

# Learning from Things: Material Culture Studies

“How can you study a society  
if you attend only to the [written] expressions of a small and deviant class within the whole?”  
Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*<sup>1</sup>

**COURSE NUMBER:** ARCH 210 or A/S 250 **Spring 2006**

**PROFESSOR** -- Susan Kus

**OFFICE** – 105 Clough; x3933

**CLASS PERIOD** – 2-3:15 PM T, Th

**OFFICE HOURS** T, Th 1 – 2 pm:

**CLASSROOM**—102 Clough

W 1-2 pm, or by appointment

## ***COURSE STATEMENT***

We are symbol users and inhabitants of imagined worlds; we are also tool makers whose hands are “dirtied” in manipulating the world.<sup>2</sup> This course will pull us away from the ivory towers of our lofty untethered “thoughts,” which we often invest with determination of the lives we lead. (“Just put your mind to it.” “It is a question of mind over matter.” “Dream big!”) This course will moor us to an examination of our “materiality” and our engagement with the material world.

Members of our genus, *homo*, distinguished themselves, and ourselves, as inveterate tool-makers. Yet our species, *sapiens*, uses objects to do things beyond the procurement of our immediate survival. We make and use objects to investigate and to modify the physical world that surrounds us, to create social relations, to advertise our gendered and ethnic identities, to proclaim our group affiliations, social status and entitlements, to entertain ourselves, to objectify ourselves, to restrain and even kill others, to advertise our religious affiliation, to take with us into the next life, to appease our gods, and even to approach our gods (by building a stairway to heaven, for example.) Yet, in this course we will come to appreciate the fact that we are not only crafters of material culture, we in turn are “crafted,” both physically and mentally, by the material culture we create, use and consume.

Material culture studies cross many (if not all) disciplines including archaeology (anthropological, classical and biblical), anthropology, geography, history, art history, folklore, popular culture, architecture (vernacular, modern and landscape), and museum studies. In some cases, material culture studies can be seen as a challenging and vital complement of study in those areas that have the possibility of accessing written documents and/or living witnesses. As the Glassie quote above suggests however, not everyone in a society with a writing system is given voice in the written record. Even those with voices in the written record do not speak of the entire gamut of their actions and thoughts. In other cases, in archaeological studies in particular, the only access we have to a culture, a society, or a segment of society is through the materials detritus its members have left behind.

The study of material culture, while a rich source of information, is a challenging arena for the study of individuals, societies and cultures because objects “speak” neither unambiguously nor directly to us. Nevertheless, astute observation underpinned by theoretical acumen and the clever framing of questions can allow us to “learn from things.”

## ***COURSE CONTENT***

In this course we will begin initially with an appreciation of the relationship of material culture to culture, the challenges of material culture studies, and the importance of such studies for a wide range of disciplines. We will

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<sup>1</sup> Quote taken from the course outline (History 6202, Spring 2004) of Dr. Ann McCleary, University of West Georgia.

<sup>2</sup> We are stardust; we are golden, as well.

further investigate the relationship between the human capacity for tool production and the human capacity for symbolic activity.

We will then go on to a survey of material culture studies across disciplines and across materials from contemporary popular culture to the deep past of humanity, and from the minute to the monumental. This survey will allow us to become acquainted with the incredible range of questions that have been investigated through material culture studies concerning technological knowledge, craft and art production, social, economic and political organization, philosophical, aesthetic and ideological systems, etc. During this first half of the course, students will become "physically engaged" with some skill involving material culture (e.g., knitting, Inuit string games, Frisbees, sewing, pottery making, house building with Habitat for Humanity, etc.) and record the knowledge they acquire and the questions that arise for material culture studies from such engagement.

The last section of the course will be devoted to how theory influences the questions we ask and the interpretation we bring to the study of material culture. Do materiality and technology determine social organization and ideology? Or is material culture just a reflection of "ideas" (a materialization of our intentions, volition, and imagination)? Or are matters more complex; in transforming the material world we are in turn transformed? And finally, how do we express ourselves through private collecting and telling stories through material culture in public forums, such as museums.

