

Material Culture in America
Rutgers-Camden
Fall 2010

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This course will focus on artifacts as sources for understanding past cultures, with emphasis on both academic scholarship and the field of public history. Using readings covering a wide range of time periods and topics in United States history, we will discuss the development of material culture studies, methodologies of material culture; relationships between artifactual and textual evidence; and artifacts as sources for historians.

Your responsibilities for the seminar are:

- Critical reading, with attention to theory and method of material culture analysis.
- Leadership on one book presentation team.
- Active participation in discussion.
- One article presentation and associated research narrative paper (3-5 pages).
- A material culture review essay, including one artifact analysis. (15-20 pages).
- Presentation of your work.

Grades: Greatest weight will be given to the final paper and class participation. Please note that all requirements must be fulfilled in order to pass the course. Attendance at seminar meetings is essential; more than two absences will significantly (and negatively) impact your final grade.

- See the end of the syllabus for further information about grades and paper instructions.

Communication: E-mail is welcome; write to cmires@camden.rutgers.edu. Please check your own e-mail regularly. Please also check in advance before sending attachments of documents; printouts are preferred. To leave a voice message, call 856-225-6069.

Office Hours: Regular office hours are held in Armitage Hall, Room 352, on Tuesdays from 3 to 5 p.m. and prior to class on Thursdays (but concluding at 4:30). For your convenience conferences also will be scheduled at other times by request. This is an important aspect of graduate study, so please do not hesitate to ask.

Books and other readings. Books listed on the schedule in **bold** are available in the University District Bookstore. Articles will be made available online through databases or as PDF files, which will be posted on the Sakai site for this course. See <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>.

Schedule / Procedures

The success of the seminar depends on everyone's thorough preparation and active participation. Please turn off and put away all electronic devices. To help propel discussion, come to each class prepared with several open-ended questions based on the reading. Questions that pose problems or needs for clarification are especially useful. Examples of artifacts or experiences with material culture are always encouraged.

For each book, there will be a book presentation (one or two people) and one or two article presenters.

The book presenter(s) will begin the class with a presentation of approximately 10 minutes including the following: The argument of the book; the supporting arguments of the chapters; and the methodology of material culture employed by the author. The team also will pose a first question for discussion (but does not have the responsibility for leading the discussion that follows). **The purpose of this is to focus discussion. Please bear in mind that we have all read the book, therefore lengthy summarizing is not expected or necessary.**

The articles presenters may (or may not) be the same as the presentation team. If you are an article presenter, your task is to select an article from the list of recommendations that will be provided. You will have approximately 10 to 15 minutes to brief the class on the article; a short research narrative paper (3-5 pages) is due on the night of the presentation.

The presentation should focus on the substance as well as methodology of the article. Report informally to the class; do not read the paper you are turning in.

The paper is not a review. Please see the end of the syllabus for instructions.

Readings	Papers / Other expectations
Sept. 2 – Introductions	
<p>Sept. 9 - Deetz, <i>In Small Things Forgotten</i> (Doubleday, rev. ed. 1996) Please make sure that you have the 1996 edition.</p> <p>Also:</p> <p>Karen Harvey, “Practical Matters,” in Harvey, <i>History and Material Culture</i> (pp. 1-23). PDF on Sakai.</p> <p>Cary Carson, “Material Culture History: The Scholarship Nobody Knows” in Martin and Smart, <i>American Material Culture: The State of the Field</i> (pp. 401-28). PDF on Sakai.</p>	
<p>Sept. 16 – Material Culture Methodologies (All readings for this week in PDF on Sakai)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thomas J. Schlereth, <i>Material Culture: A Research Guide</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Material Culture and Cultural Research” (pp 1-34) ▪ Thomas J. Schlereth, <i>Material Culture Studies in America</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ch 2, John A. Kouwenhoven, “American Studies: Words or Things?” (pp 79-92) ○ Ch 3, William B. Hesseltine, “The Challenge of the Artifact” (pp 93-100) ○ Ch 10, E. McClung Fleming, “Artifact Study: A Proposed Model” (pp 162-173) ▪ Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, <i>History From Things</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jules David Prown, “The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction?” (pp 1-19) 	<p>Bring one artifact (or picture of an artifact) to discuss in relation to one or more of the readings.</p>

Sept. 23 - Breen, <i>The Marketplace of Revolution</i> (Oxford, 2005)	Paper proposal due.
Sept. 30 – Lanier and Herman, <i>Everyday Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic</i> (Johns Hopkins, 1997)	
Oct. 7 - Ulrich, <i>The Age of Homespun</i> (Random House, 2002)	
Oct. 14 – Heneghan, <i>Whitewashing America</i> (University Press of Mississippi, 2007)	
Oct. 21 – Ames, <i>Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture</i> (Temple U Press, 1992)	
Oct. 28 – James, <i>Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture</i> (University of Nebraska Press, 2010)	
Nov. 4– Dusselier, <i>Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps</i> (Rutgers U Press, 2008)	
Nov. 11 – Deutsch, <i>Building a Housewife’s Paradise: Gender, Politics, and American Grocery Stores in the Twentieth Century</i> (University of North Carolina Press, 2010)	
Nov. 18 - Savage, <i>Monument Wars</i> (University of California Press, 2009)	Optional: Drafts accepted.
(Thanksgiving)	
Dec. 2 – Presentations	Optional: Drafts accepted.
Dec. 9 - Presentations (last class)	Final papers accepted, but not due until next week.

