

Inventing Farewell: A Practicum on Elegy

Fall 2018
English 148a

Prof. Sherman

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Class Schedule:

Tue / Thur, 2:00-3:20
Rabb 236

Every modern generation re-invents its relation to the dead, creating whatever forms will suffice. Elegiac poetry remains a spectacularly vital space for this cultural re-invention, in dynamic conversation with other mourning and memorial practices. In this course, we'll read modern elegy in the context of emerging commemoration rituals, funerary architecture, cemetery planning, monument design, and other techniques for working through loss and gathering memory. My motivating argument for this course is that many kinds of recent cultural production—in writing, visual art, performance art, and design—have discovered significant aesthetic techniques to help make grief less lonely in the modern world.

Elegy is poetry to, for, and about the dead. It's a symbolic gathering of their remains and act of witnessing past lives. But elegy is also to, for, and about the living. We'll explore elegy as a creative, imaginative transaction between living and dead people, between past and future, a way to bind generations together and prevent the scattering of identities in time. In these tasks, elegiac writing becomes a powerful discourse for reckoning with love and social power, as well as with grief.

As a practicum, this course will offer opportunities for several independent research and design projects, resulting in your individual portfolio of elegiac and mortuary-related work. Your work will unfold in an extensive process of revision and feedback, throughout the semester, culminating in a final portfolio presentation. Our research and invention will consist of practical responses to an actual cultural problem: *what mortuary acts, mourning practices, and spaces for the dead should be invented for the contemporary world?*

This is a four-credit course. I expect students to spend at least nine hours a week preparing for class sessions and completing assignments.

Required Texts:

Because these books are widely available at competitive prices, I will not order them from the Brandeis bookstore. Please make your own arrangements to acquire these books.

Course Reader [CR]

Allen Ginsberg, *Kaddish* (City Lights Books)

Sharon Olds, *The Father* (Knopf)

Mary Jo Bang, *Elegy* (Graywolf Press)

Paul Monette, *Love Alone: 18 Elegies for Rog* (St. Martin's Press)

Leslie Harrison, *The Book of Endings* (University of Akron Press)

Natasha Tretheway, *Native Guard* (Houghton Mifflin)

David Wojahn, *For the Scribe* (University of Pittsburgh Press)
Larry Levis, *Elegy* (University of Pittsburgh Press)
The Epic of Gilgamesh (Free Press, trans. Stephen Mitchell)

Learning Goals

Upon successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- design a space, object, or practice with elegiac and memorial functions, and to theoretically reflect on this creative and practical design
- recognize the generic conventions of elegiac poetry, as a long tradition, and to describe contemporary developments in elegy, as these have emerged against and within tradition
- write an elegy, propose an anthology of elegiac writing, or write a knowledgeable letter to a poet about the craft of elegy
- analyze the complex nature of public and collective memory, as a combination of material and symbolic elements, especially as public and collective memory relates to such phenomena as trauma and political identity; analyze particular monuments and memorials in terms of these social functions
- analyze the political stakes of cemetery design, mortuary practices, and other forms of collective memorialization, as these relate to such phenomena as the history of cemetery desegregation and campaigns against cemetery neglect
- interview a mortuary or grief practitioner as a way to explore the productive relations between literature and other social practices, including professional funeral directing, grief counseling, cemetery design, or otherwise
- gather a portfolio of related work, in several different genres and through a collaborative workshop process, to demonstrate potential, emerging possibilities for cultural action in the present

Assignments and Assessment:

Participation in Peer Workshop: over the entire semester, we'll provide one another with ongoing written and verbal feedback about project ideas, design proposals, and other writing. With support from one another, we'll revise these assignments for final portfolios. Workshop participation will be assessed by the effort and care that you demonstrate in your feedback to others. 5%

Current Events: two brief class presentations during the semester summarizing a current event, reported in the media, related to the topic of the course. These news stories can involve legal or political conflicts over bodily remains, controversies over public monuments, cemetery restoration campaigns, issues involving funeral homes, or other related matters. Presentation dates tbd. Credit / No Credit. 5%