Students will have the opportunity to create a final research project that will allow them to investigate in more detail a piece of material culture and a theoretical question that can be answered through the study of material culture. This project will be chosen in consultation with the instructor and can be tailored to the specific disciplinary major of the student. The student will present the results of their research both orally in a class presentation and in a written and illustrated document.

### ***COURSE REQUIREMENTS***

Class attendance and class participation are very important if you wish to take an active interest in your education and move along the path to enlightenment. Besides lectures and assigned readings, this course requires class participation, completing 4 short exercises, keeping a journal of "physical engagement", writing a book report, and completing a mid-term, a final exam, and a final research project.

The book report and the final research project will conform to the style guidelines of the American Anthropologist. These guidelines can be found in AA 97(1):191-194, at the web site <http://www.aaanet.org> and on the Writing Center web site. Late papers and assignments will not be accepted, except in the case of very extenuating circumstances. In such a case, permission to turn in an assignment late must be obtained **in person** from the instructor **before** the assignment due date. Such late submissions can carry an automatic grade penalty.

**Failure to adequately complete any assignment or to take any exam will result in a failing grade for the course.** Absences and/or failure to participate in class can lower your grade. In the case of 3 absences a grade of "D" will be assigned for class participation. 4 absences will result in a grade of "F for class participation. In the case of 5 or more absences, a failing grade as a rule will be assigned for the course. You are asked to self-report on absences. Upon returning to class after an absence, you should sign the attendance notebook with the date of the absence(s) and the reason for the absence.

Incompletes are not normally given in this class. In the rare case where an incomplete may be in order, the student must obtain permission from the instructor **in person** and complete all paper work for the Registrar **before** the final day of the course.

### ***GRADING***

Class participation.....	10%
Exercises 1-4 @ 5% each.....	20%
Book report.....	10%
Mid-term exam.....	15%
Journal on "physical engagement".....	15%
Final project.....	20%
Final exam.....	10%

## REQUIRED READING

### Basic Texts:

- Praetzelis, Adrian  
2001. *Death by Theory*. Walnut Creek, California: Altamira Press.
- Deetz, James  
1996 *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life*. Garden City, N. Y.:Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- Lubar, Steven & W. David Kingery, eds.  
1993 *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian.

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### Reserve Readings

- (1) **Akin**, Marjorie  
1996 *Passionate Possession: The Formation of Private Collections*, *In Learning from Things*, D. Kingery, ed. Pp. 102-128. Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Press.
- (2) **Bender**, Barbara  
2002 *Landscape and Politics: Introduction and Contested Landscapes: Medieval to Present Day*. *In The Material Culture Reader*, V. Buchli, ed. Pp. 135-174. Oxford U.K.: Berg.

copy of this article can be read through "Knowledge Portal" and online journals through the Barrett Library

- (3) **Briggs**, Jean  
1993 *Expecting the unexpected: Canadian Inuit Training for an Experimental Lifestyle*. *Ethos* 19(3):259-287.
- (4) **Csikszentmihalyi**, Mihaly & Eugene Rochberg-Halton  
1981 *Chapters 1 & 2. In The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Pp. 1-54. Cambridge University Press.
- (5) **Ewers**, John Canfiel  
1969 *The Influence of the Horse on Blackfoot culture*. *In The Horse in Blackfoot Indian culture*, Institution Press
- (6) **Glassie**, Henry  
1987 *Vernacular Architecture and Society*. *In Mirror and Metaphor: Material and Social Constructions of Reality*, Ingersoll & Bronitsky, eds. Pp. 229-245. University Press of America.
- (7) **Hilliard**, Sam  
1988 *Hog Meat and Cornpone: Foodways in the Antebellum South*. *In Material Life in America 1600-1860*, St. George, ed. Pp. 311-332. Boston :Northeastern University Press.
- (8) **Johnson**, Mark  
1998 *At home and abroad; inalienable wealth, personal consumption, and the formulations of femininity in the southern Philippines*. *In Material Culture: Why some Things Matter*, D. Miller, ed.. Pp. 215-238. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

copy of this article can be read through "Knowledge Portal" and online journals through the Barrett Library