Last date for submitting final papers: Thursday, December 16.

PAPERS

For citation guidelines and other matters of style, consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Brief versions of the same citation guidelines are in Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, as well as Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. Use the footnote/endnote form of citation, not the parenthetical author-date method.

1. Research narrative paper (3-5 pages) – Due on the night you are an “article presenter.” The paper will include the following – but craft it as an essay, not as a list of answers to these questions. Please read follow these instructions carefully, because this is different from a review. Your primary task is to identify the author’s research process.

- At the top of the paper, provide a complete citation for the article
- In one paragraph, summarize the argument (thesis) of the article.
- Who is the author of the article? (Provide identifying information, such as affiliation or other published work.)
- Why did he/she write this article (what was the research problem?) How does the article fit into the historiography of the topic? Is the author agreeing or disagreeing with other scholars?
- What steps were taken by the writer to research the article?
 - What topics of secondary sources were consulted?
 - What archives and/or museums were visited, and what types of sources and/or artifacts were found there?
 - Did the author use other types of primary sources, not found in an archive? What types of other sources? How / where were they located?
- How does the author approach material culture analysis? Does the analysis rely on texts or artifacts, or both? Do you detect any of the methodologies you have encountered in other readings?
- What do you observe about the organization and writing of the article?

Citations for this assignment are necessary only for sources other than the article being described. For any quotations or sections of the article itself, include page numbers in parentheses.

2. Material culture review essay, including artifact analysis (15-20 pages). For this paper, select a time period or topic in American history that you have studied previously. If you approach this subject through material culture scholarship, what understanding emerges? Does material culture reinforce, change, or add to your understanding? To answer these questions, you should read recent books and articles, predominantly scholarly work such as books published by university presses and articles published in the *Winterthur Portfolio*. Also include in your paper an analysis of one relevant artifact, using one or more of the methodologies described in the readings on September 16 (if you wish to deviate from these, please consult with the professor). The artifact must be an actual object, not a hypothetical.

The proposal should consist of a one-page description of your intended project plus a working bibliography. In your description, include your artifact or the collection(s) where you will seek it. The bibliography must include both books and articles – at least six to eight books or the equivalent in articles. In addition to these works on material culture, please also list general works on your topic that you expect to use for reference.

Grade definitions

A	Outstanding
B+	Good
B	Satisfactory, needs improvement
C+	Weak
C	Unsatisfactory
F	Failure

Paper grading criteria

A

Prose: clear, precise, grammatically correct, error-free, and pleasing formal English.

Argument: innovative, orderly, coherent, well constructed, skillful marshalling of evidence, clear, clearly stated thesis, and persuasive.

Analysis: goes beyond description or narrative; addresses issues that transcend the particular focus of the paper; demonstrates an understanding of the literature on the topic; and penetrates beneath the surface meaning of sources.

Research: uses a sufficient number and range of appropriate primary sources [where applicable], consults and applies the pertinent secondary literature, and cites accurately the sources using a standard style sheet acceptable to the professor.

B+

Prose: clear, grammatically correct, formal English.

Argument: orderly, coherent, marshals evidence, usually clear, clearly stated thesis, interesting but not completely persuasive.

Analysis: often goes beyond description or narrative, thorough treatment of the paper topic, demonstrates an acquaintance with the literature on the topic; and often penetrates beneath the surface meaning of the sources.

Research: uses a sufficient number and range of appropriate primary sources, consults the pertinent secondary literature, and cites accurately the sources using a standard style sheet acceptable to the professor.

B:

Prose: clear but uneven, grammatically correct, formal English.

Argument: coherent, shows effort to marshal evidence, some obscurity and/or lapses in organization, not brought forward to its conclusion.

Analysis: a substantive treatment of the paper topic but sometimes lapses into mere narrative or description, missed opportunity/ities for analysis of evidence, demonstrates an awareness of the literature on the topic, sometimes penetrates beneath the surface meaning of the sources.

Research: uses a fair number and range of primary sources, consults some of the pertinent secondary literature, and generally cites accurately the sources using a standard style sheet acceptable to professor.

C+

Prose: frequently unclear, weak grasp of grammar, often colloquial English.

Argument: sometimes incoherent, disorganized, insufficient evidence, repeatedly obscure, unpersuasive.

Analysis: relies mainly on narrative or description, superficial treatment of paper topic, demonstrates a fragmentary awareness of the literature on the topic; rarely penetrates beneath the surface meaning of sources.

Research: uses the minimum number and range of primary sources, consulted one or two secondary works on the topic, and sometimes cites incorrectly or fails to cite the sources using a standard style sheet acceptable to professor.

C

Prose: basically unclear, numerous grammatical errors, colloquial English.

Argument: often incoherent, often disorganized, insufficient and ineffectively employed evidence often obscure, unpersuasive.

Analysis: relies exclusively on narrative or description, reliance on quotations in place of analysis, misguided treatment of paper topic, no awareness of literature on the topic; does not penetrate beneath the surface meaning of sources.

Research: Uses fewer primary sources than necessary, relied too much upon secondary sources or, alternatively, neglected to contextualize the primary sources with any secondary sources, and cites incorrectly or fails to cite the sources.