

History 600 (Seminar 15)

Global Car Cultures

W 1:20-3:20, Fall 2004

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Throughout much of the world in the twentieth century, driving a car became synonymous with modernity. Some one billion cars have been produced since the dawn of the automobile age, and with the further economic development of India, Russia, and China, that number could very well be surpassed in the twenty-first century. Yet the car and everything that goes with it in everyday life—road systems, state regulation and licensing, retailing and advertising, environmental effects, patterns of driving, and above all cultural representations and practices—remain rather marginal as topics of historical inquiry. The main focus in this course is on the history of automobility, which is to say we study how and why the automobile became a primary medium for being “at home” (for traveling and dwelling) in modern cultures. We concentrate on the origins, nature, and development of car cultures in the United States, UK, France, and Germany, but we also have material on Norway, Sweden, Ghana, Australia, and Japan. In addition, although we do not ignore systems of production and state regulation, we concentrate most heavily on the ways in which automobility entailed new cultural forms and social patterns. Our topics therefore include not only the rise of “Fordist” and “Sloanist” manufacturing models and the histories of specific car models or types of cars (e.g., the Ford Model T, VW, SUVs) but also driving practices, suburbanization, gender, tourism, the aesthetics of car styling, road trip literature, and hotrodding.

This is an advanced seminar in which student participation is essential. The course is structured around weekly readings and discussion questions. The required reading consists of two texts, James Flink, *The Automobile Age*, and Daniel Miller, ed., *Car Cultures*, both of which are available for purchase at the Underground Textbook Exchange in addition to being on reserve reading at Helen C. White. We will read these books in their entirety. There is also a required course packet, available for purchase at the Humanities Copy Center (or on reserve), consisting of excerpts from various scholarly monographs, novels, journalism, and essays. The discussion questions listed under each weekly topic are designed to orient students’ reading, prepare them for course discussion, and stimulate ideas for research.

Reading and writing critically are key components of the course. Students will write almost every week, but assignments are usually brief. There are three writing modules to the course. First, students will submit 6 single-sentence exercises on questions posed by the instructor; see the syllabus for the due dates and topics. These short assignments are designed to hone students’ critical and expository skills. You will not be graded on these assignments, but you will receive brief comments, and failure to submit the exercises will lower your discussion grade. Second, there will be a graduated exercise in writing the research paper consisting of a single-sentence statement of intent, a one-page descriptive report on the project, a partial rough draft of no more than 3 pages, a one-sentence thesis statement, and a short in-class presentation near the end of the semester. This module sharpens students’ experiences with writing as a process of continuous revision and refinement, and of sharing ideas with others. See the syllabus for the due dates, and note that time is of the essence. You will be asked to identify a topic in consultation with me fairly early in the semester, and although you may change your mind, it is very much in your interest to “frontload” your thinking on this part of the course. Third, a 15-page research paper is required for submission on the last day of class (December 15). I will circulate more information on this assignment including specific criteria for successful papers in the course of the semester. The research project will require outside sources.

Grading will be based on discussion (seminar participation and six one-sentence expositions); the research process (one-sentence statement of intent, one-page description, partial draft, thesis statement, and oral presentation); and final paper. Each of these will account for one-third of the total grade

Required Reading:

- J.G. Ballard, *Crash* (HarperCollins, 1973), 7-18.
- Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel 1910-1945* (Johns Hopkins, 1979), 71-103.
- Michael L. Berger, *The Devil Wagon in God's Country: The Automobile and Social Change in Rural America, 1893-1929* (Archon, 1979), 55-74.
- Keith Bradsher, *High and Mighty: SUVs—The World's Most Dangerous Vehicles and How They Got that Way* (Public Affairs, 2002), 43-80.
- Mikita Brottman, ed., *Car Crash Culture* (Palgrave, 2001), xi-xliii.
- James J. Flink, *The Automobile Age* (MIT, 1990).
- David Gartman, *Auto Opium: A Social History of American Automobile Design* (Routledge, 1994), 136-81.
- Stephen L. Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (Johns Hopkins, 2001), 54-88.
- Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (Signet, 1955), 148-203.
- Ronald R. Kline, *Consumers in the Country: Technology and Social Change in Rural America* (Johns Hopkins), 55-86.
- Catherine Berho Lavenir, "How the Motor Car Conquered the Road," in *Cultures of Control*, edited by Miriam Levin (Harwood, 2000), 113-34.
- Bjorn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World* (Cambridge, 2001), 118-26, 327-52.
- Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (Columbia University, 1994), 203-28.
- Daniel Miller, *Car Cultures* (Berg, 2001).
- H.F. Moorhouse, *Driving Ambitions: A Social Analysis of the American Hot Rod Enthusiasm* (Manchester University, 1991), 144-99.
- Sean O'Connell, *The Car in British Society: Class, Gender, and Motoring, 1896-1939* (Manchester University, 1998), 11-42.
- Ronald Primeau, *Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway* (Bowling Green State, 1996), 33-50.
- Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (University of Kansas, 1998), 143-67.
- Wolfgang Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile: Looking Back into the History of Our Desires* (University of California, 1992), 32-62.
- Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (University of New Mexico, 1992), 135-64.
- Steven Tolliday, "Enterprise and State in the West German Wirtschaftswunder: Volkswagen and the Automobile Industry, 1939-1962," *Business History Review* 69 (Autumn 1995): 273-350.
- Rudi Volti, "A Century of Automobility," *Technology and Culture* 37, 4 (October 1996): 663-85.

Class Schedule:

September 8: Introduction: The Early Automotive Age, and the Car's Humanity

Reading: Flink, 1-39; Miller, 1-33

Discussion Questions: What does Daniel Miller mean when he refers to the “humanity” of the car? Miller argues much of the existing scholarship on cars speeds toward the wrong conclusions: What does he mean? Compare and contrast his definitions of “externalities” and “entailments.” What is the significance of these terms for studying the history of automobile usage? Why did gasoline-powered cars win out over electric and steam cars in the early years of automotive history? How did the US become the leading auto producer in the world even when Britain and France had a head start? What were some of the key differences in the way US and European entrepreneurs approached the auto market?

September 15: Ford and Fordism: Understanding the Roots of Mass Automobility

Reading: Flink, 40-128; Volti, 663-85

Discussion Questions: What was Henry Ford's primary contribution to the rise of American automobility? To what extent was Ford atypical of the auto industry during the rise of the Model T? Discuss To what extent Fordism was both an industrial process and a political-cultural program? Explain why Henry Ford was called an “industrial fascist”? Why is the history of the automobile a relatively unexamined topic in scholarship? What does Volti mean when he refers to the technological conservatism of the US auto industry? Why, in Volti's opinion, was the commercial success of the early automobile in the US attributable to more than its promise of mobility? What was General Motors' key contribution to the commercial success of the early car? What was American about American cars in the first third of the twentieth century? Why does Volti argue that American cars were more classless than the telephone? What is the significance of lower gas taxes in the US compared to other parts of the world for why the American car is the way it is? Why does Volti single out the poor old Edsel as a key symbol of the failures of US automobility by the late 1950s? Volti seems to support the idea of growing government oversight over the car, but he also speaks of a “regulatory noose around the automobile”; where do you think he stands? Given some of the evidence in Volti's overview, is it reasonable to assume that the automobilization of the rest of the world in this century will develop along lines similar to those that characterized America in the twentieth century?

Writing: in one sentence of no more than fifty (50) words, explain what a car is.

September 22: Spatial Motifs: The Car in Country, City, and Suburb

Reading: Flink, 129-57; Kline, 55-86; McShane, 203-28

Discussion Questions: What determined the spread of cars in the US up to the late 1920s? What reasons did Americans give for favoring the car in the 1920s? To what extent did their support for the car become a program of social reform? Compare and contrast the motorization of Los Angeles and Atlanta. How did the spread of the automobile in America contribute to “metropolitanism”? Why did farmers initially oppose the spread of the automobile in the US? Why were farmers eventually attracted to the car? When did rural opposition to the car fade away? Did the car represent a radical change to rural people in the US, or was its presence felt in a more piecemeal fashion that adapted the car to rural ways? What does Kline mean when he writes of the “social construction” of the car? How did the automobile affect farm people's travel habits and the social geography of rural life in the US? Were rural women's attitudes toward the car different than those of rural men? What was the City Beautiful movement's view of

