

AFTERLIVES (ANT 4930 / ANG 6930)

T 11:45-12:35 (Turlington 2336) and Th 11:45-1:40 (Turlington 2349)

Instructors:

Alix Johnson	Richard Kernaghan
alix.johnson@ufl.edu	kernaghan@ufl.edu
Office hours: Thurs 2-3:30 (via Zoom except by request)	Office hours: Friday 2:30-4:00 (via Zoom except by request)
Office: Turlington B129	Office: Grinter 335

Course description: How does the past make itself felt in the present? How do we learn to sense its traces, rhythms, and echoes? In what ways do the perspectives of the living anchor what gets taken for the real, evident and actual? Are the extinct really gone, if so in which ways? What does it mean to adopt a considered relation with what came before us? And perhaps most of all, how do we steward and caretake for afterlives yet to come?

This course explores a variety of anthropological entry points into the study of *afterlives*: situations that live on past their purported end points, shaping what comes after in often imperceptible ways. From the reverberating violence of the colonial fort and cotton plantation, to the everyday remnants of the recycling plant and pawn shop, we set out to learn how anthropologists (and others) make sense of such persistent histories – and the place of living, breathing bodies in relation to those deemed ‘over,’ mute or unresponsive. Doing so, we will raise questions about time, memory, materiality, representation, geography, language, and generation. We will also experiment with a range of research methods for engaging with our own local and intimate histories, foregrounding how ethnography itself persists and grows as a kind of afterlife.

Learning objectives: To succeed in this course, students will demonstrate their ability to

- Situate a range of ideas about afterlives within a trajectory of anthropological (and adjacent) thinking
- Engage with practical and ethical questions related to afterlives (past, present and future)
- Conduct independent research on an afterlife of your choosing, in close conversation with themes and texts from this course
- Deliberate on how the forms, modes, and expressive aspects of research themselves instantiate and exist in relation to afterlives

Assessment: Your grade will be based on the following components:

Participation	25%	Ongoing
Portfolio prospectus	10%	Jan 27
Observation assignment	10%	Feb 17
Image assignment	10%	Mar 17
Archive assignment	10%	Apr 7
Portfolio presentation	15%	Apr 19
Portfolio reflections	20%	Apr 26

Participation will be assessed on the basis of in-class discussions and activities. There will be opportunities in this course for large-group, small-group, and one-on-one (office hours) participation, but students must demonstrate consistent engagement in the course.

The *Portfolio Project* consists of a series of assignments that ask you to explore an afterlife of your choosing through a range of ethnographic methodologies (Observation, Image and Archive). The project starts with a prospectus, or short statement of interest that outlines your object of study. It concludes with a written reflection and oral presentation that summarize your experience and findings, linking your project to themes and readings from the course.

Texts: Most readings will be available as PDFs on the Canvas site. The following titles are recommended (not required) for purchase, as we will be reading extended selections from these:

- Avery Gordon (2008). *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Christina Sharpe (2016). *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press.
- Anaïs Tondeur and Michael Marder (2020). *The Chernobyl Herbarium: Fragments of an Exploded Consciousness*. Open Humanities Press.
- Leslie Marmon Silko (1991). *Almanac of the Dead*. Penguin.
- Hugh Raffles (2020). *The Book of Unconformities: Speculations on Lost Time*. Penguin.
- Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan and Nils Bubandt. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. University of Minnesota Press.

In addition to assigned readings, students will find a “course archive” of related texts, images, and other materials on the Canvas site. We encourage you to dig into the archive for further context on each week’s theme, to use these materials in your assignments, and to suggest additional items to add.

Course policies:

Expectations: This is a reading-intensive course (you can expect to read 60+ pages each week). Some of the readings in this course will be challenging. We do not expect you to understand everything, but do expect you to make time for careful reading, and to come to class with any questions you have. Likewise, you are not required to agree with the opinions presented here, but you are expected to engage with them respectfully and in good faith. Discussions with your peers should follow the same principle: disagreement and critique are welcome, but personal attacks will not be tolerated.

Note: reading and assignments are due on the date they are listed on the course schedule.

Attendance: This course is organized as an in-person discussion seminar, and as such, its success depends on you. Instructors will offer short lectures to introduce historical context, case studies, or points of comparison, but the majority of our class time will be spent in conversation. We expect that all students will come to class having read, reflected on, and otherwise prepared themselves to discuss the day’s material. More than three unexcused and unaddressed absences are likely to impact your final grade.

All this said, we understand that this semester presents particular challenges for regular attendance. If you are unable to attend class due to illness, COVID exposure, or other unavoidable issues that may arise, contact the instructors in advance. You may be able to follow along with class discussions remotely until you can re-join the class. However, please note: this course is not offered in hybrid/hy-flex format and the Zoom option is available only to keep you caught up – you will not be able to participate in discussions and as such will receive only minimal attendance credit. In the case of extended, unavoidable absences, alternative participation credit may be arranged.

