This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

*Stereoscope, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Boston, Late Nineteenth Century*

**Course Description:** This seminar explores the history of death, cemeteries, and burials in North America beginning in 1812. Themes include mourning, memorialization, material culture, gender, spirituality, heritage, tourism, colonialism, repatriation, social justice, and treatment of human remains.

**Prerequisite(s):** 1.0 History course at the 2200 level or above

**Course Syllabus:** This course may include visuals, readings, and themes that may be difficult. Please consider your personal ability to digest them at this time.

This course assumes that students will bring an understanding of North American chronological and thematic history. We also touch on sites outside of North America when we discuss death tourism and popular culture influenced by world events.

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We also focus on the process of doing history, that is, how to: interpret 2-D and 3-D primary sources; form historical questions for original research; understand historiography; read a journal article and a monograph; write and structure historical research papers; prepare a conference paper and presentation.

By the end of this course, students will:

- be familiar with historiographical issues in the history of death and mourning
- be able to identify classic and current historians in this field
- have practised the methodology/interpretation of material culture and cultural landscapes as historical evidence
- have practised finding and interpreting primary and/or archival sources
- have attempted to conduct original historical research
- have practised how to prepare a conference poster
- have practised life-long learning skills including: effective question formulation; research skills; critical thinking; written, visual, and oral communication

History outcomes and expectations for 4th year students:
https://www.history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/expectations__outcomes.html

Readings: All readings are online through the library catalogue – (LC) – or other sites, as noted below. No materials need to be purchased.

Methods of Evaluation: Students must complete all course elements to pass the course.

- Seminar Participation: 25%
- Primary Source Analysis (written): 10%
- Presentation of Source Analysis (oral): 10%
- Mount Pleasant Cemetery Research Project: 15%
- Research Paper Outline: 10%
- Mini-Poster Draft: 10%
- Research Paper: 20%

Due Dates and Late Penalties:
Penalty for late assignments is 2% each day (including Saturdays and Sundays). For all medical and non-medical issues that might warrant accommodation, including all assignments, exams, tests, presentations, and class attendance, please go to academic counselling. For the research paper, any accommodations will require supporting documentation. Late papers cannot be accepted after the last day of class, December 6, 2024.

Seminar Participation:
Students are expected to have fully read the assigned readings before discussion, and to contribute in a thoughtful and critical way each week. Students will be marked on the quality of their contributions. To have the best experience in a small upper year class, each must demonstrate understanding of the readings, extract the salient points or arguments of each, and verbally articulate these points by contributing to the discussion. To help you prepare, I have included some questions for thought on the

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syllabus for each week. Students can check out the primary sources for each week but are not required to read them unless presenting a source that week.

**Participation Marking Rubric:** Participation will be marked each week on the following and then averaged at the end of the term. The lowest weekly mark will be dropped. You may ask to see your weekly marks at any time throughout the term.

**Preparation:** Evidence shows preparation for the seminar.

**Initiative:** Questions asked focus, clarify, stimulate and/or summarize discussion.

**Response:** Quality of response reflects knowledge, comprehension and application of readings.

**Discussion:** Quality of response extends discussion, and reflects analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

**Primary Source Analysis:**
Each student will **summarize** and **analyse** one set of the designated weekly primary sources. Using Powerpoint (or similar) presentation, students should:

1. **summarize** the sources/material culture;
2. **analyze** how the author’s background (gender; class; race; beliefs etc.) affects the content of the sources; date of, and context for, publication; audience and how this audience affects the content;
3. **assess** how the source demonstrates, and relates to, the themes presented by the secondary source articles that same week, as relevant.

Students will hand in a **written version** of their presentation and the presentation slides **that same day** through OWL Brightspace. Presentations should not exceed **15 minutes**.

**Mount Pleasant Cemetery Research Project**
We will be working with Mount Pleasant Cemetery, researching life stories of individuals buried here. This information may be used in its historical work, such as walking tours or blog posts. Students will be provided with a list of individuals and their basic information on OWL from which to choose to research and write one life story in 5 pages.

