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.

The class meets three times each week. Typically, each Monday a visiting faculty member will lecture on a phase of material culture related to his/her own scholarship. Wednesday and Friday class sessions are reserved for discussion of assigned readings, field trips, and student projects.

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

Supervising Faculty

Professor Beverly Gordon  
242 Human Ecology Bldg.  
262-2015  
bgordon@wisc.edu  
Office Hours: Mon. & Wed., 2-3pm; also by appointment

Jean B. Lee (Department of History)  
5102 Humanities Bldg.  
263-1800; 263-1837  
jblee@wisc.edu  
Office Hours: Wed., 11:15am to 12:30pm; also by appointment on Fri., 3:30-4:15
COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION:

Class Participation: 20%

_Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate actively in discussions._

Class absences are discouraged and must be explained to one of the professors in advance.

Assigned Readings: All assigned readings are available in PDF format via each student’s UW portal (http://my.wisc.edu/portal, then go to the following links: Academic/Library/Reserve). Selected books in which readings are assigned are also on reserve at the Kohler Art Library, Elvehjem Museum; an asterisk (*) precedes reference to these books on the syllabus.

_Students are expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss the readings on the days they are assigned._

Doing-Seeing-Writing Notebook 50%

Each student will keep a loose-leaf binder, in which to accumulate two kinds of typewritten assignments.

1. A synopsis of each assigned reading. On the day that each reading, or set of readings, is assigned (see the Class Schedule beginning on pg. 4), bring to class a typewritten synopsis of each item. In **no more than 200 words for each reading**, state the author(s)’ major argument (interpretation) and evaluate it. What does the reading tell you about material culture? Does it relate to other assignments and/or the lectures, and, if so, in what way(s)?

2. Members of the class will receive a list of relevant lectures and exhibits scheduled during the current semester. Attend at least one such event and write a synopsis of what you observed and learned; keep in mind the questions asked in the preceding paragraph.

Through these assignments you will enhance your ability to analyze, succinctly summarize, and recall scholarly writings and will create a readily accessible compilation of what you have read for the class. The synopses will be collected on the day each is due in class.

Material Culture Case Study Analysis: (three parts) 30%

In consultation with either Professor Gordon or Professor Lee, each student will develop an independent research projected related to her/his area of academic specialization or interest.

No later than Consult with Professor Gordon or Lee about possible topics for your Oct. 3 Case Study Analysis. For this you will need to schedule an appointment.

Oct. 31 Annotated bibliography, or resource list, due. This should be an
exploration of all sources you have identified and examined which promise to be useful your research project. For printed items, give the complete bibliographic citation for each. For objects or collections of objects, cite the location for each. If you conduct an interview, name the person, location, and date of the interview. In addition, state why each source appears useful for your topic.

Dec. 5 Undergraduates will present their findings in a typewritten paper due (2,000-3,000 words).

Dec. 1-10: Graduate students will offer a 20-minute class presentation about their research project (schedule to be arranged).

Dec. 10 Paper due from graduate students (4,000-5,000 words).

Grading policies:
Each project is due on the date it is assigned. Turning work in late will carry a reduction in the assigned grade, so it is best to plan on timely completion. Any student having special needs should make that known to the professors in the first two weeks of classes.

Religious Holidays:
According to University policy, any student who expects 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.
## CLASS SCHEDULE:

### THINKING ABOUT MATERIAL CULTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Sept. 3</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
<td>Beverly Gordon and Jean B. Lee</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sept. 5</td>
<td>Discussion Section: What Can We Learn from Objects?</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>Sept. 10</td>
<td>Field Trip: The Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, at the School of Human Ecology. Gather in Room 118.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sept. 12</td>
<td>Discussion Section: Bring to class an intriguing textile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sept. 15</td>
<td>Ceramics in America</td>
<td>Ann Smart Martin (Dept. of Art History)</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>Sept. 17</td>
<td>Discussion Section, with Professor Martin: bring to class your favorite coffee mug or cup.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sept. 19</td>
<td>Discussion Section: Analyzing Objects</td>
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M/ Sept. 22  The Archaeology of Ancient Households
LVM  Nicholas Cahill (Dept. of Art History)


W/ Sept. 24  Discussion Section, with Professor Cahill
LVM


M/ Sept. 29  Continuing Discussion of Methodology
HEB&LVM

W/ Oct. 1  Photography
HEB  Richard L. Pifer (Director of Reference and Public Service Wisconsin Historical Society)


F/ Oct. 3  The Artist’s Intent
LVM  Michael Podmaniczky (Senior Furniture Conservator, Winterthur Museum)

**MAKING THINGS: DESIGN AND CRAFTSMANSHIP**

M/ Oct. 6  Artists Presentation: One-of-a-Kind Furniture: Quoting History to Develop Meaning
LVM  Thomas Loeser (Dept. of Art)

W/ Oct. 8  Discussion Sections
HEB&LVM

F/ Oct. 10  Discussion Sections
HEB&LVM

M/ Oct. 13  A Different Perspective on Frank Lloyd Wright's Furniture
LVM Virginia T. Boyd (Dept. of Environment, Textiles, & Design)


W/ Oct. 15  Field Trip: The Elvehjem Museum
LVM NB: Assemble in L150 Elvehjem at the usual class hour.

F/ Oct. 17  Discussion Sections
HEB&LVM

**CULTURAL LANDSCAPES**

M/ Oct. 20  The Art and Artifact Dilemma
LVM Judy Newland (Curator, Wright Museum of Art, and faculty in Museum Studies, Beloit College)

W/ Oct. 22  Field Trip: The Elvehjem Museum (gather in Paige Court)
LVM Ann Lambert (Curator of Education, Elvehjem Museum)

LVM

M/ Oct. 27  American Memory and Material Culture
LVM Jean B. Lee (Dept. of History)
W/ Oct. 29
HEB&LVM

F/ Oct. 31
HEB&LVM
Discussion Sections

M/ Nov. 3
LVM
What Is Vernacular Architecture?
Anna Andrzejewski (Dept. of Art History)


W/ Nov. 5
HEB
Considering the Ordinary and Sacred in Cultural Landscapes
Arnold Alanen (Dept. of Landscape Architecture)


F/ Nov. 7
HEB&LVM
Discussion Sections

M/ Nov. 10
HEB&LVM
Discussion Sections

W/ Nov. 12
HEB
Flatboats as Occupational Tools on the Upper Mississippi River
Janet Gilmore (Dept. of Landscape Architecture)


F/Nov. 14
LVM
The Silhouette and Quaker Identity in Philadelphia
Anne A. Verplanck (Curator of Prints & Paintings, Winterthur Museum)

Reading: Mary Anne Caton, “The Aesthetics of Absence . . . ,” in Emma Lapsansky and Anne Verplanck, eds., *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections in

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>M/ Nov. 17</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>W/ Nov. 19</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<td>M/ Nov. 24</td>
<td>Victorian Periodicals: A Cultural History Perspective Julia Chavez (Dept. of English)</td>
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<td>NB:</td>
<td>Class will meet, at the regularly scheduled time, in the Special Collections Department of Memorial Library.</td>
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<td>W/ Nov. 26</td>
<td>Individual appointments with instructors.</td>
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<td>F/ Nov. 28</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Vacation</td>
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<td>M/ Dec. 1</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>W/ Dec. 3</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>F/ Dec. 5</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<td>M/ Dec. 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>W/ Dec. 10</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/ Dec. 12</td>
<td>Wrap-up Gathering</td>
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