

CALL FOR PAPERS—LUCAS Graduate Conference 2013

Death: the Cultural Meaning of the End of Life

Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society
24–25 January, 2013

Keynote Speakers:

Professor Joanna Woodall, Courtauld Institute of Art, United Kingdom
Professor Rosi Braidotti, University of Utrecht, Netherlands

The Conference

Death is a defining factor in the explorations of our subjectivity, art, history, politics, and many other aspects of our social interactions and perceptions of the world. In the modern age, conceptions of death have continued to shift and evolve, yet our perceptions are still fueled by an instinctive fear of the end of life.

In recent decades, we have rebelled against the threat of death by inventing new technologies and medicines that have drastically increased our life expectancy—diseases and disabilities are gradually disappearing. Some believe that one day we will completely conquer the aging process, and ultimately death. Life can now be seen as a new form of commodity, a material object that we can trade, sell, or buy.

Despite our attempts to shut-out death or overcome its inevitability, the end of life has remained a visible and unavoidable aspect of our society. From antiquity to the present day, perceptions of death have been represented through various different mediums: visual culture, art, literature, music, historical writing, cinema, religious symbols, national anniversaries, and public expressions of mourning.

This conference aims to explore how death has been represented and conceptualized, from classical antiquity to the modern age, and the extent to which our perceptions and understandings of death have changed (or remained the same) over time. The wide scope of this theme reflects the historical range of LUCAS's (previously called LUICD) three research programs (Classics and Classical Civilization, Medieval and Early Modern Studies and Modern and Contemporary Studies), as well as the intercontinental and interdisciplinary focus of many of the institute's research projects.

Proposals

The LUCAS Graduate Conference welcomes papers from all disciplines within the humanities. The topic of your proposal may address the concept of death from a cultural, historical, classical, artistic, literary, cinematic, political, economic, or social viewpoint.

Questions that might be raised include: How have different cultures imagined the end of life? What is the role of art (literature, or cinema) in cultural conceptions of death? How might historical or contemporary conceptualizations of death be related to the construction of our subjectivity and cultural identity? What is the cultural meaning(s) of death? To what extent has modern warfare changed our perceptions of death? How is death presented in the media and how has this changed? In what ways has religion influenced our reflections on death and the afterlife?

Please send your proposal (max. 300 words) to present a 20-minute paper to lucasconference2013@gmail.com. **The deadline for proposals is 15 November, 2012.** You will be notified whether or not your paper has been selected by 1 December, 2012.

As with the previous LUCAS Graduate Conference (2011), a selection of papers will be published in the conference proceedings. For those who attend the conference, there will be a registration fee of €45 to cover the cost of lunches, coffee breaks, and other conference materials. Unfortunately we cannot offer financial support at this time.

If you have any questions regarding the conference and/or the proposals, please do not hesitate to contact the organizing committee at: lucasconference2013@gmail.com. Further details will be available online in the Fall.

The organizing committee:
Odile Bodde
Maarten Jansen
David Louwrier
Jenny Weston