- (9) **Kus**, Susan and Victor Raharijaona  
2000 *House to Palace, Village to State: Scaling Up Architecture and Ideology*. *American Anthropologist* 102(1):98-113.

- (10) **Miller**, Daniel

- 1998 Coca-Cola: a black sweet drink from Trinidad. *In* Material Culture: Why some Things Matter, D. Miller, ed. Pp.169-187. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (11) **Morgan**, Lewis Henry  
2000 Ethnical Periods. *In* Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History, McGee and Warms ed. Pp. 41-52. Mountain View California,: Mayfield.
- (12) **Oldenziel**, Ruth  
1996 Object/ions: Technology, Culture, and Gender. *In* Learning from Things, D. Kingery, ed. Pp. 55-69. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press.
- Prown**, Jules  
(1) Chapter in HFT
- (13) \* (2) 1988 Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method. *In*, Material Life In America 1600-1860, St. George, ed. Pp. 17-37. Boston :Northeastern University Press
- (14) \* (3) 1996 Material/Culture: Can the Farmer and the Cowman Still be Friends? *In* Learning from Things, D. Kingery, ed.. Pp. 19-27. Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Press.,
- (15) **Roth**, Rodris  
1988 Tea-Drinking in Eighteenth-Century America: Its Etiquette and Equipage. *In* Material Life in America 1600-1860, St. George, ed. Pp. 439-462. Boston, Northeastern University Press.
- (16) **Seremetakis**, C. Nadia  
1996 The Memory of the Senses, Part 1: Marks of the Transitory. *In* The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity, Seremetakis, ed. Pp. 1-18. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (17) **Soffer**, Olga, Pamela B. Vandiver, M. Oliva, and L. Seidl  
1993 Case of the Exploding Figurines. *Archaeology*. 46(1): 36-39.  
**Vandiver**, Pamela, Olga soffer, Bohuslav Lima and Jiri Svoboda  
1989 The Origins of Ceramic Technology at Dolni Vestonice, Czechoslovakia. *Science* 246(4933): 1002-1008
- (18) **Soffer**, Olga, Pamela B. Vandiver, Bohuslav Klima, and Jiri Svoboda.  
1993 The Pyrotechnology of Performance Art: Moravian Venuses and Wolverines. *In* Before Lascaux: The Complex Record of the Early Upper Paleolithic, Knecht, Pike-Tay, and White eds. Pp. 259-275. Boca Raton: CRC Press.
- (19) **Steward**, Julian  
2000 The Patrilineal Band. *In* Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History, McGee and Warms ed. Pp. 228-243. Mountain View California: Mayfield.
- (20) **Tilley**, Christopher  
2002 Metaphor, Materiality and Interpretation; Introduction *and* The Metaphorical Transformation of Wala Canoes. *In* The Material Culture Reader, V. Buchli ed. Pp. 23-55. Oxford U.K: Berg.

