

Email from Professor Whitaker

Ella Moreau Case, October 2025

From: Daniel Whitaker
To: Dr. Karen Dupree, Department Chair
Subject: Student Paper – Example of Concerns
Date: Mon, Sep 15, 2025

Karen,

See what I mean. This is from Ella Moreau's latest submission. I understand that students bring passion to these topics, but her tone and language are becoming increasingly personal and accusatory. It is making it difficult to evaluate her work objectively.

—Dan

Attachment: Excerpt from Student Paper

Ella Moreau
Mortuary Science 312: Contemporary Issues in Disposition
Professor Daniel Whitaker
September 14, 2025

Composting, Alkaline Hydrolysis, and the Ethics of Disposition

Traditional burial and embalming practices are presented to the public as dignified, but the industry's own internal language betrays a more commercial reality. "Clients," "services," and "arrangements" are terms borrowed from sales, not sacred care. The result is a transactional experience dressed in black fabric and euphemism. The body becomes a product, purchased preservation rather than a natural return to the earth. For an industry that claims to comfort the grieving, its comfort often depends on maintaining illusions that are neither sustainable nor honest.

I visited one of the funeral homes owned by a faculty member in our program. The visit was supposed to demonstrate "best practices." What I saw was a showroom, rows of metal caskets lined up like cars, price tags discreetly hidden behind brochures. Staff spoke in practiced tones about "closure" while steering families toward higher-cost options. I do not question anyone's personal sincerity, but it was clear that grief is the business model. Even the scent of lilies in the air felt less like mourning and more like masking something decaying beneath.

The future of death care must involve truth rather than theater. Composting and alkaline hydrolysis are not disrespectful; they are honest. They admit what the industry cannot: that death is decomposition, and decomposition is renewal. To continue teaching embalming as an unquestioned good is not neutrality, it is complicity in environmental harm and cultural denial. If some professionals find that uncomfortable, perhaps it is the discomfort of recognizing that the "traditional" methods are less about respect for the dead and more about protecting the living from their own fear.