

## ENG 604 INTERDISCIPLINARY CULTURAL STUDIES: MATERIAL CULTURE SPRING 2009

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course, we examine a *material turn* in scholarship—a turn of attention to material objects and practices conducted by scholars who have traditionally focused almost solely on texts. Over the past two decades, researchers in rhetoric, literary studies, history, and cultural studies have turned increasingly to material culture studies to explore the significance of material artifacts and material strategies for understanding history, culture, race, gender, politics, economics, literacy, and so on. This turn coincides, probably not coincidentally, with a *linguistic turn*—a sense that material culture could be read as a text—in disciplines such as anthropology and archaeology that have long studied material culture. Material culture encompasses a wide range of objects, from pottery shards to ipods, and its study requires a multi-disciplinary approach. Thus course engages a transdisciplinary approach to explore the diverse roles material objects play in the lives of individuals who design, create, circulate, consume and collect them. We will read a range of sociological and anthropological theories of production, exchange, and consumption, including works by Appadurai, Baudrillard, Benjamin, Bourdieu, Freud, Marx, Mauss, and Veblen. These will be accompanied by grounded, historically-specific case studies of particular objects. The course is loosely organized around the life-cycle of objects as they move through various social and economic contexts: design, production, commodification, circulation, consumption, valuation, identification, collection, and representation. Although our use of these categories to organize the course may imply that objects fall neatly into these categories and that objects march through this life cycle as if in a natural progression, we will examine the ways in which objects are polysemic and multifunctional and can never be reduced to one simple category. We therefore will problematize the use of these categories and the notion of an object having a life-cycle. The goal of this course is to call attention to the way in which we talk about things, and we hope to stimulate lively debate about the conceptual categories we bring to bear on the social significance and meaning of objects.

**COURSE URL:** <http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

### REQUIRED TEXTS:

**ENG 604 Course Pack** [Available at Alternative Copies, located at 715 S. Forest. Phone: 480-829-7992. Also available online. Readers ordered online will be shipped to the students within 24 hours of placing their order. There is assigned a unique username and password for ordering your class reader. To place your reader order online, do the following:

- 1) Logging on to [www.alternativecopy.com](http://www.alternativecopy.com)
- 2) Clicking on the 'ASU Readers' link on our home page
- 3) Entering your class username & password below: For Class: ENG 604  
**Username:** eng604 **Password:** tobin64

\*\*Please note that both username and password are lowercase\*\*

**Online readings** (URL provided on class website)

### REQUIREMENTS:

**Assignments:** Detailed descriptions of the following required assignments will be distributed:

- |                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| • Scholarly Log on Key Terms     | 25% |
| • Oral Report on Selected Object | 20% |
| • Seminar Paper Proposal         | 10% |
| • Conference Presentation        | 10% |
| • Seminar Paper                  | 35% |

**Attendance and Participation:** Because so much of what is to be learned in this course occurs in class, regular attendance is expected. The course is so constructed that even a few absences will create serious problems. Be prepared each class to offer comments and pose questions on the day's assigned readings.

**Late Assignments:** Papers not turned in on the due date will be marked down a letter grade for each week the paper is late.

**Plagiarism:** We follow the CLAS and departmental policy on plagiarism. Students who plagiarize will receive a final grade of XE.

**Incompletes:** Please do not assume that an incomplete will be given upon request. We follow university and departmental policy on the handling of incompletes; only in the case of verified emergencies and illnesses will an incomplete be given.

### Withdrawal Deadlines:

Course Withdrawal (in Person)	April 3
Course Withdrawal (ASU Interactive & Sundial)	April 5
Complete Withdrawal	May 5

## ENG 604 TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

SPRING 2009

**Note:** *Assignments due on day listed.*

**WEEK 1      JANUARY 26      INTRODUCTION**

Introduction to the Course

**WEEK 2      FEBRUARY 2      SUBJECT/OBJECT RELATIONS**

**Read:**

Susan Pearce, from *Museums, Objects and Collections*. [In Reader.]

Janet Hoskins “Agency, Biography, and Objects,” from *Handbook of Material Culture* (2006). [In Reader.]

Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things,” from *The Social Life of Things* (1986). [In Reader.]

Bruno Latour [aka Jim Johnson], “Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: the Sociology of a Door-Closer,” *Social Problems* 35 (1988). [In Reader.]

**WEEK 3      FEBRUARY 9      INVENTION AND BRICOLAGE**

**Read:**

Karen LeFevre, from *Invention as a Social Act*. [In Reader.]

Raine Eisler and Alfonso Montuori “Creativity, Society and the Hidden Subject of Gender: Toward a New Contextualized Approach” Available online at:

<http://www.ciis.edu/faculty/articles/montuori/creativitygender.pdf>

Maureen Daly Goggin “Stitching a Life in ‘Pen of Steele and Silken Inke’: Elizabeth Parker’s circa 1830 Sampler” PDF available online at:

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

Ariane Fennetaux “Female Crafts: Women and Bricolage of Late Georgian Britain 1750-1820.” PDF available online at:

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

**WEEK 4      FEBRUARY 16      MAKING THINGS, MAKING KNOWLEDGE**

**Read:**

Karl Marx, “Estranged Labour” from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. [In Reader.]