DATE	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
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1/12 INTRODUCTION: Why material <i>culture</i> studies “matter”; for whom, and for which disciplines.	Journal of “physical engagement” - Learning a skill, choosing a “bodily” engagement to go beyond the limits of one’s imagination (Journal handed in March 9 <sup>th</sup> ) Decide on nature of “bodily engagement” for next session <b>Begin reading <u>In Small Things Forgotten</u>, finish for Jan. 26<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>WEEK 1: CULTURE IS A WHOLE AND MATERIALITY IS A PART</b>	
1/17 (W)holistic perspective	Friedel chapter in <u>History from Things</u> (HfT) <b>Exercise 1-class discussion</b> <b>Choose Book for report</b> (discussion due February 22 <sup>nd</sup> ) <b>REMINDER</b> – exercise 2 due Jan 24th
1/19 “Middle range theory” or what do you really know about being material boys and girls in a material world?	Discussion of first encounters with “physical engagement” Czikszenmihalyi chapter in <u>HfT</u>
<b>WEEK 2: PIECES OF THE WHOLE</b>	
1/24 <b>Humans:</b> grasping hands and stereoscopic vision – tools and technology	<b>Exercise 2 - class discussion</b> *Briggs
1/26 <b>Humans:</b> tool users that are symbol users: the challenge of theory in material culture studies. Arena of questions we are asking	Choosing a final research project-initiate discussion <b>Preliminary 1 page proposal due February 2<sup>nd</sup></b> Class discussion of <u>In Small Things Forgotten</u>
<b>WEEK 3</b>	
1/31 <b>Materials and metaphor</b>	*Tilley Prown (1) in <u>HfT</u> “Hopi songs of the 4 <sup>th</sup> world” <b>Film showing TBA</b>
2/2 <b>Technology</b>	*Soffer, et. al. (1) and (2) Gordon chapter in <u>HfT</u> <b>Final paper proposal due</b>
<b>WEEK 4</b>	
2/7 “ <b>Social</b> lives of things”	Brown chapter in <u>HfT</u> * Hilliard
2/9	*Oldenzel Rawson in <u>HfT</u> <b>REMINDER</b> – exercise 3 due Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>
<b>WEEK 5</b>	
2/14 technology as <b>philosophy</b> and <b>Ideologies</b> materialized	*Bender *Kus & Raharijaona

	*Glassie Begin Praetzelli, <i>Death by Theory</i> (finish chaps. 1-5 for February 28 <sup>th</sup> ) and finish the book for March 7 <sup>th</sup> )
2/16 <b>Bodies</b> and minds: wild and materially domesticated	<b>Exercise 3 - class discussion</b> Leone & Little in <u>HfT</u> *Roth
<b>WEEK 6 TAKING STOCK</b>	
2/21 <b>BOOK REPORTS</b>	Seminar format discussion of individual book reports
2/23 What does this mean for a material girl/boy in a material world	Seminar format, continue discussion of individual book reports, and taking stock and reviewing for mid-term
<b>WEEK 7:</b>	
2/28 <u>Death by Theory</u> and Final projects	Discussion of <u>Death by Theory</u> , Chapters 1-5 Seminar format; discussion of progress on final project
3/2 <b>Midterm exam</b>	
<b>WEEK 8: BINDING THE PIECES WITH THEORETICAL STRING - WARP AND WEFT</b>	
3/7 What is theory?	Discussion of <u>Death by Theory</u> , final book chapters
3/9 How does “matter” come to matter? In class discussion of “Engagement Journal”	“ <b>Engagement Journal</b> ” handed in *Prown (2) & (3) Maquet chapter in <u>HfT</u>
<b>WEEK 9 SPRING BREAK</b>	
3/14	<b>NO CLASS</b>
3/16	<b>NO CLASS</b>
<b>WEEK 10: FIRST “MATTERS” FIRST</b>	
3/21 material determinism	*Morgan *Steward <b>REMINDER</b> – Exercise 4 due March 28 <sup>th</sup>
3/23	*Ewers
<b>WEEK 11: MIND OVER MATTER</b>	
3/28 psyche, signs, symbols, semiotics (objects as language)	<b>Exercise 4 - class discussion</b> *Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton
3/30 structuralism and postmodernism	Wright chapter in <u>HfT</u> *Seremetakis
<b>WEEK 12: SOCIAL BEING DETERMINES CONSCIOUSNESS</b>	