automobility? Why were City Beautiful plans unsuccessful when it came to implementation? What does McShane mean when he refers to the “political power of automobility,” and what are some examples of this power? If American cities planned for the car in piecemeal fashion, retaining some elements of the pre-automotive city, then does it make sense to argue, as McShane does, that the “motor boys” rebuilt US cities? Compare Flink’s treatment of the social effects of the car with McShane’s. To what extent is McShane’s analysis biased or distorted by present-day concerns? To what extent does McShane diminish the validity of his analysis by using highly selective examples, e.g., when he uses New York City as his main example of traffic congestion? Is there any room in McShane’s discussion for Miller’s argument about the humanity of the car? How about in Kline’s article?

Writing: In one sentence of no more than fifty (50) words, summarize Kline’s primary argument in “Taming the Devil Wagon.”

September 29: Gender and the Family

Reading: Berger, 55-74; Flink, 158-68; Scharff, 135-64

Discussion Questions: Why did Woodrow Wilson believe that the car would spread “socialistic feeling”? What were the primary effects of the automobile on rural families in the US up to the late 1920s? Did the spread of automobility strengthen or weaken family life in the US? What effects did automobile use have on American youth? What effects did auto use have on the architecture of middle-class homes in the US? What was the effect of growing auto usage on neighborhoods and on people’s social contacts more generally? Did the automobile have a greater effect on women’s or men’s lives in the first half of the twentieth century in the US? According to Scharff, how did most women respond to the spread of the automobile in American life? Scharff refers to women’s response to cars as a “compromise”; what does she mean? Why did the job of driving cars by women make it difficult for people to distinguish between women’s work and play? How did women driving cars promote the growth of the suburb? What effect did automobility have on women’s work in the home? To what extent were women the agents of their own fate in the transformations that led to suburbanization and increasing auto usage?

Writing: In one sentence of no more than fifty (50) words, identify which author in this week’s reading gets closest to an argument about the entailments, rather than only externalities, of auto usage, and explain why.

October 6: Auto-Tourism

Reading: Flink, 169-87; Belasco, 71-103; Harp, 54-88; Rothman, 143-67

Discussion Questions: What effects did the automobile have on vacationing? What did the automobile give travelers that the train did not? What was lost in the new automobilized tourism of the 1920s? How did motorized tourism in the decade after World War I in the US reflect larger cultural and social changes? What did auto camps and touring by car have to do with democracy and nationalism in 1920s America? To what extent is it true to say that automotive touring contributed to a growing interest in nature in the US? How did Western tourism in the US change from the 1920s to the 1930s? How did automobiles reorganize the hierarchy of the American national park system? Why and how did autocamping become a national institution in 1920s America? How did it differ from earlier forms of auto “gypsying”? What problems did autocamping and auto tourism cause for natives, park organizers, and others? How did gender issues figure into the transformation of auto touring in the US and France? French auto tourism of the early 20th century was dominated by the philosophy of “solidarism”; what did this term mean? Were their similarities between the solidarism of French auto tourism and the democratic-nationalist ethos of US auto tourism? Did the development of the Michelin tourist guides in fact reflect the “solidarist” approach of French drivers? What did cleaner toilets in tourist hotels and numbered roads have to do with French nationalism? Did leisure travel by auto become more packaged over time? So what if it did? Is it accurate to say that early Michelin auto guides did

nothing more than to impose male bourgeois standards of motorized travel on the rest of France? What does it mean to say, as Rothman does, that experience gained primacy over enlightenment in auto tourism? What does Rothman mean when he argues that recreational tourism mirrored a cultural transition from hegemony to cacophony? Is it accurate to argue that whereas Rothman stresses the individuating elements of auto tourism, Belasco and Harp pay more attention to the collective elements? Which characterization seems most accurate?

Writing: in one sentence of no more than fifty (50) words, state what you intend to do for the research paper.

