

Art History 463
ETD 501
History 500

MWF, 9:55 am
118 Human Ecology Building (HEB)
L150 Elvehjem (LVM)

DIMENSIONS OF MATERIAL CULTURE

An Interdisciplinary, Team-Taught Course
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall Semester 2003

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.

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 a independent research projected related to her/his area of academic specialization or interest.

No later than Oct. 3 Consult with Professor Gordon or Lee about possible topics for your 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**

- W/Sept. 3 Introduction to the Course
HEB Beverly Gordon and Jean B. Lee
- F/ Sept. 5 Discussion Section: What Can We Learn from Objects?
HEB Reading: [1] Robert Kunzig, "La Marmotta," *Discover* 23 (Nov. 2002): 33-41.
[2] John N. Wilford, "String, and Knot, Theory of Inca Writing," *New York Times*, Aug. 12, 2003.

MAKING THINGS SPEAK: PRIVATE AND DOMESTIC DOMAINS

- M/ Sept. 8 The Fiber of Our Lives: Why Textiles Matter
HEB Beverly Gordon (Dept. of Environment, Textiles, & Design)
- Readings: [1] Jane Schneider and Annette Weiner, eds., *Cloth and Human Experience* (1989), pp. 2-26. [2] Beverly Gordon, "Textiles and Clothing in the Civil War: A Portrait for Contemporary Understanding," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 5 (1987): 41-47.
- W/ Sept. 10 Field Trip: The Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, at the School of
HEB Human Ecology. Gather in Room 118.
- F/ Sept. 12 Discussion Section: Bring to class an intriguing textile.
HEB
- M/ Sept. 15 Ceramics in America
HEB Ann Smart Martin (Dept. of Art History)
- Readings: [1] Ann Smart Martin, "Magical, Mythical, Practical, and Sublime: The Meanings and Uses of Ceramics in America," in Robert Hunter, ed., *Ceramics in America*, 1 (2001): 29-46. [2] Martin, "The Role of Pewter as a Missing Artifact: Consumer Attitudes Toward Tablewares in Late Eighteenth-Century Virginia," *Historical Archaeology* 23 (Fall 1989): 1-27. [3] *Martin, *Makers and Users: American Decorative Arts, 1620-1860, from the Chipstone Collection* (1999)—available online at www.chipstone.org
- W/ Sept. 17 Discussion Section, with Professor Martin: bring to class your favorite coffee
LVM mug or cup.
- F/ Sept. 19 Discussion Section: Analyzing Objects
LVM

M/ Sept. 22 The Archaeology of Ancient Households
LVM Nicholas Cahill (Dept. of Art History)

Readings: [1] Nicholas Cahill, "Olynthus and Greek Town Planning," *Classical World* 94 (2000): 497-516. [2] L. C. Nevett, "Gender Relations in the Classical Household," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 90 (1995)L 363-81. [3] Also scan *Cahill, *Household and City Organization at Olynthus* (2002), especially chap. 4--available online at www.stoa.org

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

F/ Sept. 26 Discussion of Readings: [1] Jules D. Prown and Kenneth Haltman, eds.,
HEB&LVM *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture* (2000), pp. 1-27. [2] Susan M. Pearce, "Thinking about Things," in Pearce, ed., *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (1994), pp. 123- . [3] Graduate students only: R. Elliot et al., "Towards a Material Culture Methodology," in Pearce, ed., *Interpeting Objects and Collections*, pp. 109-22.

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)

Readings (on 3-hour reserve at the Wisconsin Historical Society): [1] Alan Trachtenberg, "Introduction: Photographs as Symbolic History," *The American Image: Photographs from the National Archives, 1860-1960* (1979). [2] Marjorie L. McLellan, *Six Generations Here* (1997), pp. 1-11, 53-81; also read the captions for images throughout the book. [3] George Talbot, *At Home: Domestic Life in the Post-Centennial Era, 1876-1920* (1976). Look at the images and read the captions.