Life stories should include the following information, where relevant: birth date and birth place; siblings’ names; names and occupation of parents; marriage date and place; spouse(s) and children’s names; career(s)/occupation(s); London or local address(es); business locations and advertisements; religion/church(es) attended; social/cultural organizations joined; publications or speeches given; reason for, place of, age at death; legacies.

We kick off the project with a tour of the cemetery in Week 3. On their own time, students must visit their assigned grave at least once as the stone and/or family plot may have additional information or symbolism that may prove useful in research.

Students must choose their person on OWL Brightspace; first come, first serve. An individual cannot be researched by more than one student.

All documents such as obituaries, marriage certificates, ads, membership lists, etc. must be attached to the life story as appendices or figures. Documents do not count as pages in the page count.

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Footnotes in Chicago Style should be used where needed.

**Potential Sources**
- Annual city directories. Western Archives.
- *London Free Press* and *London Advertiser*. [www.canadiana.org](http://www.canadiana.org)
- Ancestry.ca (free in Western Archives reading room); [www.familySearch.org](http://www.familySearch.org)
- Publications specific to occupations eg: *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (many online or at Weldon)
- MANY local history books (Western Archives) such as *London and its Men of Affairs* (1917), *History of the County of Middlesex* (1889), and *Illustrated London Ontario, Canada* (1900). It is best to go to the reading room and look through the stacks.

**Research Paper:**
Pick a subject of interest related to the history or heritage of death, cemeteries, human remains, and mourning in North America after 1812 and conduct the research required to write a 12-15 page paper.

Your submission should include a historiographical section, draw on primary and/or archival, and secondary source research, and present a tightly-argued thesis with specific supporting historical evidence. Students should aim for an **original argument**.

Historians start research with a set of related questions, not already decided-upon statements. Instead, they examine the historical evidence to find the answers to their questions, like a detective starts an investigation and answers questions by examining the evidence left behind. The answer to your question(s) is your thesis. Thesis arguments are not personal opinions or ethical judgements about what “should” be.

Encyclopedia articles or textbooks cannot be used. Good sources for research have *arguments* rather than being simply descriptive or exploratory. If you are unsure if a source is academic, please ask.

This research paper topic should be focused. Topics can be refined by narrowing down the time period, geographical area, historic site, themes, case studies, or policies.

Common essay writing mistakes: choosing too large of a topic for page length; writing in the passive voice not active voice; beginning with broad sweeping generalizations; having too large a background and not enough analysis from research; and not following Chicago style manual. Quoting should be rare and only then from primary, not secondary, sources unless extremely eloquent. Always write in the past tense.

Structurally, the paper should include an introductory paragraph with a thesis argument (1 paragraph); a brief discussion of historiography (what other historians have said about your topic 1-2 paragraphs and where your research sits in comparison); background information that the reader needs to understand.

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your research (max. 1 page); a detailed exploration of the historical evidence that supports your argument (10-12 pages); a conclusion which re-asserts your thesis (1 paragraph).

Papers can include photographs. However, pictures are additional; you still must write 12-15 pages of text for the essay.

Papers should be approximately 12-15 pages, double spaced, and use Chicago Manual of Style: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html See the marking rubric on OWL Brightspace.

Students will prepare a research paper outline, which will include a brief summary of the topic and historiography, the research question(s) being pursued, and a list of 10 primary and secondary sources that will be useful for the paper. I encourage you to meet with me even earlier to discuss ideas and how to focus them appropriately for the size of the paper.

Mini-Conference Poster
Based on their research, students will prepare a poster that summarizes their historical question(s), relevant historiography (2-5 sentences), their thesis (1 sentence), and original research findings (100 words). They should include a snappy title and 3-5 evocative visuals. Text should be written for the non-specialist historian. A mini-poster draft due before the poster session date allows the instructor to provide feedback for student revision before the poster conference. After the conference, posters will be displayed in the History department hallway.