October 13: European Counterpoints, American Limits

Reading; Flink, 188-261; Lavenir, 113-34; O'Connell, 11-42

Discussion Questions: How was a "culture of control" built up in Europe to make way for automobiles? Who was involved in the making of the culture of control? What does Lavenir mean when she argues that early auto users in Europe undertook "symbolic violence" against those who opposed the car? Why does Lavenir argue that automobility disturbed a pre-existing balance of traffic on French roads? What role did the bicycle play in making way for the car in France? Is Lavenir too critical of the early French automobilists, who after all were only acting in the public interest (weren't they?) when they and not the state installed road signs, distance markers, and other amenities to aid drivers? Does Lavenir make too little of the fact that the number of auto accidents in France in the early days of motorization were rather small compared to those involving horses or trains? What did driver's belief in the need for self-control and good manners on the road have to do with French Republican ideology? What did saving pretty landscapes and preserving historical architecture have to do with driving in pre-World War I France? Why is it important to note, as Lavenir does, that the early motorization of France was regulated in terms of cultural control and negotiation between competing interests rather than by the state? How does Lavenir's argument about the making of a culture of control link up with Harp's discussion of solidarism and auto-tourism in France?

Does O'Connell assign a similar importance to cultural factors when discussing motorization in Britain from 1896 to 1939? What does O'Connell mean when he writes that early British car manufacturers adopted "conspicuous production" techniques? Why was Britain, unlike the US, unable to turn to the mass production of cars before World War I? What happened between the world wars that allowed the British to achieve "motoring for the million"? What was "hire purchase," and what significance did it have for the expansion of British car ownership? How did sociocultural factors such as taste and status affect patterns of car ownership in Britain between the wars? How did such factors influence car design? How did the ambivalence of British consumers toward hire purchase schemes shape patterns of car ownership? What distinguished used car buyers from new car buyers in interwar Britain? What is the significance of O'Connell's critique of the "rational economic actor" model of car ownership in Britain?

How were patterns of installment buying for cars in the US different than those prevailing in Britain? What role did developments in the US automobile market play in the coming of the Great Depression? Why was General Motors better able to handle the Great Depression than Ford was? What was Sloanism? What was the relationship between Sloanism and the design of US cars between the world wars? What was the difference between "rigid" and "flexible" mass production of cars? What happened when "bean counters" took control of US auto firms? How did European cars of the interwar era differ from American models? How does one explain this difference?

Writing: in one sentence of no more than fifty (50) words, compare and contrast how Lavenir and O'Connell use cultural factors to explain patterns of motorization in France and England.

October 20: A German People's Car

Reading: Flink, 261-76, 319-26; Sachs, 32-62; Tolliday, 273-350

Discussion Questions: Why had Germany been unable to establish a mass car market as early as the US, the UK and France had? Why were German car producers so reluctant to attempt building a "people's car" like the Model T? What made the automobile particularly attractive to the German bourgeois strata? How were women represented in relation to the car in interwar Germany? What does Sachs mean when he argues that the automobile won "a permanent place in desire" in 1920s Germany? Why were many German conservatives, including car manufacturers and state officials, opposed to mass motorization and the building of superhighways? What did Hitler intend to do about Germany's lack of automobiles? What role did mass motorization play in Germany's economic recovery up to 1935? How did Ford and GM/Opel benefit from Hitler's plans for mass motorization? Space had to be "penetrable" in order for the car to succeed, according to Sachs; what does he mean? What did cars and highways have to do with Hitler's nationalistic goals? What did roads and cars have to do with the "homogenization" of society, which Sachs maintains is necessary to sustain modern industrial culture? In Hitler's vision, how would the car break up pre-existing traditions and loyalties (church, home, family), and create the conditions for a new society loyal to Nazism alone? What was so original about the Porsche-designed Volkswagen of the Hitler era? Why have some scholars called the savings plan for the VW "the world's biggest installment swindle"? What role did the automobile play in the postwar reconstruction of Germany? Why were small cars so central to the motorization of Germany in the 1950s and 1960s? What enabled VW to grow so successfully after World War II? Why has Heinz Nordhoff been described as more Fordist than Ford? Was VW's postwar success attributable more to the legacies of the Nazi period or to the unique conditions of postwar Germany and Europe?

Writing: in one sentence of no more than fifty (50) words, explain the VW's significance in twentieth-century German history.

October 27: Auto Styling: Desire or Dissimulation?

