Graves, Bodies, and Books:
Funerary Commemorations from Antiquity to the 21st c.
FYSEM-UA 747

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Course Description
In 2014, the start-up company Eterni.me began offering its services to preserve deceased loved-ones as 3-D avatars. In the first four days of its existence, the company registered 3,000 people on its site and, consequently, joined the ranks of many other companies in the ‘e-death’ industry that promise to prolong the life of a family member or friend beyond biological death. Companies like Eterni.me -- and the Digital Age, more generally -- will surely change the way that societies commemorate their dead. Yet, humans have always named their dead and marked their final resting places with a monument to ensure that they will be remembered beyond a single generation.

In this freshman seminar, we will explore the human tendency to locate the dead in society and to engage with them postmortem through a series of case studies, both literary and historical. More specifically, this course will focus on the commemoration of deceased writers, poets, and, in some cases, artists, and will ask why it is that the tombs of such figures often become the focus of tourism.

Who visits such monuments? What do they do there? How does the tomb help ensure a writer’s “immortality” after his or her biological death? This seminar will begin to answer these and similar questions through the study of ancient Greek and Latin poetry in translation, and, more specifically, through the tombs that ancient poets imagine for themselves in their verse. In the second half of the class, the scope of the course will be broadened to study a selection of funerary monuments dedicated to writers and poets of the 19th and 20th centuries. Finally, we will consider the 21st century’s evolving relationship to traditional modes of commemoration, as well as to digital and experimental forms of memorialization.

By the end of the course, students will be able to articulate the development and reception of the poet’s tomb motif specifically and eloquently, in writing and in speech, and to appreciate modern society’s continued investment in the dead bodies and the tombs of those it claims as its “geniuses.”

Teaching and Learning Methods
The chief work of this seminar is the reading of the assigned texts. Most classes will be presented as a combination of lecture and guided discussion. Lecture and discussion will be supplemented with illustrated slides and walking tours when applicable. Occasionally, students will be asked to work together in groups to answer questions or to think critically about the primary themes of identity, commemoration, and immortality both orally and in written responses. Each assignment
will receive constructive feedback. Students should visit office hours both before and after these assignments are due. These visits count towards the students’ participation grade.

**Class Assessments**

1. **Participation (15%)** Your success in this seminar rests on the active reading of assigned texts and materials, and contribution to class discussion. Read with a pen in hand and come to class prepared with questions and topics you would like to discuss.

2. **Homework Assignments (15%)** Before class each week, you will choose one passage (1-2 paragraphs max.) from one of the readings or assignments for the week, then write a brief response (1 page double spaced) and a question to pose to the class which indicates a theme or subject that interests you and that you think will be productive to class discussion. You will post your citation, response, and question to the Forum page on the NYU Classes site. Select posts will be used during class discussion.

3. **Short Paper (15%)** You will write one short paper on a topic given to you in advance. Papers should be 4-5 pages in length and will be due at class time.

4. **Tomb Project (20%)** Over the course of the semester, each student will engage in his/her own project analyzing a tomb and its affiliated decoration and epitaph in New York City. The objective of this project is not only to build your writing and observational skills, but also to stimulate a curiosity about the minds and the history of the city that will become your home during your years at NYU. You will choose a grave and visit it -- on your own time -- over the course of the semester. You will catalogue your visit with a reflective journal entry (minimum 2 pages typed and double-spaced), which you will post on our NYU Classes site. Your post will include select photographs (2 minimum) that you took along with captions and a brief description of the monument. Detailed guidelines will be distributed well in advance of the due date.

   **It is imperative that you visit your site during the day and when the cemetery and/or monument is open to the public.**

5. **Oral Presentation (10%)** Each student will give a brief, 5-8 minute presentation of their tomb project to the class. Students should draw on their journal entries, their photographs of the monument, as well as research about the deceased person and his or her artistic works.

