

GERO 493:
Spring 2014
M-Th 9:00am-12:00 in the U.S.
See assigned times in Italy
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Email: sengui@aol.com

Longevity and Death among Ancient and Modern European Populations (Italy)

COURSE OUTLINE

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides a look at ancient and modern cultures in terms of longevity, health behaviors and end of life practices. We will explore the role of religion and culture in determining and defining death practices, ceremonies, and other customs. Class discussions and field trips will demonstrate the strong connection between religious and afterlife beliefs and body disposal practices. We will discuss the influence of these customs on modern practices.

In our look at longevity and health behaviors, we will discuss how the discoveries of ancient humans and bodies that have been preserved illuminate the connection between diet, health, and disease. Blue Zones, demographic and geographic regions that have clusters of populations with extended longevity, will be discussed to understand factors associated with longevity among isolated cultures. Nutrition and other health behaviors will be compared in modern and ancient cultures. We will also discuss the evolution of disease throughout history.

Finally, we will discuss how these ancient customs influence our modern day lifestyles, aging patterns, and end of life practices. How does this history impact our lifestyle and end of life choices today?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the rates and causes of death throughout history.
2. Contrast the various death practices and beliefs among ancient and modern cultures.
3. Describe how religion influences death rituals and practices.
4. Understand how ancient practices have influenced modern day pre and post death practices.
5. Describe the role of health behaviors in the evolution of longevity.
6. Describe the changing patterns of disease throughout history.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Articles as assigned

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. **Class Participation (15%)**
   Participation is a critical component of this course and of the student’s final grade. As much of the content of this course requires attendance at historical sights and museums, participation in these events is mandatory. Participation will be monitored and the final grade set according to the level of participation across the class sessions.

2. **Quiz (25%)**
   A quiz will be given on the first four class lectures and related readings.

3. **Final Paper: Ancient Italy Populations and Practices (35%)**
   Each student will select an ancient population studied in class and provide in in-depth research paper on a particular element of this culture discussed in class. Students are encouraged to narrow their focus in order to provide a quality overview of a particular topic. For example, students can discuss death ceremonies or religious beliefs or body disposal practices among Etruscans, Romans, or early Catholics. Final papers should be written in APA style and be 5-7 pages in length and should have appropriate references. **Final papers must be submitted electronically through Blackboard. If you are unable to submit via Blackboard, be sure to email the paper to your instructor before the deadline.**

4. **Presentation (25%)**
   At designated times, students will formally present their paper topic in an experiential and/or didactic format to the class for our collective education and understanding. Presentations should be approximately 30 minutes in length. As part of their presentation, students should use handouts, articles, and other media to support their topic. Grades for presentations will be assigned by the instructor and your classmates (your audience). This peer grading system will require critical listening by the audience so that grades are fair and consistent across presentations.

Grade Breakdown
Students are expected to attend all classes. **Students with more than two unexcused absences risk failure.** This policy exists because the gerontology program is one of professional preparation and each session accounts for a large portion of class hours. In addition to acquiring theoretical knowledge, students are expected to acquire professional values, to integrate knowledge from a range of courses, to develop professional skills and be socialized into the profession. The faculty of this school is convinced that this cannot be accomplished through independent study alone. Thus, attendance at classes is required unless legitimate and special reasons exist for absences or tardiness. Any such absences or tardiness should be discussed directly with the course instructor, prior to the occurrence when possible.

University of Southern California policy permits students to be excused from class, without penalty, for the observance of religious holy days. This policy also covers scheduled final examinations which conflict with students’ observance of a holy day. Students must make arrangements in advance to complete class work which will be missed, or to reschedule an examination, due to holy days observance.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Plagiarism and other academic integrity violation will result in an F for that assignment. **Two instances of academic integrity violations during this course will result in a course grade of F.**

Academic integrity violations will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. With regard to course papers, academic integrity violations include plagiarism, turning in purchased papers, turning in papers written for someone else, turning in papers written for another class. See SCampus for more information on academic integrity. The Office of Student Conduct also has a publication: Academic Integrity, Guide for Graduate Students:

[http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/GradIntegrity.pdf](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/GradIntegrity.pdf)
A SPECIAL NOTE ON THE INTERNET AS A SOURCE:

The Internet is a wonderful mechanism for obtaining information. Many professional journals and libraries now have their materials on the web, so you can consult them from your home or office. And web sites can direct you to important data sources. However, web sites are NOT professionally reviewed and are often biased. They cannot substitute for professional journals. They may be considered in the category of "popular sources," as described above. Hence, no more than 2 of your sources may be from a combination of such sources, including web sites. You will lose points if you depend on them.