Reading: Flink, 235-40; 277-319; Gartman, 136-81

Discussion Questions: What was the relationship between GM auto styling and Sloanism in the late 1920s and 1930s? What were the main innovations in car styling in the 1930s? What was the significance of the Lincoln Zephyr, the Airflow, and the Cord 810-812 of 1936-7 for the history of automotive styling? What happened to automotive styling in US cars in the 1950s? Why did consumers become increasingly dissatisfied with cars and the way they were sold in the 1950s? Why, according to Flink, did US compacts of the 1950s and early '60s leave a "strange legacy"? Who was Harley Earl, and why was he important to US automotive history?

In David Gartman's estimation, what role did consumerism play in containing organized labor's ambitions in Cold War America? What did the American automobile have to do with "consumerist containment"? Gartman continues to use the word "superficial" in his discussion of auto design; why? Is it accurate to characterize Gartman's assessment of US auto styling as "conspiratorial"? What were the key differences in the relative influence of styling at GM, Ford, and Chrysler in the 1950s? What, in Gartman's argument, explains the "fantastic automotive excesses" of 1950s automotive styling in the US? Is it valid to read consumer preferences and desires off the car styles of the '50s? How did more organic looking body styles on cars enable consumers to "escape from the unpleasant reminders of Fordist labor," as Gartman avers? Does Gartman offer any evidence about consumer preferences? How does he know that Americans wanted bigger cars because other aspirations, such as "progressive politics and workplace control," were closed off to them after World War II? Why, according to Gartman, were consumers engaging in self-deception when they embraced larger, longer, and more ornamented cars? What was the result for the automobile market of the 1950s of the appearance of "condescending luxury makes" and "social-climbing cheap cars"? What leads Gartman to argue

that concept cars of the '50s were “religious utopias in steel”? What did tail fins have to do with nationalist and military values? What do you think of Gartman’s argument that “sexist ideology” made it impossible for men to admit that they too, and not only women, wanted automatic transmissions, power brakes, and other features that eased the use of automobiles? What was the significance of the rise in popularity of imported cars in late 1950s America, according to Gartman? Is there a place for individual taste in cars, in Gartman’s analysis, or are the cars we drive always a function of “class position”? What is the validity of Gartman’s argument that Detroit car makers, hotrodders, and custom car enthusiasts all shared a desire to “humanize” the car? How was “repressed sexual desire” reflected in car styling? What was the significance of the Edsel debacle? In his analysis of the Ford Thunderbird, Gartman actually says something positive about a US car, but do you agree with his discussion? Finally, what do you think of his closing argument, i.e., that American consumers by the early 1960s were becoming dissatisfied with the “auto opium” being served up by US manufacturers?

Writing: write a one-page (maximum) descriptive statement of your proposed research project.

November 3: Rebels, Hotrodders, Outsiders

Reading: Moorhouse, 144-99; Miller, 81-152

Discussion Questions: How did hot rodding evince notions of active work, diligence, and striving in American culture? To what degree was hot rodding a reworking of “traditional” values such as hard work and individual responsibility in a new context? Was not hot rodding after all just another form of consumption, manipulated by the market for essentially passive audiences? In short, doesn’t Moorhouse make too much of hot rodding, just as he overestimates the importance of other hobbies such as gardening, do-it-yourself, motoring, and the like? Why does Moorhouse argue that hot rodding presented a “romantic vision of work”? What did hot rodding have to do with assumptions about a distinctly American “genius”? Was hot rodding nationalistic and militaristic? What do you think of Moorhouse’s attempt to show that hot rodding’s crude patriarchy belied a more nuanced and open attitude toward gender identity? How did street racing link up with “typical” American values? Was there anything subversive about hot rodding in general, and illegal street racing in particular?

What reasons may be given for scholars’ complete inattention to the importance of cars in black American culture? If cars are part of a black culture of compensation, as Gilroy hypothesizes, then how does this argument link up with some of Gartman’s observations on how the appeal of pretty car bodies has a compensatory function for American workers? What do you think of Gilroy’s statement that black American car cultures reveal “weak and fading patterns of resistance or struggle”? What does Gilroy mean by stating that cars reflect a “malign anti-sociality” in modern civilization, and that the private car is an “index of hegemony”? What, according to Gilroy, did black culture’s desire for speed have to do with the history of racism in America? Why is Gilroy so critical of American blacks’ interest in buying cars, and of the way in which cars have become part of a “life-style” option? What is Gilroy’s point when he insists that black freedom movements always relied on a “poetics of transit”? What assumptions underlie Gilroy’s statement that black American car culture undercuts possibilities for African Americans to develop meaningful ties to “other less fortunate groups” in less developed countries? Does Gilroy’s comment that the car developed in “an essentially urban market” jibe with what you learned in Berger, Flink, Kline and other works on early US automobility? More generally, what do you think of Gilroy’s use of evidence throughout his chapter?

