

Proposal Blended Intensive Program

Depicting Death & Depicting the Dead in European Society

BIP- Elegy- Session 2027-Clermont-Ferrand

In-person session : 24-28 May 2027

Online Session: 18-19 May & 1-2 June 2027

Death is an intrinsic part of the human condition, but our perception of it varies considerably depending on individual or collective beliefs and convictions. Although we may agree on a medical definition of death and recognize it in others, it remains difficult to fully comprehend. Depicting death reflects this need and the attempt to grasp and define it by giving it a form.

It could be a symbolic or allegorical representation, such as a still life to signify our mortality; or conversely a personification that depicts death as a being, a divinity or a monstrous creature. But death can also be envisaged as a state, a reality that is easier to visualise because it takes on a face or is embodied in the body of the deceased.

Depicting death also raises the question of how to depict the dead. Whether to portray the deceased as a living person or, conversely, to reduce them to a corpse, a skeleton or a skull is not only a matter of iconographic choices and cultural conventions, but also reveals a particular conception of death.

These depictions are not necessarily or solely bodies, but also voices, which make themselves heard, for example, in a speech employing *prosopopoeia*, or during a dream, or even in a spiritualist experience. Such figures of death and the dead can also come to life : skeletons in a “dance macabre” and characters in a “dialogue of the dead”, ghosts and spirits who appear following a necromantic ritual or who come to haunt the living.

This study will examine not only the variety of forms but also the role played by these representation within the narrative or ritual context in which they appear as well as the purposes that underpin the choice of a particular representation of death or the dead.

This 2027 session of the BIP Elegy builds on the program initiated by Despoina Papasthati at the University of Ioannina. The present program will explore the diversity of figurative representation of death and the dead in European Society from Antiquity up to the present day.

Suggestions for a few topics :

- “Figures” of death or of the dead in literature and the visual and performing arts (comic books, theatre, cinema, opera) etc.
- Role of these representation of death and the dead in a ritual context (religious, civic, political)
- Relationship between representations of death or of deceased people and memory
- Beliefs and representation of an after-life : philosophical and religious discourse
- Discourse and practises aimed at coping or coming to terms with death and grief

Types of learning and activities

a) Icebreaker games (online and face-to-face)

b) Lectures (online, face-to-face) : 24-30 May 2027

Face-to-face lectures: three or four lectures a day, in the morning or afternoon, depending on the schedule of other activities.

Online lectures: one or two online lectures per week.

b) Creative writing workshops

The students, divided into small mixed groups including students from the different countries, will have to choose one picture or work of art on the theme of Death and devise and write a text together (description, narrative, dialogue). Each group will present his text (along with the picture chosen) to all participants at the end of the week

c) Cultural visits :

Cultural visits will be organized such as :

- Visits to historical and archeological sites in Auvergne

Archeological museum of Gergovia

Danse macabre of the Chaise-Dieu Abbey

Temple of Mercury at the summit of the Puy de Dôme

Archeological museum of Clermont-Ferrand

- Short film screening (Clermont-Ferrand organises each year the International Short Film Festival)
- Roger Quilliot Art Museum

etc.

**Feel free to communicate the invitation of the BIP
with your colleagues-specialists on the topic**

Please register your interest in participating in the program by the 30/09/2026

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