



Assignment Buffet #1

If you signed up for this project, you probably have a family willing to take part. If a member backs out, or if parents forbid a child to take part, you won't be penalized -- just interview your family as totally as possible.

Interview members of your family about death and conceptions of death

It might be easier to interview the family as a group which is fine.

You may decide to tape record the interview, for a better record, but if you do, treat it confidentially, only you should listen to it, and perhaps transcribe it..

?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Looking back, what are your experiences with death in the past?

What parts of those experiences have been difficult? What parts of those experiences have been impactful on you, and on the family?

How do you think about death? What happens when someone dies? What happens afterwards?

Is death something you think about? Is it something any of the family ever discussed together? When? What?

Is death better out of sight and out of mind, or better planned and prepared for?

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MORE SAMPLE QUESTIONS

When is the last time someone died, and it affected you? How?

After someone died, how have you reacted?

Have deaths had a part in shaping your outlook on life?

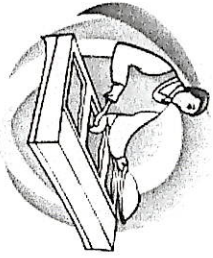
Should kids in the family be part of it when someone dies?

What plans are there to handle death in the future? Are there ways death is being planned for, such as through documents or other preparations?

Write a three page summary of your family's "biography" of death. On a 4th page, reflect on that biography, both personally and in terms of what the class is studying. For instance, is there death anxiety, or repression in your family? How is memorialization practiced in your family? Are there any forms of symbolic immortality?



Writing it up.



Assignment Buffet
#2

Interview someone with an occupation close to death.

You may conduct the interview at their place of work or someplace else -- but observe the setting closely, if at their workplace.

If you signed up for this project, you probably have a person in mind, such as a hospice worker, a funeral home employee, a morgue someone who works in an ER, etc..

You may decide to tape record the interview, for a better record, but if you do, treat it confidentially; only you should listen to it, and perhaps transcribe it.



SOME POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

Tell me about how you chose this profession?
What preparation did you have about dying and the dead?

Tell me about the first time you say a dying person? A dead body? A person dealing with a loved one's death?

In that first time what were the circumstances?
How did you feel? How did you respond?

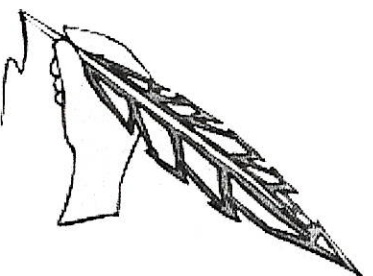
What allows you to handle so much exposure to death, and how do you cope?

Were you ever trained in grief counseling?

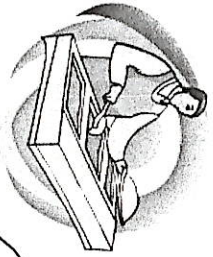
Are there circumstances when people should or shouldn't deal directly with the dying or dead?
With the dead body?

Should children have direct exposure to dying or the dead?

How has dealing so closely with dying or death affected your outlook on life? Or on death in your personal sphere?



Write a 3 to 4 page report. Summarize what you learned about their experiences working in proximity to death. How does their experience compare with what you've been learning in class? For example, does it have any connection to Kaufman's book on hospital professionals dealing with death? How does it relate to theories of universal death anxiety, repression, symbolic immortality, etc.



Assignment Buffer #3

Interview someone who survived a death-threatening experience

Conducting this interview will take sensitivity, empathy, and gentle listening, rather than pushing your interviewee. Exercise an ethical duty not to go where they don't want to. The more empathic you can be, the better.

If you signed up, you must already know a combat veteran, an accident or shooting survivor, a survivor of a near-death experience



If you want to tape record, treat any tape or transcript you make with the utmost confidentiality. Do not tape record if your interviewee objects.



THINGS YOU MIGHT SAY & ASK:

Thanks so much for helping me with this assignment, and sharing your experience with death. I'm so glad you're alive to share it!

Tell me about your experience with death.

When

Where

How old were you

What happened

What was it like for you in the midst of it

What is the first thing you remember?