How does O’Dell define the aesthetics of Swedish modernity? What role did the American car play in Swedish notions of modernity in the 1950s? What happened to the design of American cars to decrease their popularity among Swedes? What made American cars appealing to Swedish *raggare*? In what ways did greasers’ cars represent gendered notions of modernity and mobility in Sweden? How is it that the American car has the power to subvert distinctions between public

and private spheres in contemporary Sweden? Couldn't one argue that cars in the US have had a similarly subversive impact? Was Swedish greasers' embrace of the American car due solely to their admiration of American culture, or were there other specifically Swedish conditions at work?

How does the car facilitate a "flip" into transgressive modes of behavior for young Norwegian women, according to Garvey? How are drinking and driving related to the evolution of Norwegian state policy toward the car? How is the car associated with "abandon" in Norwegian culture? How do Norwegian women use the car in opposition to prevalent notion of (female) domesticity? How do young Norwegian men use the car to realize its transgressive potential? If notions of domesticity are the context in which young women using cars transgress accepted modes of behavior, then what is the equivalent context for men, according to Garvey? To what degree was the car a sign of the control and authority of the Norwegian state up until roughly the 1980s? How was this different than in the United States, or in other European countries such as the UK and France?

US hot rodders, African Americans "driving while black" (Gilroy), Swedish greasers driving '50s American cars, and Norwegian joyriders—what do they have in common, if anything at all?

Writing: in one sentence of no more than fifty (50) words, explain what Moorhouse learns about "work" by studying the leisure-time pursuit of hot rodding.

November 10: Road trips

Reading: Primeau, 33-50; Kerouac, 148-203; Brotman, xi-xliii; Ballard, 3-18

Discussion Questions: Why, according to Primeau, are all road trips forms of protest? What is the significance of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* for road trip literature? How is it that the road became a "sacred space" for Kerouac? Do other road tripping writers agree? What did the Midwest represent for Kerouac? What values and experiences are associated with driving a car in the road trip literature? Does all road trip literature believe in the fulfillment of driving? What is the symbolic import of movement in road trip literature? To what extent did seemingly subversive road trip literature yearn for a return to "tradition"? How are cars interwoven into Kerouac's narrative? What is the function of speed in Kerouac's account? Do Sal and Dean have anything in common with the tourists we've read about in other texts in this course? What does being Beat have to do with driving? To what extent is Kerouac's narrative a critique of everyday existence in America? How does driving further this critique? Is Kerouac/Sal very concerned with the external world, or is he more interested in a sense of Self? How do accidents or the fear of accidents play into the narrative of *On the Road*? What do households signify for masculinity in *On the Road*? How do cars relate to households? Are they forms of dwelling, or anti-dwelling? Isn't *On the Road* really nothing more than a juiced-up narrative of male adolescence's breaking away from home? What role do women play in the lives of Sal and Dean? *On the Road* has been described as "transitory and neurotic"; do you agree?

Do you agree with Brotman's point that accidents bring as much pleasure as pain? What is the fascination with celebrity death in traffic accidents? What is the point of discussing how the automobile has "enabled" certain kinds of death? Do you agree with Brotman's argument that, following Freud, there are no real "accidents"? What does popular fascination with accidents have to do with "Holocaust inferiority syndrome"? What, in the estimation of some analysts, is the "choreography of contingency" underlying traffic accidents? How is it that, as Brotman avers, vehicular death is the "counterpart"—and not the antithesis—to all that is venerated in American culture? Would Gattman agree with any of Brotman's points about how automobile design has brought together the beautician and the mortician? Do the subject and tone of Brotman's essay disturb you? How does the chapter from J.G. Ballard's *Crash* highlight some of Brotman's points? How are sexuality, death, and technology interwoven in *Crash*? Do women and men play the same role in this triangular relation? Does Ballard's narrative have anything to say about Miller's argument regarding the humanity (or anti-humanity?) of the car? Do you

recognize any of the hot rodders and outsiders in Ballard's Vaughan, or are they rather respectable characters when compared to the "hoodlum scientist" of *Crash*?