Pamela H. Smith, “The Artisanal World,” in *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (2004). [In Reader.]

Steven Shapin, “The Invisible Technician,” *American Scientist* (1989). [In Reader.]

James A. Schmiechen, "Reconsidering the Factory, Art-Labor, and the Schools of Design in Nineteenth Century Britain," *Design Issues* 6.2 (1990): 58-69. [In Reader.]

Rebecca Bedell and Margaret Samu "The Butter Sculpture of Caroline S. Brooks (1840-1913)." PDF available online at:  
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

**WEEK 5      FEBRUARY 23      WHAT IS A COMMODITY**

**Read:**

Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret," from *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867). [In Reader.]

Arjun Appadurai, "Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (1986). [In Reader]

Howard Morphy, "Aboriginal Art in a Global Context," in *Worlds Apart*, ed. D. Miller (1995). [Handout]

Robert J. Foster, "Tracking Globalization: Commodities and Value in Motion," from *Handbook of Material Culture* (2006). [In Reader.]

**WEEK 6      MARCH 2      CONSUMING THINGS**

**Read:**

Thorstein Veblen, "Conspicuous Consumption," in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). [In Reader.]

Pierre Bourdieu, "Aristocracy of Taste" in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1979). [In Reader.]

Theodor Adorno, "Culture Industry" in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). [In Reader.]

John Fiske, "Commodities and Culture," in *Understanding Popular Culture* (1989). [In Reader.]

Amanda Vickery, "Women and the World of Goods" from *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. Brewer and Porter (1994). [In Reader.]

**WEEK 7      MARCH 9-15      \*\*\*SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES\*\*\***

**WEEK 8      MARCH 16      WHAT IS A GIFT**

**Read:**

Marcel Mauss, from *The Gift* (1925). [In Reader.]

Pierre Bourdieu, "On Symbolic Capital," from *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972, 1989). [In Reader.]

Annette Weiner, "Inalienable Wealth," *American Ethnologist* 12 (1985). [In Reader.]

Danny Miller, "Alienable Gifts and Unalienable Commodities," from *Empire of Things* (2001). [In Reader.]

Katherine Rieder, "Gifting and Fetishization." PDF available at:  
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

**WEEK 9      MARCH 23      ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIES OF VALUE: SENTIMENT, MEMORY, RITUAL, COMMEMORATION**

**Read:**

Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library." (c. 1930s; Translated, 1968) [In Reader.]

Alan Radley, "Artefacts, Memory and a Sense of the Past," from *Collective Remembering*, eds. Middleton and Edwards (1990). [In Reader.]

Jo Dahn, "Mrs. Delany and Ceramics in the Objectscape" in *Interpreting Ceramics* (2001). Available online at: <http://www.uwic.ac.uk/ICRC/issue001/delany/delany.htm>

Bärbel Tischleder, "Literary Interiors, Cherished Things, and Feminine Subjectivity in the Gilded Age," *English Studies in Canada* 31 (2005). [In Reader.]

Maura Coughlin, "Cloaks, Crosses, and Globes" PDF available at:  
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

Lisa Ricker, "(Re)Collecting Herself" PDF available at:  
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

**WEEK 10      MARCH 30      COLLECTING PRACTICES**

**Read:**

Sigmund Freud, "The Fetish" in "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925, 1963). [In Reader.]

Jean Baudrillard, "The System of Collecting" in *The Cultures of Collecting*, eds. Elsner and Cardinal (1994). [In Reader.]

Susan Stewart, "The Collection" in *On Longing* (1993). [In Reader.]

Beth Fowkes Tobin, "The Duchess's Shells: Natural History Collecting, Gender, and Scientific Practice." PDF available at:  
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

**WEEK 11      APRIL 6      CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL IDENTITIES****Read:**

Georg Simmel, "On Fashion." [Handout]

Carol Mattingly, "Blooming Celebrity" *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (2002). [In Reader.]

Maureen Daly Goggin, "Fabricating Identity: Janie Terrero's 1912 Embroidered English Suffrage Signature Handkerchief" PDF available at:

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

Dickinson, Greg. "Joe's Rhetoric: Finding Authenticity at Starbucks," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* (2002). [In Reader]

Ellen Johnson "Trans-coding Nationalism: Subjectivity and Military Themes in Regency Women's Dress." PDF available at:

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~mdg42/ENG604MaterialCulture2009.htm>

**WEEK 12      APRIL 13      PROBLEMATICS: KEY TERMS**

**KEYTERMS:** Agency, Art, Craft, Artist, Artisan, Identity, Gender, Social/Economic Class, Technique/technical (techné), Knowledge, Production

**WEEK 13      APRIL 20      PROBLEMATICS: KEY TERMS**

**KEYTERMS:** Circulation, Consumption, Commodification, Exchange, Gift, Collecting, Display, Commemoration, Memory, Shopping,

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

**DUE: Keyword Scholar's Journal**

**WEEK 14      APRIL 27**

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

**WEEK 15      MAY 4**

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

**DUE: Seminar Paper**