Assignments: Written assignments should be submitted via the Canvas site. Assignments should be submitted as Word docs (or equivalent – not PDFs), typed in 12pt font, double-spaced, with 1" margins.

Assignments submitted late, but within one week of the due date, will be docked one letter grade. Late work submitted after one week will not be accepted.

The following scale will be used for final grades: 94-100=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 79-82=B-; 76-78=C+; 72-75=C; 69-71=C-; 66-68=D+; 62-65=D; 59-61=D-; 58 and below=E (failing).

Accommodations: UF is committed to achieving full accessibility for people with disabilities, and we are committed to making this classroom accessible to you. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are encouraged to register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/, or 001 Reid Hall) as soon as possible – but also know that it is never too late. Having your accommodation letter will allow us to make any necessary accommodations as quickly as possible. Whether or not you are registered with the Disability Resource Center, we always welcome feedback about how to make this class more accessible – to you in particular, or overall.

Academic integrity: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.” We encourage you all to review the Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) in its entirety. *In this course, cheating and plagiarism (representing someone else’s work as your own, including through failures of citation) will result in a grade of zero, and may be reported to the Dean of Students.*

UF resources:

Library / Research Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>

E-Learning / Technical Support: learningsupport@ufl.edu / 352-392-4357 (select option 2)

Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu> / 352-392-1575

U Matter, We Care (Resources for students in distress): umatter@ufl.edu / 352-294-2273

Course schedule:

WEEK 1: Introductions

T 1/6 [no reading]

WEEK 2: Approaches

T 1/11 Johnson, "Data Centers as Infrastructural In-betweens: Expanding Connections and Enduring Marginalities in Iceland," *American Ethnologist* 46(1): 75-88

Th 1/14 Kernaghan, "Cloud to Clod"

WEEK 3: Death, precision, co-presence

T 1/18 Hertz, "A Contribution to the Study of the Collective Representation of Death" Benjamin, "Black Afterlives Matter"

Th 1/20 Rubin, "Exhuming Dead Persons: Forensic Science and the Making of Post-fascist Publics in Spain"

WEEK 4: Ghostly matters

T 1/25 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, "Her Shape and His Hand" (p. 3-30) and "The Other Door, It's Floods of Tears with Consolation Enclosed" (p. 63-136)

Th 1/27 Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam*, "Introduction" (p. 1-9) and "Ghosts of War" (p. 10-27)

Assg: Prospectus due Th 1/27 by 5pm

WEEK 5: From fragment to dream

T 2/1 Marder and Tondeur, *The Chernobyl Herbarium*

Th 2/3 *Cabinet Magazine*, Issue 67, "Dreams"

WEEK 6: Rubble

T 2/8 Stoler, "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination," *Cultural Anthropology* 23(2): 191-219

Th 2/10 Gordillo, *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*, "A Haunted Frontier" (p. 31-52) and "Ships Stranded in the Forest" (p. 131-152)

WEEK 7: Sources and Sieves

T 2/15 Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (Part I: books 1-4)
 Serres and Latour, "Method"

Th 2/17 Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (Part I: books 5-8)

Assg: Observation due Th 2/17 by 5pm

WEEK 8: Wake work

T 2/22 Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (selections)

Th 2/24 Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (selections)

WEEK 9: Surfaces (texture, retention, release)

T 3/1 Freud, "A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad'"
 Kittler, "Gramophone"

Th 3/3 *Entre-Rios* website (Blackmore, Domínguez Londoño et. al.)

WEEK 10

[SPRING BREAK]

WEEK 11: Debilities

T 3/15 Wool, *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed* (selections)

Th 3/17 Wool, *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed* (selections)

Assg: Image due Th 3/17 by 5pm

WEEK 12: Inorganic drives

T 3/22 Raffles, *The Book of Unconformities* ("Marble"; "Sandstone"; "Magnetite")

Th 3/24 *Cultural Anthropology Fieldsites Series: "Geological Anthropology"*

WEEK 13: Toxicity

T 3/29 Agard-Jones, "Spray," *Somatosphere*
 Shapiro, "Attuning to the Chemosphere: Domestic Formaldehyde, Bodily
 Reasoning, and the Chemical Sublime," *Cultural Anthropology* 30(3): 363-393

Th 3/31 Nguyen, "Breathless in Beijing: Aerial Attunements and China's New Respiratory Publics," *Engaging Science, Technology and Society* 6: 439-461

WEEK 14: Living on

T 4/5 Tsing et. al., *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (selections)

Th 4/7 *Feral Atlas* website (Tsing et. al.)

Assg: Archive due Th 4/7 by 5pm

WEEK 15: Presentations

T 4/12 [no reading]

Th 4/14 [no reading]

Assg: Portfolio presentations due (in class)

WEEK 16: Presentations

T 4/19 [no reading]

Assg: Portfolio reflections due Apr 26 by 5pm