Elegy Journal, or Book of the Night: this journal will be the most detailed record of your engagement with the course and the matrix for your more formal work. **Please bring it to every class session. I strongly encourage you to use a paper, book-style journal.** It will be for your responses to assigned readings and class discussions, your reflections on their significance, your brainstorms for projects, and your notes for writing projects. It can also be a record of other experiences related to the course. I provide many journal writing prompts throughout the semester; beyond these, your journal is where you can test new ideas and make connections

across texts, as these occur to you. Your Elegy Journal, or Book of the Night, will be assessed for the evidence it shows of consistent and engaged reading over the semester, as a process involving your own responsive writing; for your responses to the assigned prompts; and for your use of its pages for reflection on and exploration of our themes. The journal should demonstrate your sustained energy as a reader and writer and a willingness to take creative risks—in a rich intellectual *process*—rather than polished or revised products. Due during the final week of the course, during individual office hour appointments, times tbd. 25%

Interview with Mortuary or Bereavement Practitioner: an interview with someone in a vocation or profession involving mortuary practices or bereavement. You can interview someone who works in a funeral home, cemetery, morgue, crematorium, or similar place involving the remains of the dead. You can interview advocates for alternative mortuary practices or policies, including green burial grounds, home funerals, or similar campaigns. You can interview clergy, mental health professionals, or death midwives engaged with mortuary rituals and bereavement. You can interview designers of public memorials or organizers of commemorative gatherings. Please feel free to propose other possibilities. For your assignment, write a 5-7 page summary of what you learned from your interview. This summary should describe the interviewee's work, your guiding questions and curiosities, your most successful interview questions, crucial excerpts from your interviewee's comments, and your final reflections on the exchange, including further analysis of relevant cultural questions. You don't have to provide a full transcript of the interview. Further guidelines will be distributed. Initial list of potential interviews, due 10/25. Final interview assignment, due 12/11. 15%

Final Portfolio: by the end of the semester, your portfolio should consist of approximately 20-30 pages of material related to a diverse array of design, creative writing, research, and other projects. The final portfolio should include an introductory cover letter and earlier drafts of your final work that demonstrate your revision process (these drafts do not count toward the final page count). This gathering of your best work can include revised, elaborated versions of the written assignments submitted throughout the semester and other work you decide to develop and workshop during the course. Your portfolio can include critical essays about literary texts, elegiac poetry, design proposals for memorial sites or burial grounds, a letter to a poet, a proposal to a publisher for an anthology of elegiac writing, a podcast project, a mapping project, historical scholarship, a wiki or digital resource, an ethnography, a proposal for a community historical exhibit, a proposal for an archive, and other work. This portfolio will be assessed for evidence of revision and growth in your writing process, engagement with multiple genres, and the viability of your final work as interventions in contemporary mortuary and commemorative culture. Due during final exam period, at our final class celebration and presentation session. 50%

Rights, Rules, and Requirements:

- Laptops may be used in class only with permission and for accessing relevant course materials. If you use a laptop for other purposes (email, web browsing), you will be asked to leave the class and be considered absent for the day. Bring other materials (e.g., paper, pens) for taking notes. Please bring your Elegy Journal to every class.
- Three unexcused absences lowers the final course grade by one plus/minus, and each additional absence by another plus/minus.

- If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.
- You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

Class Schedule:

Thur 8/30

Introduction—what elegy is good for—modern dilemmas—how this course is a practicum—opening collaboration.

Tue 9/4: Dying Modern

Assignment: begin your elegy journal, or Book of the Night, with responses to the poems assigned for today. These responses can take any form. Transcribe lines that impress you, capture images that compel you, describe a fascination or distress, write something back. Reflect on what it feels like to inhabit one of these poems. Make any of your own, idiosyncratic connections among the poems and to other things you know about. Re-read the poems and find other connections. Ask some questions. Identify something you want to better understand.

