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instructor: Dell Upton
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ANTH 759/ARH 759. Material Culture Theory & Methods

Dell Upton

OFFICE HOURS: Thursdays, 2-4 in 111 Campbell (odd-numbered Thursdays), or 202 Brooks (even-numbered Thursdays)

Instructor's e-mail: du2n@virginia.edu

Course meets Tuesdays 3:30-6pm in Brooks Hall Library

Material culture is a term originally coined by archaeologists to stand for “the vast universe of objects used by mankind to cope with the physical world, to facilitate social intercourse, and to benefit our state of mind” (James Deetz). In recent decades, material culture studies have grown into a thriving field that considers every aspect of the ways people imagine, create, use, and interpret their physical surroundings.

In this graduate seminar we will read and discuss a variety of theoretical and practical approaches to material culture, ranging from traditional formal analyses of artifacts to the most recent studies focusing on consumption, perception, and social self-definition. Our readings will examine many kinds of artifacts, including architecture, cultural landscapes, furniture, painting, clothing, decorative arts, and the ephemera of daily life.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. This is a graduate seminar. It requires **extensive reading** (the equivalent of a book a week, on average) and its success depends on faithful completion of the reading leading to active intellectual engagement and participation in discussions by *all* members.

N.B.: If you have not taken an academic (as opposed to a design) seminar before, please consult the instructor before enrolling.

2. Each week (excluding the first), each person will write a **one-page reaction paper** to the week's readings. This should neither be a summary nor a review of the entire reading, but should explore a particular issue or point in the readings that intrigues you. Because these are of no use after the fact, no late papers will be accepted. However, each person has the opportunity to skip the paper (but not the reading or participation in the discussion) one week of his or her choice.

3. At the beginning of our weekly meetings, each member of the seminar will contribute a question or issue derived from the readings. We will write these on the board and use them to structure our discussions.

4. The seminar requires a **final 20-25-page term paper** on a topic of your choice related to the seminar. It is **due December 2**.

READINGS:

I have requested that all readings be posted on **Toolkit**, except those in the books assigned to buy and a few that cannot legally be posted there (readings of more than a single chapter in one book). Everything not on Toolkit will be placed on reserve in the **Fine Arts Library**. (I will file all Toolkit readings, messages, etc., under the ANTH759 number.)

Where a topic continues over two or more weeks, you will notice that the assigned readings below are separated by extra spaces to indicate which readings are assigned for which weeks.

BOOKS TO BUY:

The following books, of which we will read all or most, are available for purchase at UVa Bookstore. All are paperbacks except the Miller, which is a hardback at a paperback price. I will also place them on reserve in the Fine Arts Library.

- Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* [1997]
- Peter Galison, *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* [1997]
- George Kubler, *The Shape of Time* [1962]
- Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* [1987]
- Christopher Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture* [1999]

Schedule of Topics and Readings

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING (Sept. 2)

NB: DENIS COSGROVE LECTURE, 5PM, SEPT. 5, CAMPBELL 153 & 158

ISSUES & CONCEPTS (Sept. 9)

- James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* [rev. ed., 1996], chap. 1, “Recalling Things Forgotten: Archaeology and the American Artifact”
- Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* [2d ed.; 1991], chap. 1, “The Problem”
- Ian Hodder, “Introduction: A Review of Contemporary Theoretical Debate in Archaeology,” in *Archaeological Theory Today* [2001], ed. Hodder
- Michael Shanks & Ian Hodder, “Interpretive Archaeologies: Some Themes, and Questions,” in *Interpretive Archaeology: Finding Meaning in the Past* [1995], ed. Ian Hodder, Michael Shanks, Alexandra Alexandri, Victor Buchli, John Carman, Jonathan Last, & Gavin Lucas

INTERPRETING CHANGE (Sept. 16, 23)

- Julian Thomas, *Time, Culture, and Identity: An Interpretive Archaeology* [1996], chap. 3, “Material Things and Their Temporality”
- Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* [6th ed.; 1915/1932], Introduction and Conclusion
- Charles F. Montgomery, “Some Remarks on the Practice and Science of Connoisseurship” [1961], in *Charles F. Montgomery and Florence M. Montgomery: A Tribute* [1978]
- George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* [1962]
- Sally Price & Richard Price, *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest* [1980], chap. 8, “Continuity and Change: African Aesthetics and Afro-American Dynamism”

- Peter F. Galison, *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* [1997], chaps. 1, 6, 9
- Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *On the Line* [1983]: “Rhizome”

WORDS AND THINGS (Sept. 30, Oct. 7, 21)

- James Deetz, *Invitation to Archaeology* [1967], pp. 83-101
- Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* [1975], chap. IV, “The Architectural Competence”
- Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, & Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* [rev. ed., 1977], pp. 87-103, 128-34
- David Summers, “Conditions and Conventions: On the Disanalogy of Art and Language,” in *The Language of Art History* [1991], ed. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell
- Simon Coleman, “Words as Things: Language, Aesthetics and the Objectification of Protestant Evangelicalism,” *Journal of Material Culture*, 1 no. 1 [Mar. 1996]: 107-28
- Mark Gottdiener, *Postmodern Semiotics: Material Culture and the Forms of Postmodern Life* [1995], chap. 1, “Semiotics, Socio-Semiotics and Postmodernism: From Idealist to Materialist Theories of the Sign”
- Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* [1988], chap. 4, “Clothing as Language: An Object Lesson in the Study of the Expressive Properties of Material Culture”
- Timothy Yates, “Jacques Derrida: ‘There is Nothing Outside of the Text’,” in *Reading Material Culture: Structuralism, Hermeneutics, and Post-Structuralism* [1990], ed. Christopher Tilley
- Andrea M. Heckman, *Woven Stories: Andean Textiles and Rituals* [2003], chap. 1, “Textiles as Visual Metaphor and the Anthropology of Art”; chap. 6, “Metaphor and Myth in Weaving Symbols”
- Christopher Tilley, *Metaphor and Material Culture* [1999]

OCT. 14 READING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

LANDSCAPE (Oct. 28, Nov. 4)

- Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* [1997], Preface & parts 3-4 (rec: parts 1-2)
- John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* [1984], “A Pair of Ideal Landscapes”
- Paul Groth & Chris Wilson, eds., *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson* [2003], “The Polyphony of Cultural Landscape Study: An Introduction”
- A. Bernard Knapp & Wendy Ashmore, eds., *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives* [1999], chap. 1, “Archaeological Landscapes: Constructed, Conceptualized, Ideational”
- Julian Thomas, “Archaeologies of Place and Landscape,” in *Archaeological Theory Today* [2001], ed. Ian Hodder
- Allan Pred, “The Choreography of Existence: Comments on Hagerstrand’s Time Geography and its Usefulness,” *Economic Geography*, 53 [1977]: 207-21

NB: DIANNE HARRIS LECTURE, 6 PM, NOV. 5, 153 CAMPBELL

ENGAGING THE MATERIAL (Nov. 11)

- Steven Mithen, “Archaeological Theory and Theories of Cognitive Evolution,” in *Archaeological Theory Today* [2001], ed. Ian Hodder
- Colin Renfrew, “Symbol before Concept: Material Engagement and the Early Development of Society,” in *Archaeological Theory Today* [2001], ed. Ian Hodder
- Dell Upton, “The City as Material Culture,” in *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honor of James Deetz* [1991], ed. Anne Elizabeth Yentsch & Mary C. Beaudry
- Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* [2002], chap. 4, “Noise and Modern Culture, 1900-1933”
- Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* [1974; 2d ed., 1999], chap. 1, “Towards (a definition of) experimental music”
- John Cage, “The Future of Music: Credo” [1937], in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* [1961], pp. 3-7

CONSUMPTION (Nov. 18, 25)

- Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* [1987]
- Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* [1986], ed. Appadurai
- Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* [1899], chap. IV, “Conspicuous Consumption”
- Teresita Majewski & Michael Brian Schiffer, “Beyond Consumption: Toward and Archaeology of Consumerism,” in *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* [2001], ed. Victor Buchli & Gavin Lucas
- David Brooks, “Conscientious Consumption,” in *The New Gilded Age: The New Yorker Looks at the Culture of Affluence* [2001], ed. David Remnick
- Colin Campbell, “The Meaning of Objects and the Meaning of Actions: A Critical Note on the Sociology of Consumption and Theories of Clothing,” *Journal of Material Culture* 1 no. [Mar. 1996]: 93-105

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION (Dec. 2)