

HIST 4000

American Material Culture, 1650-1950

Fall 2010 TTR 11:00-12:15 LeConte 135

Professor Akela Reason; Office: LeConte 239

Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 TTR

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Course Description:

This course examines American material culture from 1650-1950. Material culture (the study of things) includes not only elite cultural artifacts but common everyday items, too. Material culture encompasses anything crafted by humans: architecture, cemeteries, parks, gardens, clothing, fine art, furniture, coins, metalwork, jewelry, glass, photographs, public monuments, broadsides, trade cards, sheet music, panoramas, etc. Since both the range of materials and time span covered by this course are broad it is not possible to be comprehensive. The class is intended as an introduction to a material culture approach to history.

Please note: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Course Structure and Readings:

The course is organized in a roughly chronological fashion. However, many of the readings are studies of classes of objects over an extended period. It is expected that students will read all texts before the date of the class for which they are assigned. The following required texts are available for purchase at the university bookstore:

James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten*

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun*

Jules David Prown and Kenneth Haltman, *American Artifacts*

A required course reader is available at Bel-Jean copy center.

Additional readings are available via the JSTOR database.

Requirements:

1. Attendance. Students are required to attend all classes. Three or more absences will be deemed excessive and will affect your grade.
2. Participation: Students are expected to have completed all readings assignments and come to class prepared to discuss.

3. Papers: there is one extended project, which consists of a several parts: a research proposal (1-2 pages), an object description (2-3 pages), a survey of the literature (4 pages), and a completed final research paper about a single object in its historical context (7-10 pages).
4. Exams: there will be an in-class midterm and a comprehensive final exam (given during the final exam period). Make-ups will not be scheduled except in the unlikely event of a serious documented emergency. Exam questions will refer to slides discussed in class. It is expected that students will know the works shown and be able to discuss them in relation to their historical context and use. Additional questions will be based upon the readings.

Grading:

Attendance and participation	10 %
Midterm	20%
Research Proposal	10%
Object Description	10%
Survey of literature	10%
Final Paper	20%
Final Exam	20%

Academic Honesty:

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The link to more detailed information about academic honesty can be found at: <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introduction to Material Culture

Aug. 17: Introduction

Aug. 19: Readings: *American Artifacts*, pp. 11-27; *In Small Things Forgotten*, pp. 1-38

Week 2: Colonial America

Aug. 24: “An Indian Basket,” *The Age of Homespun*, pp. 41-74

Aug. 26: Wayne Craven, “The Seventeenth-Century New England Mercantile Image: Social Content and Style in the Freake Portraits” (reader); *In Small Things Forgotten*, pp. 89-124

Week 3: *Decorative Arts in the 17th and 18th Centuries*

Aug. 31: “Hannah Barnard’s Cupboard” *The Age of Homespun*, pp. 108-141

Sept. 2: Margaretta Lovell, “Such Furniture as Will Be Most Profitable”: The Business of Cabinetmaking in Eighteenth Century Newport,” in *Winterthur Portfolio* (Spring 1991): 27-62 (JSTOR).

Week 4: *Vessels and Buildings in the 17th and 18th Centuries*

Sept. 7: *In Small Things Forgotten*, pp. 68-88; Barbara Ward, “In a Feasting Posture: Communion Vessels and Community Values in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century New England,” *Winterthur Portfolio* (Spring 1988): 2-24 (JSTOR)

Sept. 9: *In Small Things Forgotten*, pp. 125-164

Assignment: Research proposal due.

Week 5: *18th Century Portraiture and African-American Material Culture*

Sept. 14: Paul Staiti, “Character and Class: The Portraits of John Singleton Copley” in *John Singleton Copley in America*; Wendy Wick Reaves, “‘Effigies Curiously Engraven’: Eighteenth-Century American Portrait Prints” in Georgia Barnhill, ed. *Prints of New England*. (both in reader)

Sept. 16: *In Small Things Forgotten*, pp. 212-252

Week 6: *Material Culture in the Early Republic*

Sept. 21: “A Linen Table Cloth,” *The Age of Homespun*, pp. 277-305

Sept. 23: Jeffery Collins, “In Vino Vanitas? Death and the Cellarette in Empire New York,” in *American Artifacts*, 46-69; “A Woodsplint Basket,” *The Age of Homespun*, pp. 340-373.