Reading [all poems in CR]:

Emily Dickinson, 40 “[I never lost as much as twice--]”

e. e. cummings, “[Buffalo Bill’s]”

Les Murray, “Last Hellos”

Elizabeth Bishop, “One Art”

W. H. Auden, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats”

Lucille Clifton, “Last Words” poem sequence

Kevin Young, “Grief” 1 and 2

Frank O’Hara, “The Day Lady Died”

Li-Young Lee, “Rain Diary”

John Berryman, “Epilogue”

Thur 9/6: No class, Brandeis Monday

Tue 9/11: No class, Rosh Hashanah

Thur 9/13: Apostrophe

Assignment: continue writing in your elegy journal. What do you find to be Culler’s most interesting ideas about the rhetorical figure of apostrophe? What makes this speech act, an address to the dead, complex and significant? How do some of these poets manage to perform it effectively, with what imagistic techniques or constructions of lyrical voice? Be prepared to discuss your sense of these poems, as lyrical acts of apostrophe, in class.

Reading [all readings in CR, except for Ginsberg's "To Aunt Rose," in *Kaddish*; Culler's "Apostrophe," on LATTE; and the episode of *This American Life*, link on LATTE]:
Jonathan Culler, "Apostrophe"
Homer, *The Odyssey*, from Book 11
Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats"
Adrienne Rich, "A Woman Dead in Her Forties"
Allen Ginsberg, "To Aunt Rose"
Joy Harjo, "Death Is a Woman"
Kevin Young, "Exit Music"
Thom Gunn, "Lament" and "Words for Some Ash"
Deborah Landau, "The City of Paris Has You in Mind Tonight"
Mark Strand, "A Piece of the Storm"
Anne Sexton, "Sylvia's Death"
Maxine Kumin, "How It Is"
This American Life podcast episode, "One Last Thing before I Go," on Itaru Sasaki's Wind Telephone

Tue 9/18: Apostrophe, cont.

Assignment: in a paragraph or two, propose a materially rich medium, place, or action for directly addressing the dead, in a ritual or lyrical act. Following Sasaki, this *invention of apostrophe* can include architectural or technological design, a particular landscape, exposure to the wilderness, or basic elements such as wind, earth, water, fire. Your idea can include impossible or fantastical features, if you approach this as an imaginary exercise or hypothetical invention. You can think of this proposal as helping us imagine *a zone of felt contact* between the living and the dead. Due in class.

Reading: Re-read all the poems from last session. Re-read your elegy journal from the beginning and elaborate promising lines of thought. Describe aspects of the poems you hadn't noticed in your earlier reading.

Thur 9/20: Vigil Strange

Assignment: After reading the poems assigned for today, select one to write about in your journal. Address some of these questions: what does this poem seek to tell us about the practice of holding vigil over the dying or dead? In the world of this poem, what does this action consist of, what does it demand of the one who performs it? Why is it necessary, what is its value? What does the psychic space of vigilance feel like? How do you picture this task and how is your own picture of fulfilling it in conversation with the poem? Be prepared to discuss your ideas in class.

Reading [in CR, except for Thomas, on LATTE]:
Louis-Vincent Thomas, "Funeral Rites: An Overview," from *Encyclopedia of Religion*
Walt Whitman, "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night"
Carol Ann Duffy, "Water"
Elizabeth Alexander, "Autumn Passage"
Carl Phillips, "Cortège"
Gjertrud Schnackenberg, "Sublimaze"

Patrick Phillips, “Elegy for a Broken Machine,” “Four Haiku,” “The Night Nurse Comes,” “The Body”

Adrienne Rich, “Through Corralitos under Rolls of Clouds”

Tue 9/25: No class, Brandeis Monday

Thur 9/27: Vigil Strange, cont.

Assignment: Select **one** of the following assignments. Due in class.

1) Write an elegy. You can turn in different drafts or versions of this poem, to show your revision process, so far. If you’d like, feel free to add an author’s note or brief reflection on your poem, including any potential for further poems in an elegy sequence.