6. **Final Paper (25%)** Your tomb project will culminate in your final paper. Drawing from your journal entry and oral presentation, you will connect your observations and reflections from your tomb visit to the course readings/materials. Your paper should also explain how the existence of such monuments informs your own relationship to New York City. A good paper will demonstrate sound knowledge of the themes, figures, and readings we have studied throughout the semester, and will show a strong capacity for literary and historical analysis as well as critical thinking. Papers should be approx. 10-12 pages in length.

N.B.: All written assignments should have a heading, be double spaced with 12 pt. font, and have 1-inch margins. Late work will suffer grade deductions.
Classroom Etiquette

● Please be on time to every class session. It is distracting to others, including the instructor, if you arrive late.
● Should you miss a class due to illness, family emergency, or religious holidays, you are expected to email the instructor directly with the reason for your absence and documentation if necessary.
● Bring all assigned readings to class with you. All readings will be made available on our NYU classes site.
● Electronic devices, such as a tablet or a computer, are permitted during class for note-taking and for accessing assigned readings. It is, however, highly encouraged that you bring hard copies so as not to be distracted by email, text messages, etc. Hard copies will be especially useful for when we travel to the local cemeteries throughout NYC.
● Please refrain from eating during the class period. If you have a snack, you will be able to eat it during the break.

Additional Information

1. Academic Integrity
As stated in NYU’s Academic Integrity Policy, “NYU expects and requires its students to adhere to the highest standards of scholarship, research and academic conduct. Essential to the process of teaching and learning is the periodic assessment of students’ academic progress through measures such as papers, examinations, presentations, and other projects. Academic dishonesty compromises the validity of these assessments as well as the relationship of trust within the community. Students who engage in such behavior will be subject to review and the possible imposition of penalties in accordance with the standards, practices, and procedures of NYU and its colleges and schools. Violations may result in failure on a particular assignment, failure in a course, suspension or expulsion from the University, or other penalties.” Students can familiarize themselves with the details of the academic policy at https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html.

2. Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:
Academic accommodations are available through the University for students with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 in the beginning of the semester.

NYU’s Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003-6675

Telephone: 212-998-4980
Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114
Web site: www.nyu.edu/csd
Provisional Course Schedule and Readings:

Week 1  
*Introduction to the course and to Bobst Library*

Week 2  
*Tombs of Fictitious Characters pt. 1, or, Death Comes to Arcadia*
⇒ Read: Theocritus *Idyll* 1 (pp. 3-6)
⇒ Read: Vergil *Eclogues* 5 (pp. 36-44)
⇒ Read: Vergil *Eclogues* 10 (pp. 66-74)
⇒ Read: Breed, *Pastoral Inscriptions: Reading and Writing Virgil's Eclogues* (pp. 52-74)

Week 3  
*Tombs of Fictitious Characters pt. 2, or, The Case of Charlotte Temple*
⇒ Read: Ovid *Heroides* 2, 7 (pp. 22-32) 7, (pp. 76-89) and 14 (pp. 164-173)
⇒ Read: Ovid *Metamorphoses* (pp. 23-35)
⇒ Read: Ramsby, *Textual Permanence: Roman Elegists and Epigraphic Tradition* (pp. 113-130)
⇒ Read: Rawson, Summary of *Charlotte Temple* on our Classes site and pp. 66-70
⇒ Read (optional): Keralis, “Pictures of Charlotte: The Illustrated Charlotte Temple and Her Readers” (pp. 25-57)

**Class meets at Trinity Churchyard**

Week 4  
*The Words of the Dead, or, Epitaphs, Monuments and Chronotopes*
⇒ Read: Wolf, *Cut These Words into My Stone* (pp. 47-107)
⇒ Read: Foucault, “Different Spaces” (pp. 175-185)
⇒ Read: Pereen, “Grave Stories” (pp. 55-68)