All written assignments should reflect the student’s own thoughts and independent written work. Students should generate their own figures (e.g., graphs, diagrams) rather than using AI-generated ones. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry, and original written contributions. If plagiarism or AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes after the paper has been submitted; keep all notes until the paper is returned to you.

All work submitted must be your own. You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course. All work will be submitted through OWL Brightspace.

Conference Day
Our last class will be an open-house-style poster session to which other students and faculty will be invited. Students may invite family and friends. The session will take place in Lawson.

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Please review the Department of History’s shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.

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Course Schedule Fall 2024

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 5</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Sign up primary sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept 12</td>
<td>Cemeteries: Cultural Landscapes &amp; Heritage</td>
<td>Sign up primary sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept 19</td>
<td>Mourning &amp; Material Culture</td>
<td>Mount Pleasant Cemetery Intro to our assignment</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sign up primary sources</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Doors Open this weekend</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sept 26</td>
<td>Death in the Archives</td>
<td>Western Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sign up primary sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>Interpreting Death</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 10</td>
<td>Battlefields, Cemeteries &amp; Dark Tourism</td>
<td>Mount Pleasant paper due</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 13-18</td>
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<td>Research Paper Outline due</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 31</td>
<td>Anatomy, Dissection &amp; Medical Science</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Ossuaries, Catacombs, Tombs &amp; Mounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>Indigenous Ancestors &amp; Repatriation</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 21</td>
<td>Skulls &amp; Slave Bodies</td>
<td>Mini-Poster draft due</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nov 28</td>
<td>Cemeteries, Public History &amp; Social Justice</td>
<td>Final paper due</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dec 5</td>
<td>Conference Day</td>
<td>Bring final posters</td>
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</tbody>
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**Week 1: September 5, 2024**

Introductions. We cover the syllabus, and take a short tour of memorial sites on campus. Students begin signing up for primary sources today on OWL.

**Homework:** Read “How to Read a Journal Article.” (OWL)

**Week 2: September 12, 2024: Cemeteries: Cultural Landscapes & Heritage**

How did cemeteries as we know them today come to be? How are cultural values embedded into a cemetery, past and present? What is a cultural landscape? Deathscape? Dark tourism? How and why is heritage tied to death, human remains, cemeteries, mourning, and memorialization?

**Readings:**


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**Week 3: September 19, 2024: Mourning & Material Culture**
We meet at Mount Pleasant Cemetery at 10:30 for a 1 hour-ish walking tour of gravestone symbolism and rural, garden, and lawn-style cemeteries. Rain or shine; dress for walking and the weather.

*Mount Pleasant Cemetery. [https://mountpleasantscemetery](https://mountpleasantscemetery) history.wordpress.com/*

**Readings:**


**Week 4: September 26, 2024: Death in the Archives**
We visit Western Archives to be inspired by archival material and think about our research topics.

**Readings:**


Steinroetter, Vanessa. “Vacant Chairs and Absent Bodies: Material Disruptions of Domestic Spaces in a Southern Scrapbook.” *Mississippi Quarterly* 70/71 (2017/18); 423-38. (LC)

This is a *draft* outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.
**Week 5: October 3, 2024: Interpreting Death**

What were mortality rates in early Canada? How were mourning rituals, natural history, and material culture shaped by cultural values? Did the First World War change memorials and depiction of death?