4/4 Neo-Marxist and feminist theory. And who, exactly, is doing the interpretation of material culture?	Lubar chapter in <u>HfT</u> *Johnson
4/6 Performance theory, material "affordances", etc.	*Miller Additional reading to be assigned
<b>Week 13: MUSEUMS AND COLLECTORS: TELLING STORIES WITH MATERIAL CULTURE AND UNDERSTANDING PASSION FOR COLLECTING</b>	
4/11	*Akin
4/13	<b>EASTER RECESS</b>
<b>Week 14 STUDENT REPORTS</b>	
4/18 Student Reports	Final paper due
4/20 Student Reports	
<b>Week 15 WRAP UP</b>	
4/25 Taking stock once again	Reading to be assigned
4/27 Concluding Remarks	
<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<b>Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> 8:30 am</b>



# EXERCISES 1-4

## Exercise 1 Due January 17th

For this exercise, bring to class one small object with no writing on it that will convey important information on this cultural moment in time and place for future generations and/or extraterrestrial visitors. Find an object that not only "epitomizes" something about this cultural moment, but also conveys as much information as possible. Write a brief statement (1-2 pages) about your understanding of what information your object can convey to someone unfamiliar with this cultural moment.

### International Time Capsule Society



#### What is a Time Capsule?

The 1989 Oxford English Dictionary defines a time capsule as "a container used to store for posterity a selection of objects thought to be representative of life at a particular time."

Time capsules are interesting to people of all ages and touch people on a world-wide scale. Properly prepared time capsules preserve the salient features of history and can serve as valuable reminders of one generation for another. Time capsules give individuals, families and organizations an independent voice to the future.

[http://www.oglethorpe.edu/about\\_us/crypt\\_of\\_civilization/international\\_time\\_capsule\\_society.asp](http://www.oglethorpe.edu/about_us/crypt_of_civilization/international_time_capsule_society.asp)

Exercise 2 Due January 24th

Gary Larson – THE FAR SIDE



Early archaeologists

This exercise, asking you to look at a piece of material culture from your own society, will help you begin to appreciate both the potential richness of material cultural studies, as well as the complexity and difficulty involved in the study and interpretation of material cultural remains. Read handout pages on (1) tableware from Historic Annapolis and (2) beer pitchers from the Inka state to “wet your appetite” for material cultural studies.

THE EXERCISE:

- Choose a three-dimensional object of material culture (i.e., not a picture) from your culture. It must be brought to class (thus it must be transportable and easily handled so it can be physically examined by other members of the class.) **DO NOT** choose an object whose primary intent is to convey information through writing (e.g., book, newspaper, magazine.) You should ignore the content of any writing on the object, though you can comment on numbers and visual signs or

ideographs.

- Be prepared to give a 5-10 minute presentation to the class on this object discussing the points listed below. (You should also produce a 2-3 page written statement on these points that will be handed in for grading.)

- **The object** (1) Give a description of the object highlighting the physical, tactile and other sensory aspects of the object.
  - Really look at the object; look at it with new eyes. Don't let your memory fill in for your senses
- **Its creation** (2) Consider the production of the object (e.g., materials involved, original source of these materials, degree of transformation of raw materials involved, level of craft skill involved in production, steps in production, time involved in production, location of production, number and characteristics of individuals involved in its production, etc.)
  - If the object is something that you understand the entire process of raw material procurement to final stage of crafting, then explain the cycle.
  - Otherwise, admit your “ignorance” and then surf the web to fill in at least one element of that “ignorance” and report on your findings.
- **Social context** (3) Connect or relate this object to particular aspects of everyday life, populations within a culture (e.g., particular class, ethnicity, and gender), and cultural institutions, cultural values or beliefs, etc. In answering this part of the exercise, consider the following quote from the French philosopher and phenomenologist, M. Merleau-Ponty.

