

ANTH 452:
Senior Seminar: The Social Life of Things
Spring 2016

Monday Wednesday 2:20-3:50 PM
Asbury Hall 007

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Office Hours: 2:00-3:30 PM Tuesday and 3:00-4:00 PM Friday or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores anthropological approaches to material culture and consumption. We will analyze the cultural practices and social relations through which things—from food and clothing to money and ritual objects—become meaningful. Students will consider not only how people make and use things but also how things make people—that is, how objects mediate social relationships and identities. We will additionally consider recent controversial theoretical developments, like symmetrical archaeology, that question the human/object divide and imbue objects themselves with a considerable degree of agency. Readings include classic works of anthropology and social theory as well as ethnographic and archaeological studies of capitalist, colonial, and postcolonial settings. This seminar is discussion-based, and students will serve as discussion leaders on a rotating basis. The course's primary purpose is to assist students in the production of a 25- to 35-page thesis on a research question of their choice. These theses will present original student research framed by and grounded in material culture theory. Since objects mediate nearly every aspect of human life, the range of potential topics of inquiry is quite broad. Additionally, students may employ either ethnographic or archaeological analysis in their research.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miller, Daniel. 2010. *Stuff*. Malden MA: Polity.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

All other assigned readings will be posted as pdfs in Moodle or placed on reserve in the library.

SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

- 2/1: Thesis proposal due via Moodle
- 2/10: Revised thesis proposal due via Moodle
- 2/17: Full annotated bibliography due via Moodle
- 2/22: Methods plan due via Moodle AND submit IRB for approval if necessary
- 3/2: List of things you have done, are currently working on, and plan to do due
- 3/18: Introduction and literature review draft due (10-page minimum) AND thesis outline due via Moodle at 4 PM
- 4/4: List of things you have done, are currently working on, and plan to do due
- 4/11: List of things you have done, are currently working on, and plan to do due
- 4/13: Full thesis draft due via Moodle at 4 PM (20-page minimum)
- 4/25: Practice research presentations and peer review
- 4/27: Practice research presentations and peer review
- 5/2: In-class research presentations (graded) AND list of things you have done, are currently working on, and plan to do due
- 5/4: In-class research presentations (graded) AND Senior Symposium Presentation, 6:30-9:30 PM
- 5/11: Final thesis due in two copies, one bound hard copy and one electronic copy via Moodle, at 4 PM (25-page minimum)

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Monday, 2/1: Material Culture and 9/11

In-Class Film: *Objects and Memory* (excerpt)

In-Class Field Trip: The S Center

Thesis proposal due via Moodle

Wednesday, 2/3: Thinking about Objects (*Choosing a Topic*)

Miller, Daniel. 2010. "Prologue: My Life as an Extremist" and "Chapter 1: Why Clothing is not Superficial." In *Stuff*, 1-41. Malden MA: Polity.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 2: Choosing an Ethnographic Topic." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 19-36. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Monday, 2/8: Introducing Material Culture Theory (*Choosing a Question*)

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. "Chapter 3: From Topics to Questions" and "Chapter 4: From Questions to a Problem." In *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., 35-67. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miller, Daniel. 2010. "Chapter 2: Theories of Things." In *Stuff*, 42-78. Malden MA: Polity.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 3: Research Design." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 37-50. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Monday 2/8: Deadline to drop (cancel) or add Spring Term 2016 classes

Wednesday, 2/10: Materialist Approaches to Objects (*Finding Sources*)

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. "Chapter 5: From Problems to Sources." In *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., 68-83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Harris, Marvin. 1981. "Why Nothing Works." In *Why Nothing Works: The Anthropology of Daily Life*, 17-38. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Marx, Karl. (1867) 2001. "Chapter 1: Commodities" (excerpt). In *Capital*, Volume 1, 101-110. London: The Electronic Book Company.

In-Class Library Presentation by Tiffany Hebb

Revised thesis proposal due via Moodle

Monday, 2/15: Idealist Approaches to Objects (*Engaging Sources*)

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. "Chapter 6: Engaging Sources." In *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., 84-101. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood. 1996. "The Uses of Goods." In *World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, 3rd ed., 36-47. New York: Routledge.