2) Do a detailed commentary, in about 3 pages, of one of Old’s poems, as it works through a complex set of feelings and thoughts, and as this poem relates to others around it. Describe what gives the poem force and what we can learn from it about memory, vigil, mourning, illness, death, apostrophe, or something else involving elegy.

Reading: Sharon Olds, *The Father*

Friday 9/28: Special Session and Field Trip: Visit to Mt. Auburn Cemetery for Death Salon, 12-3. Transportation provided.

Tue 10/2: Cities of the Dead

Assignment: in your journal, create a vivid sensory description of one spot in Mt. Auburn Cemetery. Capture the felt texture of the place—its soundscape, quality of light, the movement of one’s eyes around it. Describe what it’s like to pass through this space and what about it seems dynamic. In this rendering or word picture, use personal and experiential language to generate knowledge of the place that cannot be communicated by a photograph or video. If relevant, note if there are any elegies from our syllabus, so far, that come to mind as you spend time there, or if the place helps you compose elegiac lines of your own. You’re free to make a drawing or map of your site, as a complement to your writing.

Reading [all on LATTE]:

Catherine Howett, “Living Landscapes and the Dead”

Arnaldo Pomodoro, “A few notes regarding the plan for the new cemetery in Urbino”

Enric Miralles, “From what time is this place?” and related Igualada Cemetery material

African Burial Ground: <https://www.nps.gov/afbg/index.htm>

Alvar Aalto, proposal for Lyngby Cemetery

The Hart Island Project website: hartisland.net

Columbia University DeathLAB website: deathlab.org

Sophie Calle, [Here Lie the Secrets of The Visitors of Green-Wood Cemetery](#)

Thur 10/4: Cities of the Dead, cont.

Assignment: develop a draft proposal for a burial ground, city of the dead, or related mortuary or memorial site. Your proposal should be for a distinctive, uncommon place to remember dead people or to be in the presence of their remains. This might be a sort of cemetery, graveyard, necropolis, crematorium, laying-out (corpse preparation) facility, or otherwise. Your goal is to

imagine a combination of landscape, architecture, handcraft, technology, visual art, or other resources to invent a city of the dead or memorial space that dynamically engages the worlds of the living. In other words, this city of the dead should refuse their obsolescence or social death, and could be directly connected to other sorts of useful places and institutions.

As you develop your proposal, work through several questions: how does your design affect one's experience of time and space? What do people do here, how does movement flow here? Is there some stance toward mortality, memory, or history communicated by your design? Is there some aspiration for the future embedded here, or some other commitment? *What about the place creates a persuasive sense of value for past lives?*

Your draft proposal can take any of several forms: a formal proposal, with detailed descriptions of your design elements; a visual art project, with brief commentary; a narrative, fictional or non-fictional; an essay or piece of creative non-fiction; or another form that will allow you to develop your idea for this place. Due in class.

Reading [all in CR, except for Ginsberg's "At Apollinaire's Grave," in *Kaddish*]:

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, excerpts

Seamus Heaney, "Funeral Rites"

Zora Neale Hurston, letter to W. E. B. Du Bois

Karla Hollaway, "Epilogue / In Memoriam," from *Passed On: African-American Mourning Stories: A Memorial*

Allen Ginsberg, "At Apollinaire's Grave"

Tue 10/9: Ubi Sunt

Assignment: write a short journal reflection on the Ubi Sunt motif in poetry. Consider how one of our poets gives the simple question—*where are they now?*—complexity and impact. Be prepared to discuss your ideas in class.

Reading [all in CR]:

Francois Villon, "Ballade des dames du temps jadis," various translations

Robert Hayden, "Elegies for Paradise Valley"

Mark Strand, "Where Are the Waters of Childhood?"

Laura Kasischke, "Oblivion" and "Ubi Sunt"

Kevin Young, "Truce"

Thur 10/11: Ubi Sunt, cont.

Assignment: Select **one** of the following assignments. Due in class.

