

Death, Loss and Mourning in Film and Media

Today, death is both something very absent and very present. When people die, they often do so hidden away in care homes and hospitals. Death is dealt with by professionals, making it something absent in most people's lives. At the same time, death is all around us via media images and popular cultural narratives. Whether in media reports from sites of war, televised royal funerals, gruesome murders in true crime podcasts or fictional stories in films, death would seem to be everywhere. The pandemic also influenced our thinking about death. While the dead and dying were often even more separated from the living – with care homes being closed and funerals limited to only a few people – death was very present in news reports and online spaces provided new ways of mourning and remembering those we had lost.

When death and mourning move online or become the topic of media, different modes of production, representation, and distribution are applied. Death and mourning become commercialized and marketized. Still, media can offer different narratives about death and mourning, and online spaces allow for alternative ways to relate to loss and grief. However, media and digital spaces can also uphold norms and strengthen traditional views on death. As with research on religion and media in general, the connection between the online and the offline when exploring grief must not be ignored. Death and mourning online are connected on diverse levels to offline practices. These processes can be subsumed under the term of mediatisation that scrutinizes changes in the field of media and religion.

What are then the narratives the media and popular culture offer us about death? How can media, online spaces, influencers, and popular culture be a part of loss and mourning? What notions of an afterlife do films and the online world provide? How are religious imaginaries about death reinvented

in media representations? These are some of the questions we encourage authors to explore in this upcoming issue of the *Journal for Religion, Film and Media*. Though focusing on death, this issue is also very much about life. It aims to highlight how death, loss, and mourning is also a part of what it means to be human, a notion not always acknowledged in today's culture.

Suggested topics:

- Notions of an afterlife in popular culture
- The ritualization of death in media
- Online sites as places of mourning and memory
- Experiences of online funerals
- Online pastoral care
- Theological perspectives on online death rituals and practices
- Theorizing religion and death online
- Online deaths and afterlives
- Grief practices online and offline
- Mourning processes in media and popular culture
- Death/grief/mourning influencers
- Ethnographic explorations of online and offline grief
- Media and online death ritual innovations
- The visualization of loss and the aesthetics of grief in media
- Beyond language – capturing grief in alternative ways online
- The digital revitalization of old grief norms/rituals
- The commercialisation and marketization of death in media
- The use of media in death rituals

We invite scholars from a range of relevant fields, such as literature, film and media studies, theology, and the study of religion, as well as of sociology or political sciences, to contribute to this issue. The issue also includes an open section for articles on other topics in keeping with the profile of JRFM. The deadline for all submissions is 1 June 2025. The publication is scheduled for May 2026. Contributions of 5,000 to 6,000 words (including notes) should be submitted for double-blind peer review through the journal website at www.jrfm.eu. We kindly ask authors to register and to follow the instructions for submitting contributions, especially the style guide.

For questions regarding this call for papers or the submission and publication process, please contact the editors of the issue, Sofia Sjö (Sofia.Sjo@abo.fi) and Marie-Therese Mäder (m.maeder@lmu.de).