

Fall 2017  
Temple University  
Department of History  
History 8151

### STUDIES IN AMERICAN MATERIAL CULTURE

**Instructor:** Dr. Seth C. Bruggeman    **Course Meeting Times:** W 2:00-4:30  
**Phone:** (215) 204-9744    **Office Hours:** MWF 8:45-9:45; 11-12  
**E-mail:** [scbrug@temple.edu](mailto:scbrug@temple.edu)    **Classroom:** Independence Seaport Museum  
**Office:** 942 Gladfelter Hall    **WEB:** <https://sites.temple.edu/lesley/>

#### Course Description:

This course introduces students to the major themes and methods relevant to the study of objects and the past. We will consider the variety of ways in which scholars from diverse fields have sought to infer meaning from things and then seek specifically to understand how historians have applied those ideas to their own work. During Fall 2017, History 8151 will take place entirely at Philadelphia's Independence Seaport Museum. Students will experiment with traditional production techniques in the museum's boat shop, consider how collecting institutions manage material culture aboard its ships and in its exhibit halls, and conduct research in the museum's archive and library. We will use this opportunity especially to consider the materiality of Philadelphia's historic waterfront and its embeddedness within the global circulation of things and ideas.

#### Objectives:

- Become familiar with major scholarship bearing on historians' uses of material culture;
- Understand methods for using objects as historical evidence;
- Learn to incorporate material culture into written historical analysis;
- Explore how material culture is managed and exhibited in historical institutions; and,
- Discover how material culture functions in public historical interpretation.

#### Requirements:

*Writing Assignments:* Students are required to write approximately 15,000 words over the course of the semester in a variety of formats. All writing assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

*Participation:* In addition to occasional lectures, each class meeting will rely principally on student participation by way of discussion, debate, presentations, breakout groups, and conversation with guest discussants. Active participation in all class meetings is necessary to pass the course.

*Readings:* Course readings will include a variety of book chapters, articles, and reports. All materials will be distributed in class or available online.

#### Course Grade:

Students will be assessed through participation in class discussions, a semester-long reading blog, four short writing assignments, and one final term paper. Failure to complete all assignments will translate into a grade of F for the course. Course grades will be calculated as follows:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>		<u>Points</u>	<u>Course Grade</u>
Reading Blog	25		< 60	F[ail]
Object Exercises	25		60-69	D
Term Paper	25	...where...	70-79	C
Participation	25		80-89	B
Total Possible Points:	100		90-100	A

## Course Policies

**Attendance:** You must attend class to succeed in this course. Successful completion of assignments will require consideration of material presented during course lectures and discussion that may not necessarily be available in weekly reading assignments. Absence due to illness still means that you are not participating in class. Students with an emergency (e.g. death in the family, severe illness, automobile accident) may have an excused absence, but if such absences amount to more than 20% of class hours for the semester, students should consider the possibility of withdrawal from the class. I take roll to determine whether you have been physically present; your participation reveals whether you have been mentally present.

**Internet Accessibility:** This class has numerous assignments to be completed on the internet that will require a fast connection (working with internet based video and audio-files). These assignments can be completed in any campus computer lab and on any computer in a networked dormitory, but they cannot be completed on computers with a dial-up modem connection.

**Missed Assignments:** Note carefully the dates for quizzes, tests, papers, and the final examination as listed on this syllabus. If you miss a quiz, test, or exam or fail to submit an assignment when due without a valid excuse (illness, family emergency), you will receive a zero for this test. It is your responsibility to inform the instructor of your absence BEFORE the scheduled test.

**Religious Holidays:** If you will be observing any religious holidays this semester which will prevent you from attending a regularly scheduled class or interfere with fulfilling any course requirement, your instructor will offer you an opportunity to make up the class or course requirement if you make arrangements by informing your instructor of the dates of your religious holidays within two weeks of the beginning of the semester (or three days before any holidays which fall within the first two weeks of class).

**Portable Electronic Devices:** Cell phones, pagers, and beepers must be turned off during class except with special permission from your instructor.

**Course Withdraw:** Students are responsible for officially withdrawing from classes they do not plan to complete. If you stop attending a class but remain on the class roster, you may receive an 'F' in the course. If you receive federal or state financial aid, you may also be required to repay those benefits.

**Disability Statement:** This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**Statement on Academic Freedom:** Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link:  
[http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy\\_no=03.70.02](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02).