Mendoza-Denton, Norma. 1996. "'Muy Macha': Gender and Ideology in Gang-Girls' Discourse about Makeup." *Ethnos* 61 (1-2): 47-63.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 4: Writing a Proposal." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 51-63. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Wednesday, 2/17: Object Biographies (*Taking Ethnographic Notes*)

Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, 64-94. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Meskel, Lynn. 2005. "Objects in the Mirror Appear Closer Than They Are." In *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, 51-71. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 5: A Guide to Collecting Data and Taking Field Notes." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 65-81. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Full annotated bibliography due via Moodle

Monday, 2/22: Applying Material Culture Theory (*Data Collection*)

Miller, Daniel. 2010. "Chapter 3: Houses: Accommodating Theory." In *Stuff*, 79-109. Malden MA: Polity.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 6: Participant Observation" and "Chapter 7: Interviews." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 83-114. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Methods plan due via Moodle AND submit IRB for approval if necessary

Wednesday, 2/24: Immaterial Culture (*Analyzing along the Way*)

Miller, Daniel. 2010. "Chapter 4: Media: Immaterial Culture and Applied Anthropology." In *Stuff*, 110-134. Malden MA: Polity.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 8: Analyzing along the Way." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 115-126. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Monday, 2/29: Material Culture and the Life Cycle (*Organizing Your Data*)

Dessai, Elisabeth. 1998. "Living with Children." In *Kid Size: The Material World of Childhood*, edited by Alexander Von Vegesack, 203-210. Milan: Skira.

Miller, Daniel. 2010. "Chapter 5: Matter of Life and Death." In *Stuff*, 135-156. Malden MA: Polity.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 9: Ethnographic Maps" and "Chapter 10: Tables and Charts." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 127-155. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Wednesday, 3/2: Material Culture and Social Relationships (*Finding Meaning in Your Data*)

Mauss, Marcel. (1950) 2008. "Gifts and the Obligation to Return Gifts." In *The Object Reader*, edited by Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins, x-x. New York: Routledge.

Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 12: Sorting and Coding Data" and "Chapter 13: Answering Questions and Building Models." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 173-194. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Vannini, Phillip. 2004. "Will You Marry Me?: Spectacle and Consumption in the Ritual of Marriage Proposals." *Journal of Popular Culture* 38 (1): 169-185.

List of things you have done, are currently working on, and plan to do due

Monday, 3/7: Material Culture and Emotion (*Building an Argument*)

- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. "Chapter 7: Making Good Arguments: an Overview" and "Chapter 9: Assembling Your Reasons and Evidence." In *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., 108-119 and 130-138. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Everett, Holly. 2002. "The Material Response to Loss." In *Roadside Crosses in Contemporary Memorial Culture*, 1-14. College Station, TX: University of North Texas.
- Parrott, Fiona R. 2005. "'It's Not Forever': The Material Culture of Hope." *Journal of Material Culture* 10(3): 245-262.

Wednesday, 3/9: Consumption and Culture (*Planning the Writing Process*)

- Belk, Russell and Gulnur Tumbat. 2005. "The Cult of Macintosh." *Consumption, Markets and Culture* 8 (3): 205-217.
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. "Prologue: Planning Again." In *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., 173-176. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Murchinson, Julian M. 2010. "Chapter 14: Choosing the Appropriate Presentation Style" and "Chapter 15: Putting the Whole Ethnography Together." In *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*, 195-222. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Wilk, Richard. 2006. "Bottled Water: The Pure Commodity in the Age of Branding." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 6 (3): 303-325.

Monday, 3/14: Objects and Persons (*Drafting Your Thesis*)

- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. "Chapter 12: Planning" and "Chapter 13: Drafting Your Report." In *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., 177-202. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Knappett, Carl. 2005. "Chapter 2: Animacy, Agency, and Personhood." In *Thinking Through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, 11-34. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Witmore, Christopher L. 2007. "Symmetrical Archaeology: Excerpts of a Manifesto." *World Archaeology* 39 (4): 546-562.

Wednesday, 3/16: Fieldwork/Writing Day (Professor Marshall is available for consultation)

Friday, 3/18 (note: not a class day):

Introduction and literature review draft due (10-page minimum) AND thesis outline due via Moodle at 4 PM

Monday, 3/21-Friday, 3/25: NO CLASS (*Spring Break*)

Meet with Professor Marshall about your thesis progress during class hours. A sign-up sheet will be available through Google Sheets.

Monday, 3/28: Required Individual Writing Meetings (20 minutes)

Wednesday 3/30: Required Individual Writing Meetings (20 minutes)

Friday, 4/1: Last day to drop course with grade of W (strictly enforced) or change a course from grade to pass/fail or from pass/fail to grade.