What happened after that?

Did you feel your life was threatened then?

What allowed you to survive?

How did you know you nearly died?

Knowing this, how did you react and feel?

Did it have any impact on you later? How?

Do you feel the impact on your life, now?

In how you live?

In how you feel about the past, present, future?

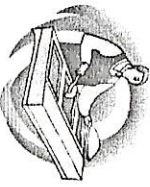
In how you think about and approach death?

Thinking about now, have you put this completely away or behind you? In what way (or not)?



Write a 3 page (approximately) report, mainly a summary of the interview.

In a paragraph or two, reflect on how the experience impacted the person. Was there repression? Did it raise or lower death anxiety? etc.



Assignment Buffet #4



Two options to this assignment

1 Attend the funeral and other rituals for a person who died, as a participant observer

2 Observe the rituals of death for a famous person, on video

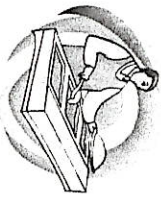
Go to Sakai in the "Assignment Buffet Resources" folder. Read the document "Research Observation, Field Note Tips." Do not take notes at the funeral, but observe with great attention and taking nothing for granted. As soon as you come home, or even in the car or nearby place, write down everything totally and fully to the very best of your memory-- these are field notes. Make good notes about the setting. Make note of who was there and what they did and how people reacted when they did it. What seemed most important and salient? What else did you notice?

Identify a person whose funeral is available in fairly complete form, online. Study the video record closely, taking notes in as much detail as you can.

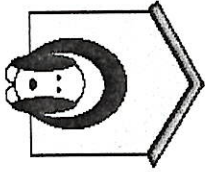
Write a report about what happened at the events. Don't just describe it, but attempt to interpret the behaviors you observed. You can make use of concepts we have read about, such as things you observed that stand for "symbolic immortality," actions that help to reintegrate the group surviving, actions that reveal that participants are suppressing or managing their own fears of death. You may choose to compare this ritual to other cases we've read about, in how the body is regarded, how the death is explained, or whether the death happened in a manner that involved foretelling or hints in advance, or explanation after the fact.

Cite any reference from class readings by author and page number. No reference list is needed unless you consulted outside readings not assigned in the class.

You may quote from your field notes in your report, but you should also discuss and analyze what you saw. Your report should be 4-5 pages long. You may attach your notes to the report, but they will not be graded.



Assignment
Buffet #5



If you want to tape record, treat any tape or transcript you make with the utmost confidentiality. Do not tape record if your interviewee objects.

1

Part 1

Interview a dog owner whose dog recently died. This can be a grownup or a child, someone who had a close relationship with the dog.

Ask them about the length and nature of their relationship with the dog. How did they spend time together. What did the dog mean to them?

How did the dog die, what were the details?

During the time since the dog dies, what feelings have they experienced? In any sense, does the dog continue to live on, such as in their memories or another way?

What other losses from death have they experienced? How do these other losses compare to the emotional experience of their dog's death?

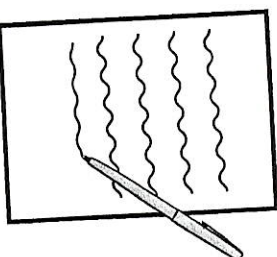
2

Part 2

Visit a nearby pet cemetery, to learn about how pet owners memorialize their pets, at such a location.

Consult the "Research Observation Field Note Tips" in the Sakai Assignment Buffet poster for suggestions on how to conduct your observation in the pet cemetery.

If you see someone visiting the cemetery, approach them and ask them about: what led them to inter their pet in this place, what does visiting here mean to them? Probe to understand how the cemetery contributes to their way of grieving or memorializing.

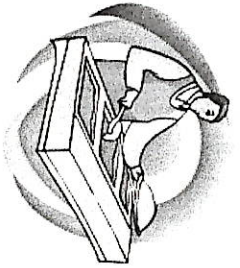


3 to 4 page write-up:

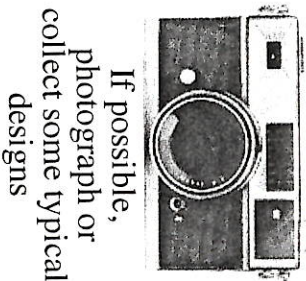
Referring to both Part 1 and Part 2, write about the experience of death for the owner of a pet.