**Policy on Academic Honesty:** Temple University believes strongly in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited. Essential to intellectual growth is the development of independent thought and a respect for the thoughts of others. The prohibition against plagiarism and cheating is intended to foster this independence and respect.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, or another person's assistance. Normally, all work done for course—papers, examinations, homework exercises, laboratory reports, oral presentations—is expected to be the individual effort of the student presenting the work. Any assistance must be reported to the instructor. If the work has entailed consulting other resources—journals, books, or other media—these resources must be cited in a manner appropriate to the course. It is the instructor's responsibility to indicate the appropriate manner of citation. Everything used from other sources—suggestions for organization of ideas, ideas themselves, or actual language—must be cited. Failure to cite borrowed material constitutes plagiarism. Undocumented use of materials from the World Wide Web is plagiarism.

Academic cheating is, generally, the thwarting or breaking of the general rules of academic work or the specific rules of the individual courses. It includes falsifying data; submitting, without the instructor's approval, work in one course which was done for another; helping others to plagiarize or cheat from one's own or another's work; or actually doing the work of another person.

Students must assume that all graded assignments, quizzes, and tests are to be completed individually unless otherwise noted in writing in this syllabus. I reserve the right to refer any cases of suspected plagiarism or cheating to the University Disciplinary Committee; I also reserve the right to assign a grade of "F" for the given paper, quiz or test.

**Controversial Subject Matter:** In this class we will be discussing subject matter that some students may consider controversial. Some students may find some of the readings and/or comments in class (or in discussion conducted through a Blackboard forum) very challenging. Our purpose in this class is to explore this subject matter deeply and consider multiple perspectives and arguments. Students are expected to listen to the instructor and to one another respectfully, but of course are free to disagree, respectfully, with views expressed in class, in electronic discussions through Blackboard, or in readings.

## MEETING SCHEDULE

### I. Introduction

#### Aug. 30: Getting Oriented

*Introductions and quiet time with LESLEY.*

Jennifer L. Roberts, "The Power of Patience: Teaching Students the Value of Deceleration and Immerisvie Attention," *Harvard Magazine* (November-December 2013): 40-43.

*\*Object Exercise 1 (due by Sept. 1)*

#### Sept. 6: The Sneakbox

*Explore ISM's sneakbox collection.*

Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 (1982): 1-19.

Cindy Ott, "Object Analysis of the Giant Pumpkin," *Environmental History* 15 (October 2010): 746-63.

Howard I. Chapelle, "The Barnegat Sneak Box," in *American Small Sailing Craft: Their Design Development, and Construction* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1951), 209-17.

Eric L. Stark, "The Barnegat Bay Sneakbox," *WoodenBoat* 47 (July/August 1982): 102-07.

Nathaniel H. Bishop, *Four Months in a Sneak-Box: A Boat Voyage of 2600 Miles Down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, and Along the Gulf of Mexico* (Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1879), <http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/nhb/SB.HTM>

Grace Schultz, "Independence Seaport Museum," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/independence-seaport-museum/>

#### Sept. 13: LESLEY

*Documentation workshop: taking LESLEY's lines and photogrammetry.*

John McPhee, *The Survival of the Bark Canoe* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1975), 23-54.

Alexander Nemerov, "Describing Is Descending," in catalogue to the exhibition, *Moby-Dick*, (San Francisco: Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, 2009): 117-26.

Martin A. Berger, "The Problem with Close Looking," in John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill, and Jason D. LaFountain, eds., *A Companion to American Art* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 113-27.

David A. Taylor, *Documenting Maritime Folklife: An Introductory Guide* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1992), <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/maritime/>

Willits Ansel, et al., *Boats: A Manual for Their Documentat* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1993).

## II. Method

### Sept. 20: Why We Need Things

*Meeting our objects with Craig Bruns.*

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," in Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, eds., *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

Bruno Latour, "A Collective of Humans and Nonhumans: Following Daedalus's Labyrinth," in *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 174-215.

Sherry Turkle, "Introduction: The Things That Matter," in *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 3-10.

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 17-30.

*Object Exercise 2 (due by Sept. 22)*

### Sept. 27: Approaches to Object Study

*Classroom conversation and catch-up.*

Cary Carson, "Material Culture History: The Scholarship Nobody Knows," in Ann Smart Martin and J. Ritchie Garrison, eds., *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 401-28.

Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 1-17.

Kenneth Ames, "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9 (1978): 19-46.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "An Unfinished Stocking, New England, 1837," in *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 374-412.

Robin Bernstein, "Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race," *Social Text* 27:4 (2009): 67-94.

Rebecca K. Shrum, "Selling Mr. Coffee: Design, Gender, and the Branding of a Kitchen Appliance," *Winterthur Portfolio* 46:4 (2012): 271-98.

Jennifer Van Horn, "George Washington's Dentures: Disability, Deception, and the Republican Body," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14:1 (Winter 2016), 2-47.

