?

Required Texts:

- WHO. Global Health Estimates: Life expectancy and leading causes of death and disability. *Global Health Observatory*. https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-globalhealth-estimates
- WHO Data. Indonesia: Health data overview for the Republic of Indonesia. https://data.who.int/countries/360

Further Reading:

- Mboi, N., Syailendrawati, R., Ostroff, S. M., Elyazar, I. R., Glenn, S. D., Rachmawati, T., ... & Mokdad, A. H. (2022). The state of health in Indonesia's provinces, 1990–2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019. *The Lancet Global Health*, *10*(11), 1632-1645.
- Suparmi, Kusumawardani, N., Nambiar, D., Trihono, & Hosseinpoor, A. R. (2018). Subnational regional inequality in the public health development index in Indonesia. *Global Health Action*, *11*(sup1), 41-53.
- Setyadi, S., Kustanto, A., & Widiastuti, A. (2023). Life expectancy in Indonesia: the role of health infrastructure, political, and socioeconomic status. *Iranian Economic Review*, *27*(3), 965-1005.
- Agustina, R., Dartanto, T., Sitompul, R., Susiloretni, K. A., Achadi, E. L., Taher, A., ... & Khusun, H. (2019). Universal health coverage in Indonesia: concept, progress, and challenges. *The Lancet*, *393*(10166), 75-102.
- Lanjouw, P., Pradhan, M., Saadah, F., Sayed, H., & Sparrow, R. (2002). Poverty, education and health in Indonesia: Who benefits from public spending?. *Education and Health Expenditures, and Development: The Cases of Indonesia and Peru. Development Centre Studies, OECD Development Centre, Paris*, 17-78.

Session 12: Puputan, Ritual Death, and Resistance

Puputan is a Balinese term derived from *puput*, meaning "to finish" or "to bring to completion." Historically, it refers to a final act of collective resistance carried out when defeat was considered inevitable. In the 1906 *Puputan Badung*, the Balinese court in the Kingdom of Badung chose to deny submission to Dutch colonial authorities. Within Balinese cultural systems where authority was connected to spirituality, submission to colonial forces would create cosmological crises, and dharma law commanded against colonial subjugation. The *Puputan Badung* was the result. In these acts, death was enacted as agency against subjugation as a necropolitical category. Students will visit the memorial of the *Puputan Badung* that depicts histories of the fight for rights of life against Dutch colonialism.

Recommended Texts:

- Creese, H. (2006). A Puputan tale: "The story of a pregnant woman". *Indonesia*, (82), 1-37.
- Campbell, S. (2014). Bali at war: a painted story of resistance to colonial rule. *International Institute of Asian Studies Newsletter*, *68*.

Reference Texts:

- Wiener, M. J. (1995). *Visible and invisible realms: power, magic, and colonial conquest in Bali*. University of Chicago Press. (Selections)

Learning on Location

- Site Visit to Bajra Sandhi

Session 13: Deep Dive: Gendered Death

Like the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in the United States, gendered necropolitics also operate in Indonesia. Indonesia is also home to many activist efforts to empower gendered categories against structured vulnerability – particularly in femicide reduction. While Indonesia does not always use the legal category "femicide", patterns of intimate partner killings, honor-based violence, and sexualized murder demonstrate how women's deaths are structured by gendered power rather than random criminality. In Indonesia, many killings of women occur in domestic or intimate context and are framed as crimes of passion, household disputes, and the moral failings of individuals. However, Southeast Asian feminist scholars argue that such framings obscure structural conditions of economic dependency, weak enforcement of domestic violence protections, cultural norms privileging male authority, and victim-blaming narratives. Necropolitically, femicide is not only an act of individual violence—it is enabled by a regime in which women's lives are not equally secured by the state. In this guest talk, students will examine the necropolitics of gender in Indonesia and the efforts at right to life.

Required Texts:

- United Nations. (2023). Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide): Global estimates of female intimate partner/family-related homicides in 2022. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/11/gender-related-killings-ofwomen-and-girls-femicide-feminicide-globalestimates2022#:~:text=Publication%20year%3A%202023&text=This%20year%20recorded%20the%20highest,related%20killings%20is%20gradually%20increasing.
- Noer, K. U., Chadijah, S. and Rudiatic, E. (2021). There is no trustable data: the state and data accuracy of violence against women in Indonesia. *Heliyon*, 7 (12), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e08552.
- Jakarta Feminist. (2022). Femicide: An analysis of online coverage of cases of murdered women in Indonesia in 2021. https://jakartafeminist.com/portfolio/femicide-an-analysis-of-onlinecoverage-of-cases-of-murdered-women-in-indonesia-in-2021/
- Pratiwi, A. M. (2019). What's missing from media reports on femicide? *Jakarta Post*. https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/09/12/whats-missing-from-media-reports-onfemicide.html.

Recommended Texts:

- Silvey, R. (2003). Spaces of protest: gendered migration, social networks, and labor activism in
West Java, Indonesia. *Political Geography*, *22*(2), 129-155.
Learning on Location
- Islekel, E. S. (2022). Gender in Necropolitics: Race, sexuality, and gendered death. *Philosophy Compass*, *17*(5).
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak?

Learning on Location

- Guest speaker from Airlangga University on gendered necropolitics