*The spirit of a society is realized, transmitted, and perceived through the cultural objects which it bestows upon itself and in the midst of which it lives. It is there that the deposit of its practical categories is built up and these categories in turn suggest a way of being and thinking....*

**FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:** To paraphrase Karl Marx: What distinguishes us from other animals is that we are [significant] tool makers. We make and use tools to modify our worlds, yet in the process we too are transformed. What do you understand by this argument in relation to how you and/or your society “consume” the object?

**Exercise 3** Due February 16th



Choose a partner - preferably someone you do not know very well. Arrange to visit each other's room for approximately 20-40 minutes. (Do not "tidy up the place" before the arranged visit.) During the visit, the observer should not ask any questions about the presence or absence of, characteristics of, or the spatial arrangement of material items in the room. Indeed, the observer should disqualify any outside information they may have about the individual(s) that occupies(y) the room and answer the questions below based solely on their observations of the materials remains in the room.

Do a quick sketch map of the room locating major pieces of furniture, as well as doors and windows. (Use pacing rather than a tape measure if it will speed up the process.) Then, looking at the room and its furnishings, try and answer the questions below. **Back up your answers with references to aspects of material items found in the room** (e.g., presence/absence, quantity, quality, spatial location, spatial associations.)

(1) Are there different activity areas in the room? What activities take place there? How many people occupy the room and how do you know this?

(2) Describe the individual or individuals who occupy this room. What parts of your description are **idiosyncratic** characteristics of the individuals? What parts involve **social categories** based on behavior patterns shared by other members of society (e.g., gender, class, ethnicity, religious affiliation, hobbies, age.) How much of this description is based on **intentional choices** involving material objects made by the Individual or individuals and how much of this description is based on **unconscious and/or unintentional patterns of behavior** that we have adopted as members of a particular culture? Do you think this an interesting distinction for archaeological research?

In addition to writing up the results of the above exercise, be prepared to discuss the following in class:

(1) What general assumptions about human behavior and culture and their relation to material objects have you made in the process of describing the rooms and their occupants that were brought to your attention in doing this exercise? (2) In particular, were you struck by any interesting new insight into humans and material culture?

**Exercise 4** *Due March 28th*



**“Selling the Dream”**

For this assignment you are to choose a full-page advertisement from a magazine that you regularly read or to which you subscribe. What “dream” is the ad selling and how is it message delivered and/or reinforced by material objects and their arrangements. Write your response to this question in less than two pages. Bring the ad to class and be prepared to discuss your ideas in class.

**Journal of Physical Engagement** *To be handed in on March 9th*



You are in college today because you can do anything you put your mind to! Books are your friends, and they allow you to “imagine” your way into exotic worlds and novel experiences. Right?

Can the mind, indeed, do all this? Can the mind usurp lived experience?

Some of you may already come to this class with important physical skills.

You may sew, have helped build houses and plant gardens, hunt with bow and arrow, etc. Yet, many of us will engage in or continue to engage in such physical activities only as a pastime, spending our days employed with matters of the mind.

The purpose of this “lab component” assignment is to allow you to learn a new physical skill that involves some materials and possibly tools. As you physically engage in your skill or activity, you will also be investigating its origins and the physical and sensual properties of the materials and tools involved.

Possible “physical engagements”: teach yourself/learn how to knit, learn calligraphy, or sew, or weave, become proficient at telling stories with string as the Inuit and other indigenous populations do, make puppets, “seize the clay”, build a model ship, plane, or intergalactic cruiser, learn to make bread or decorate cakes, created braided hairdos. Your choice of “physical engagement” will be done in consultation with the professor.

You will be engaged in this physical activity for the first half of the semester. You should keep a journal of your experience including sketches, specialized vocabulary, bibliography of written sources and websites. What are you learning about the materials you are using? What new vocabulary have you acquired in learning this skill? What are you learning about your senses, about your motor skills, etc. in exploring this new skill? What new questions arise for you concerning material culture studies and concerning individuals who make the materials studied? If possible, talk to other practitioners.