*\*Reading Blog 1*

### Oct. 4: Plans

*Lofting Workshop with John Brady*

John R. Stilgoe, "Skiffs," in *Alongshore* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

John Brady, "Jersey Cats," <http://www.woodboatbuilder.com/pages/jerseycats.html>

### III. Perspectives on Stuff

#### Oct. 11: Making and Fixing

Visit with ISM's [Workshop on the Water](#).

David Pye, "The Workmanship of Certainty and the Workmanship of Risk," in *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

Howard I. Chapelle, "Introduction," in *Boatbuilding: A Complete Handbook of Wooden Boat Construction* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1941), 19-22.

Lambros Malafouris, "At the Potter's Wheel: An Argument for Material Agency," in Knappett and Malafouris, eds., *Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach* (Springer, 2008), 19-36.

Ann-Sophie Lehmann, "How Materials Make Meaning," in Lehmann et al., eds., *Meaning in Materials, 1400-1800* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 7-27.

Peter Korn, "Thinking With Things," in *Why We Make Things and Why it Matters: The Education of a Craftsman* (Boston: David R. Godine Press, 2015), 57-68.

Steven J. Jackson, "Rethinking Repair," in Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo Boczkowski, and Kirsten Foot, eds., *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality and Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014).

\*Reading Blog 2

\*Submit Object Exercise 3

#### Oct. 18: Commodities / Value

*In the galleries.*

Selections from Jennifer L. Anderson, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process," in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Peter Stallybrass, "Marx's Coat," in Patricia Spyer, ed., *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Ann Smart Martin, "Makers, Buyers, and Users: Consumerism as a Material Culture Framework," *Winterthur Portfolio* 28 2/3 (Autumn 1993): 141-157.

Jane Bennett. "Commodity Fetishism and Commodity Enchantment." *Theory & Event* 5:1 (2001).

\*Reading Blog 3

**Oct. 25: Space and Place**

*River adventure.*

J.B. Jackson, “A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time,” in *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

John R. Stilgoe, “Alongshore,” in *Alongshore* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

Dell Upton, “White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia,” in Robert Blair St. George, ed., *Material Life in America, 1600-1860* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988).

Selections from Marcus Rediker, “The Evolution of the Slave Ship,” in *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

Jane E. Dusselier, “Remaking Inside Places,” in *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

\*Reading Blog 4

**Nov. 1: Exhibiting things**

*Aboard the Cruiser Olympia.*

Seth C. Bruggeman, ““Save the Olympia!”: Veterans and the Preservation of Dewey’s Flagship in Twentieth-Century Philadelphia.”

Ken Yellis, “Examining the Social Responsibility of Museums in a Changing World,” *Artes Magazine* (November 13, 2011), <http://www.artesmagazine.com/?p=7046>

Robert Weyeneth, “The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past,” *The Public Historian* 27 (Fall 2005): 11-44

\*Reading Blog 5

\*Submit Object Exercise 4

**Nov. 8: On Copies and Authenticity**

Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

\*Submit Object Exercise 5

**Nov. 15: Objects and/in Memory**

*Waterfront monument walking tour, weather permitting.*

Erika Doss, “Afterword: Commemoration, Conversation, and Public Feeling in America Today,” in Seth C. Bruggeman, ed., *Commemoration: The American Association for State and Local History Guide* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017).

Selections from Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997)

*\*Reading Blog 6*

**Nov. 22: Fall Break**

**IV. Conclusion**

**Nov. 29: Final Presentation of Findings with ISM Staff**

**Dec. 6: Reflection**

Carlo Rovelli, “Third Lesson: Particles,” and “Fourth Lesson: Grains of Space,” in *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2014).

Amanda Geffer, “The Case Against Reality,” *The Atlantic*, April 25, 2016,  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/04/the-illusion-of-reality/479559/>

**Term Papers due by Dec. 15**

## ASSIGNMENTS

**\*\*Failure to complete any of the following assignments will result in failure of the course\*\***

### **Reading Blog (5 @ 5 points/per = 25 points total)**

Every student must create a blog and write an approximately 500-word post for each week indicated in the syllabus. Posts must be made by MIDNIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS. 6 weeks are marked for blog posts, but only 5 will be graded, thereby allowing the option of skipping a week or dropping the lowest blog grade.

The purpose of the reading blog is to relate our course readings to each student's object research. With that in mind, choose 2-3 of your favorite readings from the week's list and explain how and why they help you think about your object—or your research methodology—in new ways. Your comments will provide context and insights for the following day's classroom discussion.