**Primary Sources:**


Sears, Roebuck and Co. *Special Catalogue of Tombstones, Monuments, Tablets and Markers*. 1902. (IA) [https://archive.org/details/specialcatalogue00sear](https://archive.org/details/specialcatalogue00sear)

Tiffany Studios. *Tributes to Honor: Suggested Types of Memorials by the Ecclesiastical Department of the Tiffany Studios*. New York, 1918. (IA) [https://archive.org/details/tributestohonors00tiff/page/n25/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/tributestohonors00tiff/page/n25/mode/2up)

**Readings:**


**Week 6: October 10, 2024: Battlefields, Graves & Dark Tourism**

What is ‘dark tourism’? ‘Thanatourism’? Why are gravesites not necessarily cemeteries? Why did/do tourists visit ‘dark sites’? Does commodification of these sites tarnish memory? How do such sites become part of nationalism? What is the role of government and tourist agencies in this process?

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Primary Sources:

*Handbook for visitors to Paris; containing a description of the most remarkable objects, in the city and its environs, with general advice and information for English travellers.* London: John Murray, 1890, 114, 120, 247-48, 272-75. (IA) [https://archive.org/details/handbookforvisit00unse/page/276/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/handbookforvisit00unse/page/276/mode/2up)

Lundy’s Lane Historical Society. *Military Re-Internment.* Niagara: 1891. (LC)


Readings:


**Week 8: October 24, 2024: Spiritualism, Ghosts, Angels & the Afterlife**

How does etiquette shape the funeral? Why did individuals seek contact with those already buried? Is the afterlife shaped by race? How did material culture/heritage change because of these of these beliefs? How did beliefs in the afterlife shape the arts?

Primary Sources:


Readings:


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Robertson’s Phantasmagoria mid-1800s


**Week 9: October 31, 2024: Anatomy, Dissection & Medical Science**

Why are some bodies ‘human beings’ and others ‘scientific resources’? Are human remains material culture? How and why do science and/or medical museums display and use the dead in ways that are different than history museums?

**Primary Sources:**

https://archive.org/details/descriptivecatal00harvuoft/page/710/mode/2up

https://archive.org/details/mariettaortwostow00robi/page/n7/mode/2up

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.
Readings:


**Week 10: November 7, 2024: Ossuaries, Catacombs, Tombs & Mounds**

Why did archaeological discoveries in Egypt start ‘Eygptomania’ in North America? Why were mummies so fascinating? Were all graves/cemeteries treated equal? How and why did popular culture become intertwined with science and archaeology? Why did graves become politicized? How did tomb architecture shape cemetery architecture?

**Primary Sources:**

Alcott, Louisa May. *Lost in a Pyramid, or the Mummy’s Curse*. 1869. [http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0603041h.html](http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0603041h.html)

Gale, George. *Upper Mississippi: or, Historical sketches of the Moundbuilders, the Indian Tribes, and the Progress of Civilization in the North-west: from A. D. 1600 to the Present Time*. Chicago: Clarke and Company, 1867, 11-40. (LC)


Readings:


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**Week 11: November 14, 2024: Indigenous Ancestors**

How do Indigenous people see burials and how did this affect heritage and archaeology over time? What legislation regulates (or doesn’t) Indigenous burials and cemeteries in Canada and the United States? How did the public “use” Indigenous grave sites? What does archaeology tell us about Indigenous peoples and cultures? Does it make a difference the age of the buried human remains?

**Primary Sources:**

Selection of Postcards of “Indian Mounds.” (OWL)

*Postcard of “Indian Mounds”*

**Readings:**


This is a *draft* outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Week 12: November 21, 2024: Skulls & Slave Bodies
What legislation exists for protection of cemeteries/gravesites and why? How do cemeteries preserve and/or reflect racial beliefs? In the American South, how were remains from enslaved persons used to justify slavery and racial science? How did the commodification of bodies – already embedded in the system of slavery – lead to the collection and study of human remains? How do burials show African identity and beliefs?

Primary Sources:


Readings:


Week 13: November 28, 2024: Cemeteries, Public History & Social Justice

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.
How can public historians make cemeteries sites of historical outreach? Sites of social justice? Are there jobs for historians at cemeteries? This week we will host guest speakers who talk about their own work.

**Week 14: December 5, 2024 -- Conference Day!**

Feel free to invite others!