November 17: Postcolonial car cultures

Reading: Flink, 327-57; Miller, 35-57, 153-84; 223-44

Discussion Questions: What is Flink's explanation for the success of the Japanese auto industry in the 1970s and 1980s? What American production methods were borrowed by the Japanese to improve the productivity of their auto plants? How did the changing composition of autoworkers in the US and Europe affect auto manufacturing? Why has it been difficult to establish automobile industries in less developed countries throughout the world?

What does it mean to say that cars are "social bodies" for Aboriginal peoples in Australia? What are the various uses to which autos, both "live" and dead, are put among the Anangu of South Australia? What leads Young to argue that cars are a "liminal space" for Anangu? What is distinctive about the way in which Anangu drivers navigate automobiles? What sorts of relationships between "dead" cars and dead people have the Anangu developed? How is it that the car renders Aboriginal culture more "authentic"?

Why, in Verrips and Meyer's opinion, have anthropologists ignored the car as a proper object of study? Why do the authors maintain that Ghanains have a less alienated relationship to automotive technology than Westerners do? What does the account of the Ghana taxi driver tell us about the impact of technology in Africa?

What are the major differences between Young's and Stotz's accounts of cars among Aboriginal peoples? In whose account does gender play a greater role? Is one narrative more positive than the other about the impact of automotive technology on Aborigines? To what degree does Stotz's discussion realize the aim of analyzing the "humanity" of the car? What does it mean to say that Western commodities are gendered before they enter the social world of the Warlpiri? Do you agree with this statement? What do sexism and racism have in common in Stotz's analysis of the Community Toyota? Why, in Stotz's analysis, is the Community Toyota a Trojan horse? How does the Community Toyota serve as a colonizing agent of Western values? How is it that Warlpiri participate in the subversion of their own values through conflicts over the Community Toyota? What does it mean to argue that Western goods are not merely appropriated but rather socialized by the Warlpiri?

Writing: submit a partial draft (no more than 3 pages) of your research paper.

November 24: The SUV Controversy

Reading: Flink, 358-409; Lomborg, 118-26; Bradsher, 43-80

Discussion Questions: Was the decline of public transport in post-World War II America due primarily to consumer choice for the private automobile, or to other factors, according to Flink? Is there necessarily a conflict in highly motorized societies between public and private transport? What do comparisons between the US on the one hand and Europe and Japan on the other tell us about the compatibility of public and private transportation networks? What "special interests" promoted what Flink refers to as the "irrational proliferation" of US car culture in 1956-73? In making his analysis, does Flink shortchange consumer desire? Given America's declining and (as of the early 1980s) low traffic death rate in comparison to the rest of the world, does it make sense to speak of "carnage" on the roads, as Flink does? What explains the "renaissance" of the US car industry in the 1980s?

Flink writes of inevitably higher oil prices, but Lomborg disagrees; who has the most convincing argument? Are we really running out of oil, according to Lomborg? What are the implications of his argument for the current debate over SUVs? What did the evolution of the SUV have to do with popular interest in the environment and nature? How did environmentalists respond to the SUV? Does Bradsher's analysis of the SUV rollover controversy say more about the unreliability of government and critics' data than about the real-world instability of SUVs? By the same token,

does Bradsher's analysis of public debate over gas mileage suggest, contrary to the author's intention, that there as many good reasons to oppose higher gas mileage standards as there are to support them? Does Bradsher's analysis suggest that environmentalists were dupes of auto-industry conspiracies, or that the environmentalists themselves were complicit in the rise of SUVs?

Writing: students presenting on December 1 submit a one-sentence (maximum: 50 words) thesis statement of their research.

December 1: Student presentations on research projects

Writing: students presenting on December 8 submit a one-sentence (maximum: 50 words) thesis statement of their research paper.

December 8: Student presentations on research projects

December 15: 15-page paper due in Humanities 4101 during class