COURSE OUTLINE

--USC Campus Week 1--

July 28
Session 1:  Course Introduction:
What we can learn from the dead
The role of social economic status on health outcomes
Review Syllabus
Orientation: Travel abroad tips
Lecture:
Variation in lifespan by countries
Factors contributing to longevity
Death rates and causes throughout history
Effects of changes in cause of death on burial practices

July 29
Session 2:
Introduction to ancient populations: Etruscans and Romans
Period Overview: Iron age

Reading: Chapters 1 & 2 of Toynbee (1996)

Etruscan and Roman religion and end of life practices


July 30
Session 3: Blue zones


July 31
Pompeii Exhibit

Religion and its influence on end-of-life practices and customs
The birth of Christianity
Roman Catholic evolution

Reading: “The Big Religion Chart,” www.religion.com

Rebay-Salisbury, (2012) Inhumation and cremation: how burial practices are linked to beliefs. Academia.edu

Quiz

August 1st
Travel to Milan, Italy

ITALY

August 2nd
No class/free day
Suggested site: Milan Cathedral
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 3rd</td>
<td>Cimitero Monumentale Di Milano</td>
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<td>Train to Bolzano</td>
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<td>Special Lecture on recent biological discoveries from Otzi and mummies.</td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<td><em>Ewen Callaway. Iceman's DNA reveals health risks and relations</em></td>
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<td><em>Otzi's genome hints at heart disease, bacterial infection and</em></td>
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<td><em>common ancestry with modern-day Sardinians.</em></td>
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<td>August 4th</td>
<td>Meet for Orientation from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM</td>
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<td>Followed by organized tour of the South Tyrol Museum of Archeology (10 am)</td>
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<td>Viewing of the Otzi (ice man)</td>
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<td>Cable car trip to Renon (lunch)</td>
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<td>Hike--View Earth Monuments and Dolomites</td>
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<td>August 5th</td>
<td><em>Early Morning: Travel to Florence</em></td>
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<td>Free day in Florence</td>
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<td>Suggested sites: David, Duomo, Medici Chapel,</td>
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<td>August 6th</td>
<td>Travel to Siena</td>
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<td>Siena City tour</td>
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<td>Dinner and discussion in Siena (Restaurant housed in Etruscan building)</td>
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<td>August 7th</td>
<td>Siena</td>
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<td>Day trip to</td>
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<td>August 8th</td>
<td>Travel to Volterra</td>
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<td>Etruscan Guarnacci Museum and debrief discussion</td>
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<td>Alabaster museum &amp; Roman ruins</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Reading:</strong> *Cles-Reden, Sibylle (1955). <em>The buried people; a study</em></td>
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<td><em>of the Etruscan world. Handout</em></td>
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<td>*<em>Reading: Kron, G. (2012) Flesheing out the demography of</em></td>
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<td><em>Etruria, The Etruscan World. Handout</em></td>
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August 9th
Breakfast lecture on Traquina
Volterra city tour

August 10th:
Trip to Traquinia
Tour Etruscan tombs and visit archeological museum
Lunch and discussion of tour

Travel to Rome

August 11th
Tour of the Vatican
Discussion of the influence of Catholicism on end of life and
death practices.

How religion influenced burial customs: Comparison tours of
protestant and catholic cemeteries.
Tour Roman cemetery
Tour: Protestant cemetery

August 12th
Tour of the Pantheon, Coliseum, Forum

Discussion of early polytheistic beliefs of the iron age. Include
discussion of sacrifice, deities, funeral customs and afterlife
beliefs

Reading: Chapter 4 Toynbee (1996)
Reading: Steinberg, S. (2011) Cultural and religious aspects of
palliative care. International Journal of Critical Illness and

August 13th
Museum and Crypt of Capuchins
Catacomb tour
Tour: Basilica of St. John Lateran, site of first catholic church in
Italy and resting place of six popes

Reading: Chapters 5 & 6 Toynbee (1996)

3 pm – 5 pm

Readings:

August 14th  Travel to Palermo, Sicily

Lecture: Role of diet in longevity and health: Mediterranean diet and beyond.

Food tour

Readings:

Smith, in Rüpke (ed), 35 - 6: Rome’s Latin neighbors significantly influenced the development of its domestic and funerary architecture.

August 15th  Palermo, Sicily

Catacombe dei Cappuccini

August 16th  Conclusions and wrap up.

Flight back to Milan

August 17th  Class adjourn (travel back to US/other destinations)