1) write an Ubi Sunt meditation or poem. Explore techniques for rendering the absence of the past as a forceful presence, that is, as palpable or haunting absences. If necessary, do biographical research into the lives you're trying to render as having passed. Consider the sensation of enigma or wonder, in the Ubi Sunt tradition, toward the mere fact of time passing and non-presence of dead people. Feel free to turn in any drafts or an author's reflection, including thoughts about possibly developing this work further.

2) develop a draft proposal for a community historical exhibit or memorial event. Your exhibit or event can include biographical portraits, neighborhood stories, curated objects, visual art, performance, or other elements of historical education and memorial community. Consider strategies for making this exhibit widely participatory and engaging. This exhibit can be for any

sort of community with a sense of its past—a neighborhood or shared residence, athletic team, school or academic department, extended family, religious community, political organization, or otherwise. Include information about your intended audience, setting, schedule, and logistical details. Describe the experience you seek to create and the effects you hope this exhibit or event will have.

Reading: Mary Jo Bang, *Elegy*

Tue 10/16: Grief without Form, or, “Nouns, verbs to not exist for what I feel”

Assignment: read Ramazani’s chapter from *The Poetry of Mourning* and answer the following questions, in 1-2 pages:

- 1) identify the sentence that, in your reading, this chapter can least afford to do without, its most crucial or clarifying moment. Transcribe it.
- 2) justify your choice by explaining how this sentence captures essential aspects of Ramazani’s argument, what this sentence says or does that provides a key to the whole.
- 3) formulate an important question that this chapter is trying to answer. What is the problem to which this piece of writing is a response?
- 4) briefly describe some alternative, contrasting or competing idea that Ramazani uses to develop his own ideas. What interesting perspective does he use to sharpen his own points?

Due in class.

Reading:

Jahan Ramazani, excerpts from *The Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* [LATTE]

Allen Ginsberg, “Kaddish”

Paul Monette, *Love Alone: 18 Elegies for Rog*, section I

Thur 10/18: Grief without Form, cont.

Assignment: reflect on today’s assigned reading in your journal. You can address any of the following prompts, or develop your own topic, about any of our assigned reading: what changes from the beginning of the poem, or book, to the end? What do these poems tell us about love, what concept or picture of love emerges from these poems about death? Is there some unlikely quality of beauty in these utterances of personal devastation? How is the reader positioned in these poems, what sort of role, function, or imagined space are we given, what relation do we have to these speakers and their grief?

Reading:

Leslie Harrison, *The Book of Endings*

Paul Monette, *Love Alone: 18 Elegies for Rog*, section II

Tue 10/23: Grief without Form, cont.

Assignment: compose a personal letter to any poet we’ve read so far this semester. Your letter can be in any style you’d like, but must knowledgeably address the poet’s work. You can describe the poetry’s effect on you, test your insights into the poems, and/or explain how these poems helped you develop your own creative ideas. Your letter should demonstrate a thoughtful, generous attention to the poems and discuss things that actually matter to you. If possible,

develop a significant question for the poet, as if to generate a genuine conversation. This letter is a sort of apostrophe, to the absent poet, but you should feel free to actually send this letter to the poet, if this poet is among those still able to receive letters. Due in class.

Reading:

Paul Monette, *Love Alone: 18 Elegies for Rog*, section III

Thur 10/25: Taking Stock: Portfolio Workshop and Interview Preparation

Assignment:

- 1) select several poems that interest you from earlier in the course to re-read. In your re-reading, identify passages which seem like the beginning of ideas for making or doing something else, lines that seem useful for imagining an interesting project or action. These might be images of objects, resonant words, a sense of a place. How do these lines embed further creative action within them or inspire your elegiac imagination? In your journal, brainstorm ideas inspired by your re-reading. Be prepared to continue this brainstorm in class.
- 2) Re-read your work so far, including your journal, and create an initial catalogue of your portfolio items. This should be in the form of an annotated list, including your incomplete and planned projects, with your anticipated work schedule.
- 3) create a short list of possible interlocutors for your Interview with a Mortuary or Grief Practitioner assignment. Include their names, relevant professional descriptions, contact information, and anything else that seems relevant for this initial list. Due in class.