Monday 4/4: Group Discussion about Thesis Progress (*Revising Your Argument*)

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. "Chapter 14: Revising Your Organization and Argument" and "Chapter 16: Introductions and Conclusions." In *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., 203-2012 and 232-248. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

In-class presentations of thesis progress (5-7 minutes each)

List of things you have done, are currently working on, and plan to do due

Wednesday, 4/6: University-Wide Conversation on Inclusiveness (*no classes*)

Monday, 4/11: Group Discussion about Thesis Progress (*Revising Your Writing Style*)

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 2008. "Chapter 17: Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly." In *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., 249-269. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

In-class discussion about DePauw Dialogue

In-class presentations of thesis progress (5-7 minutes each)

List of things you have done, are currently working on, and plan to do due

Wednesday, 4/13: Fieldwork/Writing Day (Professor Marshall is available for consultation)

Full thesis draft due via Moodle at 4 PM (20-page minimum)

Meet with Professor Marshall about your thesis progress during class hours. A sign-up sheet will be available through Google Sheets.

Monday, 4/18: Required Individual Writing Meetings (20 minutes)

Wednesday, 4/20: Required Individual Writing Meetings (20 minutes)

Monday, 4/25: Practice Research Presentations and Peer Review

Wednesday, 4/27: Practice Research Presentations and Peer Review

Monday, 5/2: Research Presentations (graded) and Group Discussion of Thesis Progress
List of things you have done, are currently working on, and plan to do due

Wednesday, 5/4: Research Presentations (graded)

WEDNESDAY 5/4: SENIOR SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATION, 6:30-9:30 PM

Monday, 5/9: Fieldwork/Writing Day (Professor Marshall available for consultation)

Wednesday, 5/11: Fieldwork/Writing Day (Professor Marshall available for consultation)
Final thesis due in two copies, one bound hard copy and one electronic copy via Moodle, at 4 PM (25-page minimum)

COURSE GOALS

The course is designed to assist students in the production of a 25- to 35-page thesis on a research question of their choice using material culture theory. A second major learning goal this semester is to improve students' speaking skills. This seminar is discussion-based, and students will serve as discussion leaders on a rotating basis. Students will additionally develop and present a formal presentation on their thesis research.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Class Participation: This course will be primarily discussion-based and class participation is essential. Class participation means attending all classes, arriving on time, volunteering to speak when you have a chance, demonstrating that you are well prepared for class by offering thoughtful comments/questions, and sometimes pushing yourself to make more rigorous, analytical, or imaginative points. I expect everyone to be respectful of other people's ideas and opinions. While we can and should debate issues, we should not attack other people personally for the ideas they express in class. Class participation accounts for 15% of the final course grade.

NOTE ON PARTICIPATION: Participation and attendance are very important to your success in this course. Remember, you cannot participate if you are not there! If you are going to be absent, contact me before class. It is your responsibility to get all information you missed on any days you were absent. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence include family emergency, serious illness, religious holiday, and participation in college athletic competitions. Please note that excessive absences, even when excused, will negatively impact your participation grade and your final course grade at the professor's discretion. Students with unexcused absences will receive no participation credit for the days they are absent. Typically, no more than two excused

absences are permitted over the course of the semester. If you have more than four absences, you may not be eligible to continue in the course whether these absences are excused or unexcused.

Discussion Leadership: As part of their S certification, students will co-facilitate one class discussion with me. Prepare, at a minimum, five questions about the day's topic based on the assigned reading and expect to lead discussion for about 20-30 minutes. These questions should be emailed to me at least two hours (12:20 PM) ahead of class and printed on a handout for students that you pass out. Questions should reflect a close reading of the texts and be clear and understandable. They should be thought-provoking and challenging for other class participants. The questions also encourage class participation—that is they are open-ended yet not so vague that engaging with them is problematic. Discussion leadership responsibilities are worth 10% of the course grade.

Annotated Bibliography: In preparation for writing the literature review section of your thesis, you will prepare an annotated bibliography of a minimum of 15 sources. The annotated bibliography is worth 5% of your course grade.

Fieldwork Log: Fieldwork is time-consuming. To be done well, it must involve consistent and steady effort over the course of the project. And it must be clearly documented. To keep on track, you should keep a fieldwork journal, beginning at the very beginning as you are brainstorming ideas. The log should record the interviews you completed, the events and places that you visit in your research, and the approximate time you spend on fieldwork tasks. I will collect the fieldwork log periodically during the semester to check on your progress. The fieldwork log is worth 5% of your course grade

Conceptual Log: All research is grounded in theory, and it is important that your thesis research has a clear theoretical framework. To help you develop your theoretical approach, you should (in complete sentences) summarize what insights from the day's readings may be applicable to your own research project. You should also summarize (in complete sentences) theoretical approaches and insight you identify in your independent reading; these summaries should also clarify how the theoretical approach is relevant for your thesis research project. I will collect the conceptual log periodically during the semester to check on your progress. The conceptual log is worth 5% of your course grade.

Research Paper Presentation: Each student will present his or her research both in class (where it is graded) and in the annual Senior Symposium. Failure to present at the Senior Symposium will result in a 10% reduction of your *course* grade. The presentation should be well-organized and well-rehearsed. Students should additionally be prepared to answer audience questions. The research paper presentation is worth 15% of your final grade.

Thesis: The primary focus of this course is the development of a 25- to 35-page thesis, which is worth 45% of your course grade. This project has multiple parts including (1) thesis proposal and short annotated bibliography (0%); (2) revised thesis proposal and short annotated bibliography (0%); (3) research appointment with librarian (0%); (4) full annotated bibliography (0%); (5) methods plan (0%); (6) IRB if necessary (0%); (7) introduction and literature review draft (0%); (8) full thesis draft (0%); and (9) final thesis draft (45%). Although no points are awarded for the first eight parts of the assignment, failure to do them thoughtfully will cause points to be deducted from your research paper grade. If you do not complete an introduction/literature review draft or a full thesis draft, 10% will be deducted from your final thesis grade for each missing draft. If you do not complete any of the other earlier project steps, 5% will be deducted from your final grade for each step missed. All of these assignments are designed to improve your thesis project, therefore it is to your advantage to do them. I reserve the right to reject an unauthorized thesis project topic.

GRADING SUMMARY:

Class participation: 15%; Discussion Leadership: 10%; Annotated Bibliography: 5%; Fieldwork Log: 5%; Conceptual Log: 5%; Research Paper Presentation: 15%; Thesis: 45%

GRADING POLICIES

A 93+; A- 90-92.999; B+ 87-89.999; B 83-86.999; B- 80-82.999; C+ 77-79.999; C 73-76.999; C- 70-72.999; D+ 67-69.999; D 63-66.999; D- 60-62.999; F <60

At DePauw, A and A- grades reflect “achievement of exceptionally high merit.” B+, B, and B- grades indicate “achievement at a level **superior** to the basic level.” C+, C, and C- grades reflect “basic achievement,” and D+, D, D- grades reflect “minimum achievement that warrants credit.” Please realize that B grades in this course reflect very good work; a “B” is not a poor grade in this or any other course at DePauw. C grades also indicate basic mastery of the material.

‘S’ certification

The ‘S’ (speaking) certification is awarded independently of each student’s grade. To obtain ‘S’ certification, a student must demonstrate technical competence and growth in his or her speaking skills over the course of the semester, in particular in clarity of expression and development of ideas. In addition, to obtain an ‘S’ certification, a student must achieve an overall course grade of at least C-. I will alert you during the semester if you are at risk of not completing the ‘S’ certification.

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Misconduct: Please familiarize yourself with DePauw's Academic Integrity Policy. I take academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, very seriously, and at DePauw such misconduct can have a variety of serious consequences. If you are at all unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please ask. If you get behind or overwhelmed, please talk to me. Students in this course will include the following pledge on all assignments and exams: "On my honor, I pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this assignment."

Late Assignments: All assignments are due in class on the due dates listed. After its due date, an assignment's value drops 10 percentage points for each day it is late. For example, if an assignment were one day late, a perfect score would give you only 90%. If it were two days late, an otherwise perfect assignment would be given 80%. I will not accept assignments more than three days late. If you have an emergency, contact me before class.

Laptops and cell phones: Laptop and cell phone use is generally prohibited during class sessions. If you have a special situation that requires that you use a laptop to take notes, talk to me.

Learning and Other Disabilities: If you have a documented disability, please contact Mrs. Pamela Roberts, Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services, to arrange for any needed accommodations, such as extended test-taking time or the right to take tests in an environment with fewer distractions. Also, if you suspect that you have a disability but don't yet have documentation, please contact Mrs. Roberts for help. She can be reached at 765-658-6267 or studentdisabilityservices@depauw.edu. Disabilities entitled to accommodation include mobility impairments, hearing or vision issues, speech impairments, learning disabilities, ADD, ADHD, psychological disabilities, neurological impairments, traumatic brain injury, and chronic medical conditions such as migraines, AIDS, cancer, and diabetes. I cannot accommodate any student without first receiving proper documentation from Student Disabilities Services, so plan ahead. It is student's responsibility to share the letter of accommodation with me. Accommodations will not be implemented until I have received the official letter. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss implementation of accommodations with me. Students with documented disabilities also have the right to choose not to use accommodations; in exercising that right, they accept the resulting outcomes. I will not retroactively address any issue arising from a student's choice to forgo accommodations.