Does it follow a similar process as for loss of a human companion?

What acts do pet owners take to come to terms with and memorialize their late pet? Report on both your interview and your cemetery visit.



Assignment Buffet #6



If possible,
photograph or
collect some typical
designs

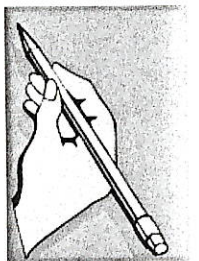


Go to 3 stores that have
noticeable displays of
sympathy cards

On the blue coding sheet, record the store zip code, the overall size of the sympathy cards, and the overall bright colorfulness of the sympathy cards

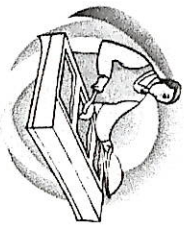
On the long, white coding sheet, record for each card (up to 60 cards per store): the front illustration, the inside illustration, any flower types shown, the front message and the inside message

Take one blue coding sheet and 10 long white coding sheets to get started -- Dr. Clark has them. If needed, ask for more sheets later.



Write a report on your observations. Attach your blue and white coding sheets to your report. Try to keep the report to 4 pages or less

Your report should report and interpret the patterns you've seen in the cards: What patterns are there in the card designs and messages? What do the designs and messages suggest about our culture's view of death and consolation? How are sympathy cards a particular genre, different from other cards? Illustrate with photos if you like.



Assignment Buffet #7



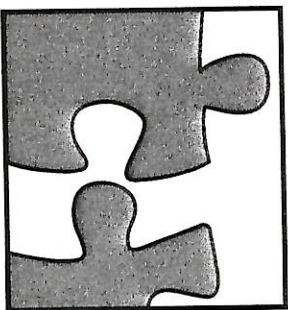
Find 4 war/soldiers' memorials, large or small, in the local area and visit them. Try finding such sites at your state's Dept. of Veteran's Affairs, or use the website Historical Marker Data Base (hmdb.org) where you can specify military as a category and search by location. Or just visit sites you already know about.

Observe carefully, and write down your observations.



Go to Sakai, in the "Assignment Buffet Resources" folder. Read the document "Research Observation, Field Note Tips." Make good notes about the setting. Make note of who was there and what they did and how people reacted and did. What seemed most important and salient? What else did you notice?

You may want to photograph each site, and use the photos in your report.



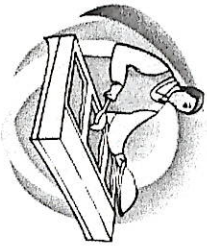
Issues to think about and write about

- 1) How does this memorial reflect the values and context of its period in history?
- 2) Are there signs of people visiting? Of disrepair?
- 3) How is this form of memorial important to the society at large? What political role might it serve?
- 4) WHAT does the monument seem to emphasize about veterans' service, death? What is the tone or meaning: Glory? Sorrow? Patriotism? Something else?

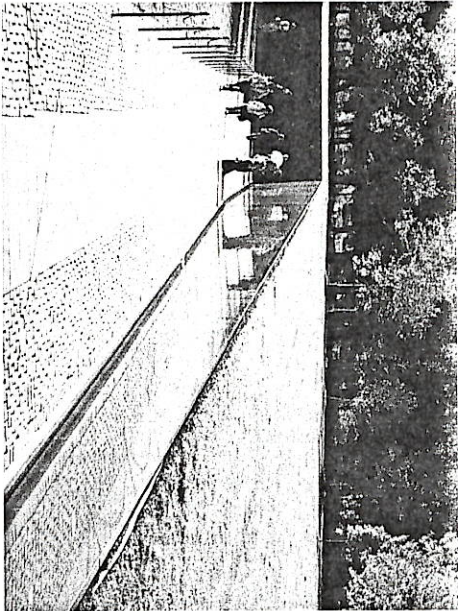
In a 3 to 4 page paper, discuss these issues as relevant to the 4 places you visited.