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
LVM Meaning
Thomas Loeser (Dept. of Art)

Readings: [1] Glenn Adamson, "More than Meets the Eye: Tom Loeser's Kinetic Furniture," *Woodwork* (Dec. 2001): 26-34. [2] Thomas Loeser, "Finding Your Own Direction: Five Stories of Life After Graduation," *Woodwork* (Dec. 2001): 35-40. [3] Beverly Gordon, "The Hand of the Maker: The Importance of Understanding Textiles from the 'Inside Out,'" in *Silk Roads, Other Roads*. Proceedings of the Textile Society of America Symposium, 2002.

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)

Readings: [1] Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Realm of Ideas" [1931], in "Two Lectures on Architecture," Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings*, 2: 82-91. [2] David Hanks, "Furniture," in *The Decorative Designs of Frank Lloyd Wright* (1979), 27-52. [3] Glenn Adamson, "The Next Moment in Studio Furniture," in Rick Mastelli and John Kelsey, eds., *Furniture Studio: Tradition in Contemporary Furniture* (2001). [4] Arthur Danto, 397 *Chairs* (1988); read the essay for this exhibition of chairs.

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)

F/Oct 24 Discussion Section: Read Lawrence Weschler, *Mr. Wilson's Cabinet of Wonder* (1995).
LVM

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

- W/ Oct. 29 Discussion of Readings: [1] David Lowenthal, "The Timeless Past: Some Anglo-American Historical Preconceptions," *Journal of American History* 75 (1989): 1263-1280. [2] Jean B. Lee, "Historical Memory, Sectionalism, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109 (2001): 255-300.
- HEB&LVM
- F/ Oct. 31 Discussion Sections
HEB&LVM
- M/ Nov. 3 What Is Vernacular Architecture?
LVM Anna Andrzejewski (Dept. of Art History)
- Readings: [1] Camile Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 2 (1986): 1-4. [2] Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (1998), pp. 11-12, 17-55.
- W/ Nov. 5 Considering the Ordinary and Sacred in Cultural Landscapes
HEB Arnold Alanen (Dept. of Landscape Architecture)
- Reading: [1] D. W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene," in Meinig et al., eds., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (1979), pp. 33-48. [2] Michael Penn, "Into the Wild," *On Wisconsin* (Summer 2000), 24-31.
- F/ Nov. 7 Discussion Sections
HEB&LVM
- M/ Nov. 10 Discussion Sections
HEB&LVM
- W/ Nov. 12 Flatboats as Occupational Tools on the Upper Mississippi River
LVM Janet Gilmore (Dept. of Landscape Architecture)
- Readings: [1] Janet Gilmore, "'We Made 'Em to Fit Our Purpose': The Northern Lake Michigan Fishing Skiff Tradition," in James P. Leary, ed., *Wisconsin Folklore* (1999), pp. 457-75. [2] Gilmore, "Flatboat," *Encyclopedia of the Midwest*. [3] Dana Everts-Boehm, *The Ozark Johnboat: Its History, Form, and Functions* (1991).
- F/Nov. 14 The Silhouette and Quaker Identity in Philadelphia
LVM 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*

American Design and Consumption (2003).

M/ Nov. 17	TBA
W/ Nov. 19	TBA
F/ Nov. 21 HEB&LVM	<u>Discussion of Readings:</u> [1] Laurel Brake, “ ‘The Trepidation of the Spheres’: The Serial and the Book in the 19 th Century,” <i>Serials and Their Readers, 1620-1914</i> . [2] Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, <i>The Victorian Serial</i> , chap. 1.
M/ Nov. 24 Memorial Library	Victorian Periodicals: A Cultural History Perspective Julia Chavez (Dept. of English) <u>NB: Class will meet, at the regularly scheduled time, in the Special Collections Department of Memorial Library.</u>
W/Nov. 26	Individual appointments with instructors.
F/ Nov. 28	<u>Thanksgiving Vacation</u>
M/ Dec. 1	Student Presentations
W/ Dec. 3	Student Presentations
F/ Dec. 5	Student Presentations
M/ Dec. 8	Student Presentations
W/ Dec. 10	Student Presentations
F/ Dec. 12	Wrap-up Gathering