Posts will be evaluated as follows<sup>1</sup>:

- 4-5 pts. *Exceptional.* The post is focused and coherently integrates examples with explanations or analysis. It demonstrates awareness of its own limitations or implications, and it considers multiple perspectives when appropriate. The post reflects in-depth engagement with the topic.
- 2-3 pts. *Underdeveloped.* The post is mostly description or summary, without consideration of alternative perspectives, and few connections are made between ideas. It reflects passing engagement with the topic.
- 1pt. *Limited.* The post is unfocused, or simply rehashes previous comments, and displays no evidence of student engagement with the topic.
- 0 *No Credit.* The post is missing or consists of one or two disconnected sentences.

### **Object Exercises (5 @ 5 points/per = 25 points total)**

Much of your work this semester will involve intensive study of a single object. The following object exercises will help you get acquainted with your object and prepare for your final paper.

#### *1. LESLEY, due by Sept. 1*

During our first meeting, you will be given one hour to identify and examine a portion of LESLEY. What you choose is entirely up to you—it could be a particular joint, a piece of deck hardware, some flaking paint—really, whatever catches your eye. Once you've identified the part of LESLEY that most interests you, spend the remainder of your time studying it. Make a rough sketch or sketches of it on the paper provided. Write down, alongside your sketches, whatever observations you make, noting how they change over time. What questions arise from your observations? What speculations?

As soon as you can, and no later than Sept. 1, transpose your notes into a blog post. Be sure to include your sketches as accompanying illustrations. Once you've finished, please share your blog's url with me via email.

---

<sup>1</sup> Blog matrix based on Sample, Mark. "Pedagogy and the Class Blog." 14 Aug. 2009. SAMPLE REALITY. Accessed 18 Dec. 2015. <http://www.samplereality.com/2009/08/14/pedagogy-and-the-class-blog/>.

2. *Object Description, due by September 22*

Each student will be assigned an object from ISM's collections to research and write on this semester. We will meet our object in class on Sept. 20. Compile a detailed object description, inasmuch as is possible during the time provided, by sequencing through Jules Prown's three stages of object analysis. Record all data, observations, and sketches on the paper provided. Be sure also to take at least one photograph. As soon as you can, and no later than Sept. 1, synthesize all of your materials into a blog post.

3. *Research Method, due by Oct. 11*

Based on our discussions and your reading of several classic models for object study, devise a multi-step method for analyzing your object. Please explain each step and its rationale. How does your model differ from/resemble other methods? What makes your model appropriate for historical inquiry? Summarize all of this in 750 to 1,250-words submitted to me in hard copy.

4. *Local Historical Context, due by Nov. 1*

Visit either **a)** a place where your object is known to have been used; and/or, **b)** an archive that contains documents pertaining to the lives and activities of the object's owner. In either case, use what you find to situate your object in time and space. Who owned your object and/or similar objects? How did its ownership change over time? What did its owners use this object for? How has your object reflected the particularities of its surroundings over time? How does interacting with your object and its past color your impression of it? Please include photographs of relevant places, objects, and/or documents wherever possible. Summarize all of this in 750 to 1,250-words submitted to me in hard copy.

5. *Object Representations, due by Nov. 8*

Produce three representations of your object: a hand drawing, a photographic portrait, and an interactive digital 3D model. Write a blog post that explains how each mode of representation variously impacts your understanding of the object, and how each mode shapes viewers' understandings of your object.

**Term Paper: Object History, due Dec. 15 (25 points)**

Write a 20-page history of your object. Your history should draw on the research you've done throughout the semester and in conjunction with your various object exercises. Beyond expanding on what you've already discovered about your object and its regional history, you must also situate your object—by engaging relevant secondary scholarship—in a national and, wherever possible, global context. Please also reflect on the effectiveness of your history. Did the method of object study that you devised at the beginning of the semester serve you well? What would you do differently if you could start again? What further opportunities for research does your object present?

You will be required to include with your paper (not included in the final page count), a brief museum catalog entry suitable for use by ISM. Your post and associated images will become a permanent part of the museum's holdings. A template will be distributed in class.

Submit *a hard copy and a digital copy of your term paper*. Also, please keep in mind that the term paper is a formal writing assignment, and therefore should:

- Be double spaced;
- Be typed in 11-12 point font;
- Have 1-inch margins;
- Include page numbers;
- Include a title page or heading with your name, date, paper title, and course number;
- Include proper citations (Chicago style preferred) and a bibliography or works cited page;
- Be thoroughly proofread, edited, and must adhere to proper grammatical conventions;

In all cases where your assignments rely on information gathered from identifiable sources (books, articles, websites, television, radio, etc.), you must cite those sources using either footnotes or parenthetical references. For information regarding citation style, visit <http://www.temple.edu/writingctr/handouts/citationguides/index.html>.