Week 7: *Cemeteries and Public Parks in the 19th Century*

Sept. 28: David Charles Sloane, “Mount Auburn and the Rural Cemetery Movement” in *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (reader)

Sept. 30: Angelika Kurger-Kahloula, “On the Wrong Side of the Fence: Racial Segregation in American Cemeteries,” in *History & Memory in African-American Culture* (reader)

Class visit to Oconee Hill Cemetery

Week 8: *Material Culture of the 19th Century*

Oct. 5: **MIDTERM EXAM**

Oct. 7: Joel Pfister, “A Garden in the Machine: Reading a Mid-Nineteenth-Century, Two-Cylinder Parlor Stove,” in *American Artifacts*, 149-166; Carla Rotella, “Industry, Nature, and Identity in an Iron Footbridge,” in *American Artifacts*, 191-211

Week 9: *Women as Consumers in the 19th Century*

Oct. 12: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, “An Unfinished Stocking” in *The Age of Homespun*, pp.374-412; Leslie Shannon Miller, “The Many Figures of Eve: Styles of Womanhood Embodied in a Late-Nineteenth-Century Corset,” in *American Artifacts*, 129-148

Oct. 14 Weili Ye, “The Light of the Home: The Dialectics of Gender in an Argand Lamp,” in *American Artifacts*, 243-251; Lucy Soutter, “An Heirloom: Interpreting a Gilded Age Tortoiseshell Locket,” in *American Artifacts*, 213-227;

Assignment: Object description due.

Week 10: *Prints and Photographs in the 19th Century*

Oct. 19: Bryan Le Beau, “Chapter 1” in *Currier and Ives: America Imagined* (reader); Michael Clapper, “I Was Once a Barefoot Boy!: Cultural Tensions in a Popular Chromo,” in *American Art* (2002) (**JSTOR**).

Oct. 21: No Class: Library research day

Week 11: *Photographs and Quilts*

Oct. 26: Alan Trachtenberg, “Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs,” *Representations* (Winter 1985) (**JSTOR**)

Class meets at Hargrett Library to view a selection of prints and photographs.

Oct. 28: Readings: Sara Laurel Holstein, “Sewing and Sowing: Cultural Continuity in an Amish Quilt,” in *American Artifacts*, pp. 93-108; Gladys-Marie Fry, “A Sermon in Patchwork: New Light on Harriet Powers,” in Frederickson, Kristen and Sarah E. Webb, *Singular Women: Writing the Artist* (reader)

Assignment: Survey of the literature due.

Week 12: *Decorative Arts and Painting in the Gilded Age*

Nov. 2: Elizabeth Johns, “*The Gross Clinic, or Portrait of Professor Gross*,” in *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life* (reader)

Nov. 4: Readings: Kenneth L. Ames, "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, (Summer 1978) (**JSTOR**); Wayne Craven, "The Artful Interior," *American Art* (reader)

Week 13: *Household Technology in the 20th century*

Nov. 9: Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century" in *Technology and Culture* (Jan. 1976) (**JSTOR**)

Nov. 11: Amy B. Werbel, "The Foley Food Mill," in *American Artifacts*, pp. 228-241; Kenneth Haltman, "Reaching out to Touch Someone? Reflections on a 1923 Candlestick Telephone" in *American Artifacts*, pp. 71-92

Week 14: 20th Century Material Culture and the Great Depression

Nov. 16: William B. Rhoads, "Roadside Colonial: American Design for the Automobile Age," in *Winterthur Portfolio* (1986) (**JSTOR**); James Newcomb, "Depression Auto Styling," *Winterthur Portfolio* (Spring 2000) (**JSTOR**)

Nov. 18: James C. Curtis, "Dorothea Lange, Migrant Mother, and the Culture of the Great Depression," *Winterthur Portfolio* (1986) (**JSTOR**).

Week 15:

Nov. 23 Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 25 Thanksgiving Break

Week 16: *Post-war Material Culture*

Nov. 30: Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., "Ranch House Modern," in *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (reader)

Dec. 2

Alison J. Clarke, "The Creation of a Modernist Icon?" in Alison J. Clarke, *Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America* (reader)

Assignment: Final research paper due

Final Exam

Tues. Dec. 14 12:00-3:00