The Tombs of the Poets: Funerary Commemorations from Antiquity to the 21st c.
FYSEM-UA 747
Stephanie Crooks

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 literary case studies. More specifically, this course will focus on the commemoration of deceased poets and will ask why it is that poets’ tombs are the destination of much literary tourism. Who visits poets’ tombs? What do they do there? How does the tomb help ensure a poet’s “immortality” after his biological death? This seminar will begin to answer these and similar questions through the study of ancient Greek and Latin poetry, and, more specifically, through the tombs that ancient poets imagine for themselves in their verse (e.g., Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid). In the second half of the class, the scope of the course will be broadened to study a selection of funerary monuments dedicated to Renaissance (e.g., Shakespeare), Enlightenment (e.g., Rousseau, Voltaire), and Romantic (e.g., Keats, Shelley) poets. 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. When possible, primary and secondary readings will be provided for students on the Classes site.

Assessment:
In-class writing and discussion 15%
Three short papers 60%
A final exam 25%

Classroom Etiquette:
Please be on time to every class session. It is distracting to others, including the professor, if you arrive late. All readings will be made available on our Classes site. Students should bring the assigned readings with them to each class. You may bring these on an electronic device, but it is highly encouraged that you bring hard copies so as not to be distracted by email, text messages, etc.

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 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.

**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](https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html).

**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](http://www.nyu.edu/csd)

**Provisional Course Schedule and Readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>The Tombs of Renato Bialetti, Carrie Fisher, and Prince</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Death Comes to Arcadia</td>
<td><em>Eclogues</em> 5 and 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Imagined Tombs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Book 2, Book 15
Ovid, *Tristia* 3.3
*Heroides* 2, 7, and 14

Week 4 Books, Stones, and Bones
“Hellenistic Period” in *Cut These Words into My Stone* (trans. Michael Wolfe)
Paper #1 Due

Week 5 Imagined Tombs
Tibullus 1.1, 1.3, 3.2
Ovid *Amores* 3.9

Week 6 Imagined Tombs
Propertius 1.7, 1.17, 1.19, 2.1, 2.8, 2.13, 2.24, 3.1, 3.16

Week 7 Tending the Tomb Silius Italicus and Statius
Martial 11.48 and 11.50; Pliny Ep. 3.7; Statius *Silvae* 4.7

Week 8 Woodlawn Cemetery Visit
Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*

Week 9 Green-wood Cemetery Visit
Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*
Paper #2 Due

Week 10 Shakespeare’s Tomb

Week 11 The Panthéon and Poet’s Corner
N. Watson, *The Literary Tourist*

Week 12 Keats, Shelley, and Dickinson
N. Watson, *The Literary Tourist*

Week 13 The Future of Funerary Commemoration

Week 14 Student Commemoration Project Presentations

Week 15 Final Review and Discussion
Paper #3 Due

Final Exam TBA