Overview

Visual and material culture has been defined from numerous perspectives most notably anthropology, archeology, art history, cultural theory, and history. Since the 1970s in particular, scholars in these and other disciplines have used material culture sources of evidence to explore the everyday lives of ordinary citizens who did not leave written records of their experiences. This proseminar combines several large interdisciplinary fields to introduce students to material culture studies and to consider how objects have been used to reinforce, propagate, and resist cultural hierarchies based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and national identity. We will consider these actions with a strong, but not exclusive, emphasis on consumption. Using a wide range of methodologies, fieldwork techniques, and theoretical approaches we will largely examine the material culture genres and subfields of cultural landscapes, food, decorative arts, public history, and photography.

Books (Required)

♦ Bledstein, The Middling Sorts
♦ Dubrow and Graves, Sento at Sixth and Main
♦ Foster, Class-Passing: Social Mobility in Film and Popular Culture
♦ Heneghan, Whitewashing America
♦ Lury, Consumer Culture
♦ Scott, Those of Little Note: Gender, Race, Class in Historical Archaeology
♦ Skloot, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
♦ Williams-Forson, Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power
♦ Locavore Challenge
♦ Readings on ELMS & ResearchPort

Course Theme – Home and Domestic Life

This semester we will focus expressly on home and domestic life. In particular, we will read, research, and disseminate information in the areas of home life, gender identity, and consider some patterns of domestic production and consumption even as we consider the greater focus on race and class. So much of the life we care about takes place at home, the private space behind closed doors that seldom lends itself to researching eyes. More than simply a place to decorate, and transform to our desires, domestic interiors and home with its accompanying material culture helps to construct our lives—who we are, what we want the world to know/not know. What do our domestic interiors say about us? What do our possessions say about our relationships to others and to that of the state? When movement takes place, what do we take with us and what do we choose to leave behind? How do we acquire these possessions and why is it an important aspect of study? What is the role of socioeconomic class in considering this line of questioning? This and other questions represent vital aspects of material culture that need to be studied.
Grading

Seminar Facilitation (20 pts)
Museum Evaluation (20 pts)
Locavore Challenge (15 pts)
Conference Paper (10 pps) (25 pts)
  • Abstract – (10 pts)
  • Presentation/Critique (10 pts)

All assignments are to be submitted on ELMS unless otherwise stated

All assignments are to use the following heading:
Name
AMST 629D – Race, Class, MC
Date Assgn Due
Assignment

Title of the Essay
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Syllabus
(The syllabus is subject to change. Always refer to ELMS for the most up-to-date version)
Readings due on the date that they appear and are either part of journal or book. If not indicated, you can find it on ELMS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sept. 6</th>
<th>Introduction and Overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Defining the Terms [Lecture]</td>
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<td>• Why we need things</td>
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<td>• If These Walls Could Talk2</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sept. 13</th>
<th>Frameworks: Material Culture and Consumption</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Lury, Ch. 1 – Material Culture and Consumer Culture; Ch. 2 – Econ &amp; Culture,</td>
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<td>• Lury, Ch. 3 – Objects, Subjects, and Signs; Lury, Ch. 4 – Capital, Class, and Consumer Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Csikszentmihalyi, “Why We Need Things” (ELMS)</td>
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<td>• McCracken, “Culture and Consumption,” J of Consumer Research</td>
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<td>• Suddath, “The Middle Class,” Time – <a href="http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1882147,00.html">http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1882147,00.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bledstein and Johnston, Middling Sorts, (MS) Intro. Sections 1 &amp; 2 (17–100)</td>
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<td>• In class viewing – American Psycho</td>
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<th>Sept. 20</th>
<th>Methods: How we study objects</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Caughey, &quot;The Ethnography of Everyday Life: Theories and Methods for American Culture,&quot; AQ 34:222–43</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Elliot, R., et al. “Toward a Material History Methodology” and Daniel Miller, &quot;Things Ain’t What they Used to be&quot; – articles combined under Interpreting Objects &amp; Collections</td>
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<td>• E. McClung Fleming, “A Proposed Model” (ELMS)</td>
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<td>• Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things” (ELMS)</td>
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<td>• Barbara Carson, “Interpreting History through Objects” (ELMS)</td>
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<td>• Alice E. Ingerson, “What are Cultural Landscapes?” (ELMS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Williams-Forson, Suckin’ the Chicken Bone Dry” in Inness, Cooking Lessons: The Politics of Gender and Food</td>
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<td>• In class viewing – A Jury of Her Peers</td>
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<th>Sept. 27</th>
<th>Race, Class, Material Culture – Colonialism</th>
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<tr>
<td>• McClintock, “Empire of the Home” in Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest (ELMS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rothschild, “Colonialism, Material Culture, and Identity in the Rio Grande and Hudson River Valley,” International Journal of Historical Archaeology 10(1) [March 2006]: 72–107</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Oct. 4 Gender, Race, and Class in Historical Archaeology

- Scott, *Those of Little Note: Gender, Race, and Class in Historical Archaeology*
- Paynter and McGuire, *Archaeology of Inequality: Material Culture, Domination, and Resistance*
- Martin, “Suckey’s Looking Glass: African Americans as Consumers,” in *Buying into the World of Goods*

Oct. 11 Material Culture, Gender, Race, and Class – Landscapes

- Lewis, " Common Landscapes as Historic Documents"
- Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Intro., Chapt. 1–2)
- DuBrow and Graves, *Sento at Sixth and Main*
- Video: *A Raisin in the Sun* (Sidney Poitier version) (available through ELMS Course Reserves Media) –

Oct. 18 Developments of Race, Class, Consumption

- Bledstein and Johnston, *Middling Sorts*, finish
- Lury, Ch. 5 – “Circuits of Culture and Economy: Gender, Race, Class and Reflexivity”
- Francois, “Credit Policy, Housekeeping, and Status,” and “Consumption, Anxious Liberals and Daily Life,” in *A Culture of Everyday Credit: Housekeeping, Pawnbroking, and Governance in Mexico City, 1750–1920*
• Colloredo-Mansfeld, “Affluence, Consumption, and Cultural Improvisation” and “The Native Leisure Class” in The Native Leisure Class: Consumption and Cultural Creativity in the Andes
• Pozo, “Beating the System?” in Exploring the Underground Economy (ELMS)
• Locke, "The New Negro" (1925) [ELMS]
• Patillo-McCoy, "Middle Class Yet Black" [ELMS]
• In class Viewing – The Wire – “The Game”

Oct 25 Material Culture, Gender, Race, and Class – Looking Toward Home

• Heneghan, Whitewashing America
• Styles and Vickery, “Introduction,” Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830
• Martin, “Ribbons of Desire: Gendered Stories in the World of Goods,” Gender, Taste and Material Culture...
• Marcus, “At Home with the Other Victorians,” South Atlantic Q 108:1 (Winter 2009)
• Scott and Dawdy, “Colonial and Creole Diets in Eighteenth-Century New Orleans,” French Colonial Archaeology
• Mintz, “Time, Sugar, and Sweetness,” reprint in Food and Culture: A Reader (2nd ed), Counihan and Van Esterik

Nov 1 Consumption and the Performance of Class

• Montgomery, "The Connoisseurship of Artifacts" [ELMS]
• Miller, “Behind Closed Doors” in Home Possessions [ELMS]
• Lury, “Habitat and Habitus” in Consumer Culture 1st ed (ELMS)
• Lawless, “Folklore as a Map of the World: Rejecting ‘Home’ as a Failure of the Imagination” Of American Folklore 124(493): 127–146
• Vlach, Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts, (pages 1–96)
• Landsmark, “‘Haunting Echoes’: Histories and Exhibition Strategies for Collecting Nineteenth-Century African–American Crafts” – Part I and one chapter from Part II (Available through ResearchPort – Dissertations)
• Mullins, Race & Affluence, excerpt
• Roth, " Tea Drinking in 18th Century: Its Etiquette and Equipage" [ELMS]
• Roell, " The Piano in the American Home" [ELMS]
• Williams-Forson, “Home Sweet Home” – panel proposal and PPT (ASA 2009)
• Video: Avalon (available through ELMS Course Reserves Media) –

Nov 8 Race, Class, Material Culture – Living the Life of a Dispossessed

• Boyce Davies, “Writing Home,” in Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migrations of the Subject
• Behrendt, “Home: The Importance of Place to the Dispossessed,” South Atlantic Q 108:1 (Winter 2009)
• Williams, “Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales” (ELMS)
• Skloot, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
• **Video: Lemon Tree** *(available through ELMS Course Reserves Media)* – Salma Zidane lives in a tiny Palestinian village on the West Bank. She is 45 years old and a widow. Her children have left home, and she is alone. When the Israeli minister of defense builds a house on the other side of the green line, Selma’s lemon trees come to the attention of his bodyguards. Her trees are a security risk. They can hide terrorists and impede the bodyguards in their work. The lemon trees were planted by Salma's family many generations ago—they are synonymous with Salma's family history.

**Nov 15 Living the Realities/Fabrications of Class...**

- Lury, Ch. 6 – Brands: Markets, Media, and Movement
- Rooks, “No Place Like Home: Domesticity, Domestic Work, and Consumerism” in *Ladies Pages*
- Mundy, “A Special Kind of Poverty...The Poor Get Used to Going Without...” *Washington Post* (ELMS)
- Foster, *Class Passing*
- **Video: The Slums of Beverly Hills** *(available through ELMS Course Reserves Media)*

**Nov 22 Gender, Race, Class, and Material Culture – Food and Foodways**

Begin Locavore Experiment on Saturday, November 19

End Locavore Experiment on Tuesday, November 22

- Williams-Forsen, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs*
- Lury, Ch. 8 – Consumer Culture, Identity and Politics
- Rouse and Hoskins, “Purity, Soul Food, and Sunni Islam” (ELMS)
- **Video: Good Fences** *(available through ELMS Course Reserves Media)*

*Happy Thanksgiving*

**Nov 29** Paper Presentations & commentaries
**Dec 6** Paper Presentations & commentaries
**Dec 13** Paper Presentations & commentaries

**Final Paper Due:** Tuesday, Dec 20 6:00pm OR Wednesday, Dec 21 12:30pm