DIMENSIONS OF MATERIAL CULTURE  
An Interdisciplinary, Team-Taught Course  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Fall Semester 2001

It's a material, a material, a material, a material world.
--Madonna

The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and, second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things.

--Hannah Arendt

Course Description: This course introduces the new and highly interdisciplinary field of material culture studies. It is intended for advanced undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in any professional endeavor that requires training in material culture, including careers in museums, galleries, historical societies, historic preservation organizations, and academic institutions. During the semester, students will have varied opportunities to contemplate "things"—the material world to which people give meaning and which, in turn, influences their lives. The course takes the perspective that what we make, see, inhabit, eat, acquire, cherish, and discard—all are important agents of communication and part of broad social and cultural contexts.

Each week a different faculty member will present a lecture on Monday. On Wednesday afternoons s/he will lead a seminar-style discussion of the lecture and readings assigned for that week. Professors Boyd and Lee will coordinate the class.

Development of this course was made possible by a Chancellor's Collaborative Teaching Award.

Supervising Faculty
Jean B. Lee (Department of History)  
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Office Hours: Monday, 4-5 pm; also by appointment

Virginia (Terry) Boyd  
Dept. of Environment, Textiles & Design  
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Office Hours: T. Th, 11 am-noon; also by appointment
Assisting Faculty
Anna Andrejewski (Department of Art History)
Beverly Gordon (Environment, Textiles & Design)
Ann Smart Martin (Art History)

Required Texts:
(1) James Deetz, In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life (revised ed., 1996) is available for purchase at the University Bookstore on State Street. This title is also on 2-hour reserve at the Kohler Art Library (Elvehjem Museum).

(2) All other assigned readings are on 2-hour reserve at the Kohler Art Library (Elvehjem Museum of Art) and also at the Reserves Department of Helen C. White Library. In addition, most essays and book chapters may be accessed and downloaded through E-Reserves (MadCat).

Course Requirements and Evaluation:
Class participation (attendance & contributions) 25%

Class presentation of an object analysis (10 minutes)
(each student will consult with the supervising professors in selecting an object for analysis) 10%

An annotated bibliography for object analysis 10%

The object analysis (1000-1200 words)
(this assignment is due one week after the class presentation) 15%

At the end of each of the four modules identified in the syllabus: write an evaluation of the information and interpretations presented in the module just completed (maximum 750 words each) 40%

Religious Holidays:
According to University policy, students who expect to be absent from class work because of religious holidays must, within the first two weeks of class, notify the instructor(s) of the specific date(s) on which s/he will be absent. Students bear the responsibility for arranging make-up assignments. If necessary, reasonable limits on the total number of days claimed by any one student will be set.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

INTRODUCTION TO MATERIAL CULTURE STUDIES

Sept. 5 Introduction to the course
Panel discussion of material culture
(Professors Andrejewski, Boyd, Gordon, Lee, and Martin)


I. PERSONAL AND PRIVATE DOMAINS

Sept. 10 Lecture: The Fiber of Our Lives
Beverly Gordon (Dept. of Environment, Textiles, & Design)

Sept. 12 Seminar


Sept. 17 Lecture: The Ritual of Tea: 18th-Century America and Past and Present in Japan
Ann Smart Martin and Eugene Phillips (Dept. of Art History)

Sept. 19 Seminar

Sept. 24  | Lecture: Cabinets of Curiosities  
           | Jane Hutchison (Dept. of Art History)

Sept. 26  | Seminar


Oct. 1   | Lecture: The Archaeology of Ancient Households  
        | Nicholas Cahill (Dept. of Art History)

Oct. 3   | Seminar


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II. WORK, SOCIAL, AND TECHNOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Oct. 8   | Lecture: Talking Machines and Dancing Bodies  
         | Susan C. Cook (Dept. of Music)

**Due at the beginning of class:** evaluation of the information and interpretations presented in Module 1.

Oct. 10  | Seminar


Oct. 15  | Lecture: Surveillance at the Work Site  
        | Anna Andrejewski (Dept. of Art History)

**Due at the beginning of class:** annotated bibliography for object analysis
October 17 Seminar


October 22 Lecture: You Are What You Shop: Consumer Engineering and the 1930s Storefront
James Draeger (Office of Historic Preservation, State Historical Society)

October 24 Seminar


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**III. PUBLIC SITES: CREATING MEANING**

October 29 Lecture: Memory and Material Culture
Jean B. Lee (Dept. of History)

**Due at the beginning of class:** evaluation of the information and interpretations presented in Module 2.

October 31 Seminar


November 5 Lecture: Pilgrimage Art and *Praesentia* [Presence] in Early Medieval Byzantium and Romanesque Europe
Thomas Dale (Department of Art History)
Nov. 7   Seminar


Nov. 12   Lecture: The Pastoral Landscape
          Glenn Adamson (Curator, The Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee)

Nov. 14   Seminar


Nov. 19   Student Presentation of Object Analyses
          (Schedule to be arranged)

Nov. 21   Student Presentation of Object Analyses
          (Schedule to be arranged)

IV. URBAN AND RURAL LANDSCAPES

Nov. 26   Lecture: London as a Case Study of Material Culture
          Henry Turner (Department of English)

**Due at the beginning of class:** evaluation of the information and interpretations presented in Module 3.

Nov. 28   Seminar


Dec. 3  Lecture: Interpreting Vernacular Architecture
        Arnold Alanen (Dept. of Landscape Architecture)

Dec. 5  Seminar

Readings: To be announced.

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Dec. 10 Student Presentation of Object Analyses
        (Schedule to be arranged)

Due at the beginning of class: evaluation of the information and interpretations presented in Module 3.

Dec. 12 Student Presentation of Object Analyses
        (Schedule to be arranged)