Tue 10/30: Poetry, Memory, History

Assignment: in your journal, identify a conversation among three or more poems from today's reading, by at least two authors. What common concern or shared problem do these poems address? How do these poems seem more meaningful when put into relation with one another? Describe how this conversation across poems helps us think more deeply about a significant, complex issue.

Reading [all in CR and LATTE, except Tretheway's *Native Guard*]:

Jacques Le Goff, "The Stake of Memory," from *History and Memory* [LATTE]

W. B. Yeats, "Easter, 1916"

Martín Espada, "Hands without Irons Become Dragonflies"

Natasha Tretheway, *Native Guard*

Thur 11/1: Poetry, Memory, History, cont.

Assignment: Select **one** of the following assignments. Due in class.

- 1) write a descriptive analysis of a local monument or public memorial. Spend enough time observing this site to understand its aesthetic strategies and social functions. In your description, use vivid details to render its sensory qualities; in your analysis, interpret its meanings. Assess the efficacy of this site, the force it exerts or fails to exert. If appropriate and useful, ask others at the site about their responses to it.
- 2) develop a draft proposal for a public monument or site of memory. Your design can be for any sort of public installation intended to enter past lives or events into the historical record and collective memory. Explain the historical meaning of your project and why this biography or history merits wider attention. Describe your project's location, its interaction with the

surrounding area, and the flow of people around it. If possible, include initial sketches or diagrams of the project, or anything else that will help others understand your idea.

3) develop a draft proposal for a historical or biographical mapping project. How can an interesting or unacknowledged aspect of an area's past be represented as a map? What sorts of places bear a shared significance in danger of being lost in the present? What story do they tell together? Describe the research required for this potential mapping project, the public forms it could take, the ways in which it would be useful to others. This proposal might be for an online resource or app, a paper map, a walking tour, interconnected landscape markings, or other forms.

Reading:

Eelco Runia, "Burying the Dead, Creating the Past" [LATTE]

Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" [CR]

David Wojahn, *For the Scribe*

Tue 11/6: The Witness

Assignment: write a journal response to Booth. Transcribe, with page citations, four or five short passages from Booth that effectively conceptualize the figure of the witness. Briefly reflect on his ideas in relation to the assigned reading or to the National Museum for Peace and Justice. Be prepared to discuss your ideas in class.

Reading [all in CR, except for Booth and museum links, on LATTE]:

James Booth, "Bearing Witness," from *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice*

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Witness"

Lucille Clifton, "at the cemetery, walnut grove plantation, south carolina, 1989"

Geoffrey Hill, "September Song"

Simone John, "Collateral" poem sequence

National Museum for Peace and Justice, Birmingham, website: <https://eji.org/national-lynching-memorial>

Thur 11/8: The Witness, cont.

Assignment: student choice. Develop your own assignment or do an assignment that you didn't select earlier in the course. This could be anything from journal writing, in response to something another student has said in class, to a proposal for a complex project, e.g., a podcast, community mural, obituary series, wiki, folk art project, archival research, creation of a new archive, or otherwise.

Reading:

Larry Levis, *Elegy* (pp. 33-81)

Tue 11/13: Mortuary Politics

Assignment: in your journal, briefly reflect on some aspect of mortuary politics that intrigues or confuses you, as this combination of elegiac feeling and political action emerges in the assigned texts.

Reading:

Simone John, “Mourning Rites (Or: How We Bury Your Son)” [CR]

Thom Gunn, “The Missing” [CR]

Jim Hubbard, dir., *Elegy in the Streets* [LATTE]

Andrea de Nichols, *Mirror Casket* sculpture website:

<http://deandreanichols.com/work/mirrorcasket/>

Honor Ford-Smith, *Letters for the Dead* performance websites:

<http://www.yorku.ca/hoperoad/projects/letters1.php>

<http://www.yorku.ca/hoperoad/projects/letters2.php>

<http://www.yorku.ca/hoperoad/projects/letters3.php>

Thur 11/15: Mortuary Politics, cont.

Assignment: student-designed assignment. Create a hypothetical assignment for the class, involving any aspect of our work so far. Your idea can be as practical or playful, and as academic or non-academic, as you wish. It should be designed to help others engage with the possibility of public memorialization, mortuary action, and inventing farewell. Please post your assignment, with whatever discussion about it that might be helpful, on the New Assignments LATTE forum before class. (Note that you are not required to fulfill this assignment for class.)

Reading:

Angelika Krüger-Kahloula, “On the Wrong Side of the Fence: Racial Segregation in American Cemeteries” [LATTE]

The Names Project website: aidsquilt.org

Tue 11/20: Mortuary D.I.Y.

Assignment: select one. Due in class

1) develop a draft book proposal for an anthology of elegiac or mortuary related writing. Your proposal should be pitched toward an imaginary publisher. Your anthology should have a compelling angle or distinguishable theme. Provide an overview of about a page in which you generate the publisher’s excitement, a short description of your target audience, an outline or table of contents, and a list of competing books on the market.

2) find an unofficial, homemade memorial in public space. This can be a roadside memorial, mural, car inscription, graffiti, or otherwise. In a few pages, describe the memorial and how you came across it. How does it tell a story? How does it change the place where it’s located? What can we learn from it about the community, visual elegy, or the act of memorialization?

Reading:

William Carlos Williams, “Tract” [CR]

Patrick Phillips, “Work-Clothes Quilt” [CR]

Kevin Young, “Codicil” [CR]

“‘Affordable Underground Furniture’: D. I. Y. Coffin Clubs Catch on in New Zealand,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2017 [LATTE]

The Order of the Good Death website: www.orderofthegooddeath.com

Recompose website: www.recompose.life

“The Architect Who Wants to Redesign Being Dead,” *The Stranger*, March 2, 2015 [LATTE]

Crossings: Caring for Our Own Death: <http://crossings.net/>

Elizabeth Westrate, dir., *A Family Undertaking* [screening, tbd]

Thur 11/22: No class, Thanksgiving

Tue 11/27: Rooms and Objects

Assignment: develop portfolio.

Readings [all on LATTE except Kenyon, in CR]:

Margaret Gibson, "Melancholy Objects"

Jane Kenyon, "What Came to Me" [CR]

Burning Man Temples, various materials

Nuala Ernest, "The Temples of Best," *Raw Vision* 87 pp. 40-43

John Mosbaugh, "Building the Temple: Spirituality and Community"

Optional: Sarah Pike, "No Novenas for the Dead: Ritual Action and Communal Memory at the Temple of Tears"

Sophie Calle, "Rachel, Monique": "As Maman Lay Dying, Her Spirit Became Art," *New York Times*, March 14, 2014

Thur 11/29: But What Is a Dead Person? What Do We Do with Their Names?

Assignment: develop portfolio.

Readings:

Berislav Marušić, "Do Reasons Expire? An Essay on Grief" [LATTE]

W. S. Merwin, "elegy" [CR]

Tue 12/4: Mythic Explanations, or, The terms are non-negotiable

Assignment: Select **one** of the following assignments. Due in class.

1) develop a live story, of about five minutes, about the mythical origins of death. Imagine a myth or fable that could be told to an audience in a compelling fashion. Be prepared to tell your story in class, without notes.

2) propose a modern version of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. This modern version can be in any narrative form and adapted in any way. Provide a list of characters, plot outline, and detailed description of a few significant scenes.

Reading:

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Seamus Heaney, "A Dog Was Crying Tonight in Wicklow Also" [CR]

Thur 12/6: Final Poems. Portfolio Workshop

Assignment: develop portfolio.

Reading [all in CR]:

Derek Walcott, "Sea Canes"

Jane Kenyon, "Let Evening Come"

Frank Bidart, "Like"

Robert Hass, "Meditation at Lagunitas"

Aracelis Girmay, "Litany"

Tue 12/11: Portfolio Workshop

Interview with Mortuary or Grief Practitioner Assignment Due

Final exam date: Final Portfolio Presentation and Celebration