It is highly recommended that you include photos as part of your paper and use these snapshots to document your insights and observations.



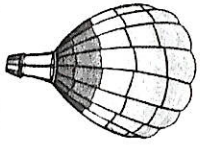


Assignment Buffet #8



Visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

For help in planning your visit, see the official website <http://www.vjps.gov/vive/index.htm>



Travel safely to and from Washington DC



Observe carefully, and write down your observations.

Go to Sakai, in the "Assignment Buffet Resources" folder. Read the document "Research Observation, Field Note Tips." Make good notes about the setting. Make note of who was there and what they did and how people reacted and did. What seemed most important and salient? What else did you notice?

Questions to think about & write about (4-5 page report)

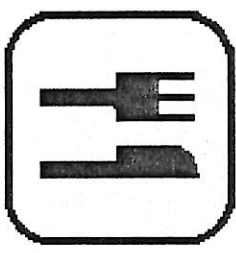
How is this memorial interactive in the way people seem to use it?

In what ways might the memorial influence those who visit? Why is it known as healing and why would this be important to people?

How is this form of memorial important to the society at large? What political role might it serve?

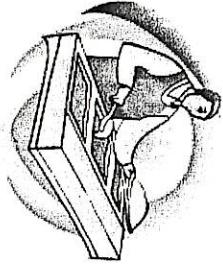
WHAT does the monument seem to emphasize about veterans' service, death? What is the tone or meaning: Glory? Sorrow? Patriotism? Something else?

From your exploring, WHY do ...

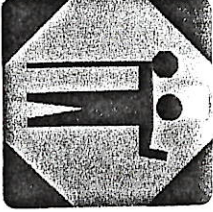


GARNISH:

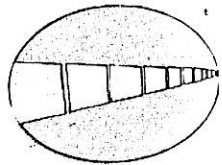
In your write-up, you might wish for one helpful reference that is related to your topic and might help you with your analysis. In Sakai, such a source is included in the Resources folder as "Assignment" Garnish"



Assignment Buffet #9



Exercise care and caution in visiting or viewing a memorial beside a road.



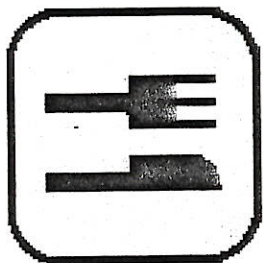
11. Photograph at least three roadside or spontaneous memorials - not tombstones at graveside, but memorials that erupt informally in a public setting. Find out about this sort of memorial and the specific sites you have photographed



Write up (4-5 pages)

You may include your photos as part of your report.

What purpose do these spontaneous memorials serve, what do they express? How do they compare to conventional memorials that are cast permanently? Who might they serve: The dead or the living, and how?

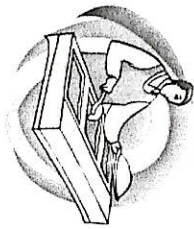


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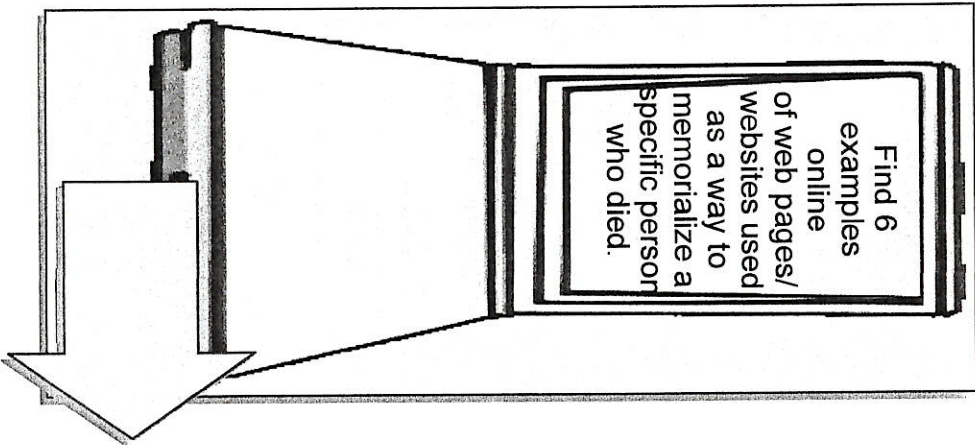
In your write-up, you might wish for one helpful

reference that is related to your topic and might help you with your analysis. In Sakai, such a source is included in the Resources folder as

