

ETHN 106- Life, Death and the Human

FALL QUARTER: 2015

MWF 2:00-2:50p, WLH 2114

Instructor: Michaela Django Walsh, PhD

Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 pm at Pete's Coffee (and by appointment)

Email: mdwalsh@ucsd.edu

Course Description:

This course takes as its point of departure the question of what constitutes a "grievable life." Together we will traverse questions of precariousness, survivability, and vulnerability in relation to the migrant body, the dispossessed, incarcerated, the war-torn, and tortured. Through readings, films, podcasts, and fiction, we will grapple with different theories of biopolitics alongside an exploration of the importance of bearing witness. One goal of this course is to trouble the idea of a universally understood category of "humanity," specifically the idea that humanity and its protections are evenly accessible across differing historical and material contexts. To these ends, we will examine conditions of life and death as revealing key aspects of the politics and economics involved in whom gets to live a fully "human" life.

Logistics

You can reach me by email, in my office hours, or by appointment at any time during the quarter. I respond to students' emails by 11am every weekday; I do not answer students' emails on weekends.

This syllabus is a guide, not a contract, and is therefore subject to change; any changes will be announced well in advance in class or by email.

Computers of any type are not allowed in this class.

ADA Statement: If you have a disability or condition that compromises your ability to complete the requirements of this course, you should inform me as soon as possible of your needs. I will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate you. If, as a result of a disability, you cannot accept the content or terms of this syllabus, you need to notify me in writing within one week of receiving it.

Policy on Late Papers and Make-up Assignments: Excepting emergencies, I do not allow late papers and do not allow make-up assignments.

Primary Ground Rules: (a) The number one ground rule to which we will all adhere is to engage in respectful and considerate debate and discussion in the classroom. You will be expected to approach this course with a patient, open mind, ready to consider information and ideas about topics that are, by their nature, subjects of controversy and disagreement. A good classroom environment should stimulate you to think for yourselves and raise critical questions based upon a thorough survey of the

evidence before you. Please take note that abusive and harsh language will not be tolerated in this classroom. These ground rules are reflected in the UCSD Principles of Community to which we are all expected to adhere (<http://www-vcba.ucsd.edu/principles.htm>).

(b) Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any form. This means plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty such as producing assignments for others. Please become familiar with the UCSD Policy on Academic Integrity (<http://senate.ucsd.edu/manual/Appendices/app2.htm>). Any academic work that you submit in this course, which violates the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship will automatically receive an “F” for the assignment and may result in you failing the course.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Please note that you should dedicate around an hour and a half to time spent reading per class. On occasion, the readings will demand more time and concentration. Sometimes less. Generally, readings will range from 20-30 pages.

Readings for this class will be available for download via our course’s blackboard website which can be accessed at <http://ted.ucsd.edu>.

Projects, Assignments, and Grade Distribution:

Attendance: Active Participation and 3 Pop Quizzes = 20%

In-class Assignments: = 10%

Collaborative Midterm: = 35%

Final: = 35%

WEEK ZERO: INTRODUCTIONS

FRI, 10/25 Introductions/Guidelines

WEEK ONE: WHOSE LIVES ARE GRIEVABLE? RACE, CLASS AND THE BIOPOLITICS OF DISPOSABILITY

MON, 9/28 Jenna Brager, “Bodies of Water” **and** Judith Butler’s “Precarious Life, Grievable Life” in *Frames of War*

WED, 9/30 Chapter One: “Survivability, Vulnerability, Affect,” in *Frames of War*

FRI, 10/2 The Truth from the Body: Medical Certificates as Ultimate Evidence for Asylum Seekers. *American Anthropologist* 107(4):597-608.