Week 5  
*The Poet’s Tomb*
⇒ Read: Tibullus 1.1, 1.3 (pp. 2-8; 14-20)
⇒ Read: Lygdamus 3.2 (See Crooks’ translation in the NYU Classes resources)
⇒ Read: Propertius 1.7, 1.17, 1.19, 2.1, 2.8, 2.13, 2.24, 3.1, 3.16 (pp. 3-72)
⇒ Read: Ovid, *Tristia* 3.3 (See Crooks’ translation in the NYU Classes resources)
⇒ Read: Ramsby, *Textual Permanence: Roman Elegists and the Epigraphic Tradition* (pp. 1-14)

**SHORT PAPER DUE**

Week 6  
*The Poet’s Tomb, ctd.*
⇒ Read: Ramsby, *Textual Permanence* (pp. 15-38; 39-72; 73-88; 89-112)

Week 7  
*Tending Historic Tombs, or, Silius Italicus and Statius at the Tomb of Vergil*
⇒ Read: Martial 11.48 and 11.50 (pp. 196-198 and Crooks’ translation on NYU Classes); Pliny Epistles 3.7 (pp. 183-187)
⇒ Read: Statius Silvae 4.4 (pp. 251-259)
⇒ Read: Godwin, Essay on Sepulchers (pp. 1-116)

Week 8  
New York’s Cemeteries, or Woodlawn Cemetery Visit  
⇒ Watch: “Why Do We Care for the Dead” <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZsWLWwNh4>> (52 minute lecture by historian, Thomas Laqueur, hosted by the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University)
⇒ Read: Harold Hart Crane, “At Melville’s Tomb” (lines 1-16)
⇒ Read: Countee Cullen, “The Shroud of Color;” (pp. 26-31) “Heritage;” (pp. 12-14) “A Brown Girl Dead;” (p. 6) “In Memory of Col. Charles Young;” (p. 16) “To John Keats, Poet, at Springtime” (p. 36)

*Class Meets at the front gates of the cemetery next to the end of the 4 train*

Week 9  
New York’s Cemeteries, or Green-wood Cemetery Visit  
⇒ Listen: “The Jet Song” West Side Story <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9z33lasnkU>>

Week 10  
Poet’s Corner(s) in London, Paris, and New York  
⇒ Read: N. Watson, The Literary Tourist (pp. 21-106)

Week 11  
Poet’s Writing on Poet’s Tombs, or, The Case of Keats  
⇒ Read: Shelley, “Adonais” (lines 1-495)
⇒ Read: Oscar Wilde, “Heu Miserande Puer” (lines 1-14)
⇒ Read: Gessner, “Wilde’s Tomb” (pp. 32-33)
⇒ Read: Matthews, Poetical Remains (pp. 1-15; 113-154)
⇒ Read: N. Watson, The Literary Tourist (pp.1-56)

Week 12  
Edgar Allan Poe, or, The Poet’s Tomb and Other Landmarks  
⇒ Read: Poe, “The Raven” (lines 1-108)
⇒ Read: Griswold (as Ludwig), “Death of Edgar Allan Poe,” in The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe (pp. 28-35)
⇒ Read: Mallarmé, “The Tomb of Edgar Poe” (lines 1-14)
⇒ Read: N. Watson, The Literary Tourist (pp. 56-106)

Week 13  
The Future of Funerary Commemoration  
⇒ Read and View: Toni Harrison, v (pp. 263-279)
⇒ Read: Parker, “How to Become Virtually Immortal”
   <<https://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/how-to-become-virtually-immortal>>
⇒ Read: Erizanu, “The biodegradable burial pod that turns your body into a tree”
⇒ Optional: Watch *Black Mirror* season 2, episode 1 “Be Right Back”
   o Description: A young woman mourning the untimely death of her husband discovers technology that can bring him back to life. The technology in the show is said to be based on actual A.I. products, including the Luka Chatbot.

*Second half of the class will be dedicated to workshopping presentations and final papers*

Week 14 Student Presentations

Week 15 Presentation Feedback, Final Discussion, and Review

**FINAL PAPER DUE**