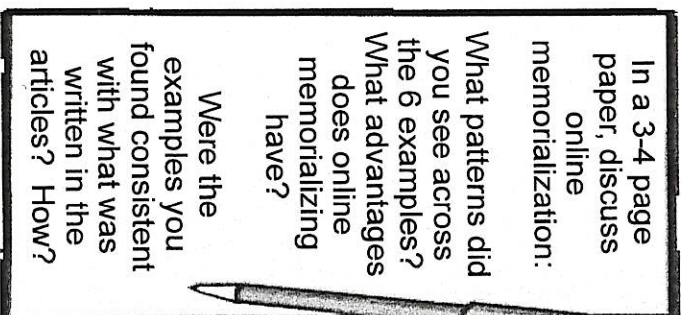
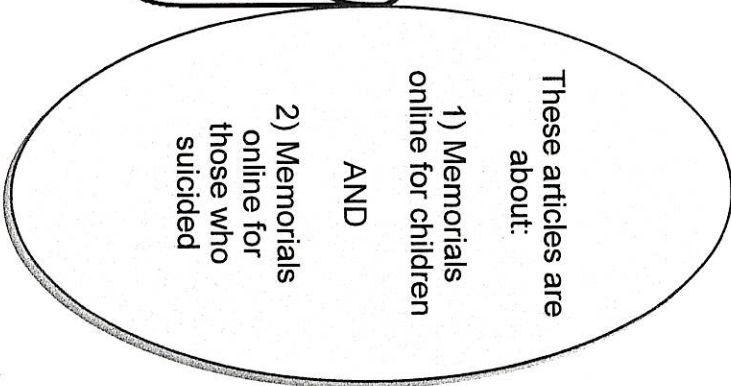
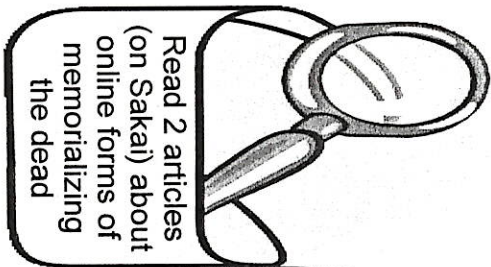
"Assignment 10 Garnish"



Assignment
Buffet #10



AND



Sympathy Card Coding Sheet –

NOTE: This study is for human cards only. Exclude any cards for animal deaths.

IF YOU SEE THE SAME CARD ON DISPLAY AT MORE THAN ONE STORE, IT SHOULD BE RECORDED EACH TIME YOU SEE IT.

You should record every design of card on display, unless there are more than 60 different card designs in one of the stores. If there are more than 60 card designs in the same store, record a systematic sampling of the cards by choosing every nth card – for instance, if there are 120 card designs on display, record every other design in order to get a representative sample of 60. If you are unable to record at least 60 cards (for instance, if the shopkeeper wants you to leave), please write that fact on the back of this sheet.

Below, you should characterize the overall display of sympathy cards at each store. Be sure to fill in the zip code for each store. (Look it up online, if necessary.)

| | Store 1 | Store 2 | Store 3 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Zip Code= | Zip Code= | Zip Code= |
| <u>Total</u> number of sympathy cards on display (Write #, even if more than 60) | | | |
| <u>Card size, overall</u> Like other cards, write L Smaller than other cards, write S Larger than other cards, write B | | | |
| <u>Card color, overall</u> How brightly colorful are the sympathy cards? Like other cards, write L Not as bright, write N More bright, write M | | | |

For the remainder of the coding, you should make a record for each card on display, up to 60 cards per store. Use the long coding sheets.