WEEK TWO:

- MON, 10/5 Judith Butler's "Torture and the Ethics of Photography, Thinking with Susan Sontag" in *Frames of War* and Eve Conant's, "Will Photo of Drowned Syrian Boy Be a Turning Point?" in National Geographic
- WED, 10/7 Henry A. Giroux, "Reading Hurricane Katrina, Race, Class and the Biopolitics of Disposability," *College Literature* Vol. 33, No. 3 (Summer, 2006), pp. 171-196
- FRI, 10/9 Listen to This American Life episode 565, "Lower 9 + 10", read Isabel Allende's, "And of Clay We Are Created"

WEEK THREE: BEARING WITNESS AS RESISTANCE

- MON, 10/12 Georgio Agamben: Introduction and Chapter One, "The Witness," in *Remnants of Auschwitz*
- WED, 10/14 Francisco Goldman's: "Crisis in Mexico, the Disappearance of the 43"
- FRI, 10/16 Francisco Goldman's: "Crisis in Mexico, Could 43 Missing Students in Mexico Spark a Revolution?"
- *MIDTERMS DISTRIBUTED

WEEK FOUR: NARCO FOLKLORE, THE PARADOX OF SANTA MUERTE

- MON, 10/19 Francisco Goldman's "The Missing 43: The Government's Case Collapses"
- WED, 10/21: Alma Guillermoprieto's, "Mexican Saints, Troubled Spirits," in National Geographic , May 2010
- FRI, 10/23 Alma Guillermoprieto's, "72 Migrantes" in Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies, Fall 2011

WEEK FIVE: IN-CLASS MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS

- MON, 10/26 IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS
- WED, 10/28 IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS
- FRI, 10/30 IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS

WEEK SIX: RACE, EDUCATION, AND THE BIOPOLITICS OF MASS INCARCERATION

- MON, 11/2 Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration" in *The Atlantic*, October 2015

WED, 11/4 Ujju Agfarwal and Renee Hatcher "The Fight for Dyett, What it Teaches Us and Why it Matters", Published by Common Dreams, September 20, 2015

FRI, 11/6 Linda Meyer, "The Meaning of death: Last Words, Last Meals". LR Meyer. Who Deserves to Die. Constructing the Executable Subject, 176, 201, 2011.

WEEK SEVEN: War

MON, 11/9 Tim O'Brien's, "How to Tell a Real War Story" and Listen to Sebastian Junger's "War" on The Moth

WED, 11/11 VETERAN'S HOLIDAY, NO CLASS

FRI, 11/13 Guest Speaker

WEEK EIGHT:

(in-class poll of what should be covered week 10)

MON, 11/16 Gabriele Schwab, "Writing Against Memory and Forgetting" in *Haunting Legacies*

WED, 11/18 Michaela Walsh, "Rupturing Silence, Rupturing Foreclosure"

FRI, 11/20 Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2000. "The Global Traffic in Human Organs", *Current Anthropology* 41(2): 191-224.

WEEK NINE: ZOMBIES – THE LIVING DEAD

MON, 11/23 Verdery, Katherine, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies*.

WED: 11/25 Murray, Leah, "When They Aren't Eating Us, They Bring Us Together: Zombies and the American Social Contract", pp. 211-220 of *ZPV*.

FRI: 11/27 NO CLASS

WEEK TEN: TBA

MON, 11/30

WED, 12/2

FRI, 12/4 LAST DAY OF CLASS

Majoring or Minorng in Ethnic Studies

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a college general education requirement. Often students have taken many ETHN courses out of interest, yet do not realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, education, medicine, public health, social work, counseling, public policy, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor, please contact:
Daisy Rodríguez, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor
858-534-3277 or d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu or visit www.ethnicstudies.ucsd.edu

Student Consent for Release of Student Information

I hereby authorize the UCSD Ethnic Studies Department to return my graded final examination/research paper by placing the examination/research paper in a location accessible to all students in the course. I understand that the return of my examination/research paper as described above may result in the disclosure of personally identifiable information, that is not public information as defined in UCSD PPM 160-2, and I hereby consent to the disclosure of such information.

Quarter:

Course:

Instructor:

Student I.D.#:

Print Name:

Signature:
