

## ANTHROPOLOGY 2239B-650

### Mummies: The Scientific and Cultural Analysis of Human Mummies

#### COURSE OUTLINE

Winter 2021

**Instructor:** Andrew Nelson

**Email:** [anelson@uwo.ca](mailto:anelson@uwo.ca)

**Credit value:** 0.5 credit

**Mode of delivery:** For 2020/2021 this course will be conducted online. It is *asynchronous*, meaning that students will be provided with a variety of lesson materials and activities that can be done throughout the week, although there are tasks that must be completed by specific times.

There will be one synchronous session in Week 8 at a time agreeable to the majority of the class, where Prof. Nelson will demonstrate the analysis of x-rays and CT scans of select mummies in real time (including "Lady Hudson", Western's resident Egyptian mummy). Students will be encouraged to ask questions and actively engage in the analysis. This session will be recorded for asynchronous review by anyone unable to attend the synchronous session.

**Calendar Course Description:** Mummies are of interest to archaeologists and to the general public. Mummies are people and they speak to us from across the centuries. This course takes an interdisciplinary, scientific, and cultural approach to the study of human mummies to discuss issues of ethics, science and cross-cultural perspectives on death.

**Antirequisites:** None.

**Prerequisites:** Any first year Social Science, Health Sciences, or Science course.

**Course Syllabus:** This course introduces students to the study of mummies: ancient and modern, natural and anthropogenic, and from every corner of the world. Mummies are microcosms of the life and death of people of the past, and they bear witness to the environments and cultures in which they lived. Topics discussed in lecture include the ethics, history and methods of mummy studies, as well as worldwide patterns and practices of mummification. The topic of the course is inherently interdisciplinary, and lectures will include material from archaeological, ethnographic, historic, clinical, radiological and popular culture sources, to name only a few. Mummy studies is also placed firmly within the broad discipline of anthropology, emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural and deep temporal perspectives to the understanding of human cultural and biological variability

*A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL site before the first day of class.*

## **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- debate the nature of the discussions of ethics related to mummy studies
- understand that mummies are people, and they are microcosms of information about the individuals and their culture
- recognize the importance of cross-cultural perspectives in the understanding of human cultural practices
- identify the variability in terms of how different cultures deal with death
- undertake a critical analysis of how popular culture uses and misuses mummies and other archaeological icons
- explain the importance of the interdisciplinary, team-based approach to mummy studies
- define the modern practice of bioarchaeology and recognize how it has evolved

## **Course Materials:**

All readings will be accessible through the Course Readings link on OWL.

## **Evaluation:**

There will be two assignments due during the 12 weeks of term, and a third due at the end of the first week of exams.

The first assignment is based on one of the readings for Week 2 – Charles 2005. The assignment will consist of a 500 word (2 page) discussion of the question “What is Mortuary Archaeology?” and the selection and analysis of an archaeological study of the mortuary rituals of an ancient society. This assignment will be worth 25% of the course grade and will be due January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021 by 5pm.

The second assignment will be a 1,250 word (5 pages) reflection paper will allow you to think in detail about one of the course readings and two related articles that you will find in refereed academic journals. The idea is to reflect on how that reading contributes to the course in general, how it presents something that is new to you and on how it relates to the additional articles you have chosen. This assignment will be worth 50% of the course grade and will be due March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 by 5pm.

The third assignment will be a 500 word (2 pages) critical analysis of a story in the media about mummies. The lecture for Week 11 will be on mummies and popular culture and will include a consideration about how mummies are featured in the popular media. You should draw on the readings for Week 11 and other relevant weeks (ethics? imaging? Peru? Egypt? Prof. Nelson’s discussion of National Geographic in Week 5 etc.) to help you critique the media pieces. A selection of stories will be made available in the last week of classes. This assignment will be worth 25% of the course grade and will be due on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021 by 5pm.

Note: The grading for this course is loaded into the first half of the term. This is a response to feedback this term which stated that students felt that too much grading was being loaded to the end of the term in other courses, making it difficult to cope with it all at once. This does require that you get on your first assignments early!

*Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations and Late Penalties:*

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

Unless a student receives accommodation for illness through Academic Counselling, late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5%/day late for up to a total of 5 days (including weekends) following the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted after 5 days.

*Statement on Plagiarism:*

Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com)

**Institutional Statements and Policies**

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding medical accommodation, accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences [here in Western's Academic Calendar](#).

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