**You should date your entries and sketches and keep a record of the time spent in the practice of your skill. The assembled journal is due March 9<sup>th</sup>.**

**Book Report** *Due February 21st*

Scholars from a wide range of fields have approached reading history from things in a variety of ways. No one field has a monopoly: none has found all the answers. Not only are their methods different, the questions they ask, the objects they ask them of, and the uses to which they put the answers are different, too.

(Luhar & Kingery, History from Things, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993:viii-ix)



You will be asked to choose a book to read from the list below. These are extended studies of material culture that will give you an appreciation for both the complexity of information gleaned from such studies and the quality of the questions asked and answered by material culture studies.

For your book report you should write a 5-7 page resume of the book which should include the following points:

-  Who is(are) the author(s)? What is his/her/their training, disciplinary affiliation?
-  What material(s) is(are) being studied?
-  What culture and time period do(es) the material(s) come from?
-  How were the objects assembled for the study and/or what methods were employed to obtain the material(s) (e.g., museum collections, excavation, anthropological fieldwork)?
-  What is the reason for the study and/or the questions asked of the material(s)?
-  What information did the study of the material or the objects bring to our attention that other sources did not or could not reveal?
-  Was there a theoretical framework used to approach this study of material culture? If yes, discuss briefly.
-  What is your appreciation for material culture studies after reading this work?

You should be prepared to speak to the class for 5-10 minutes about your book. Since time is limited you cannot present your whole report to the class. Rather, you should discuss the following points in class:

-  Briefly describe the **who** (did the study), **what** (was studied), **when** (the materials date to), **where** (the materials come from) and **why** (the study was done).
-  Bring something from your book concerning material culture studies to the attention of your classmates that you found interesting, challenging and possibly unexpected.

- 1) Clarke, Alison  
1999 Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950's America. Smithsonian Institution Press.
- 2) Michael, Bisson  
2000 Ancient African Metallurgy: The Socio-cultural Context. AltaMira Press.
- 3) Hosler, Dorothy  
1994 The Sounds and Colors of Power: The Sacred Metallurgical Technology of Ancient West Mexico. MIT Press
- 4) Weiner, Annette (editor)  
1989 Cloth and Human Experience. Smithsonian Institution Press.
- 5) Crane, Diana  
2000 Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender and Identity in Clothing. Chicago: U. of Chicago.
- 6) Meskell, Lynn  
2004 Object Worlds in Ancient Egypt: Material Biographies Past and Present. Oxford, New York, Berg.
- 7) Thomas, Christopher  
2002 The Lincoln Memorial and American Life. Princeton University Press.
- 8) Wilkie, Laurie  
2000 Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, 1840-1950. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press.
- 9) Meikle, Jeffrey  
1995. American plastic: a cultural history. New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press,.
- 10) Jordan, Peter  
2003 Material Culture and Sacred Landscape: The Anthropology of the Siberian Khanty. Walnut Creek, CA, AltaMira
- 11) Ulrich Laurel

- 2001 *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*. New York, Knopf.
- 12) Phillips, Ruth  
1998 *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900*. Seattle, University of Washington Press.
- 13) Hanley, Susan  
1997 *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan: The Hidden Legacy of Material Culture*. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.
- 14) Houchins, Chang-su  
1995 *Artifacts of Diplomacy: Smithsonian Collections from Commodore Matthew Perry's Japan Expedition (1853-1854)*. Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press.
- 15) Calvert, Karin Lee Fishbeck  
1992 *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600-1900*. Boston, Northeastern University.
- 16) Briggs, Asa  
1988 *Victorian Things*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- 17) Orvell, Miles  
1989 *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina.
- 18) Kusimba, Chapurukha, J. Claire Odland, and Bennet Bronson (eds)  
2004 *Unwrapping the Textile Traditions of Madagascar*. Los Angeles, UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. (Textile series no. 7)
- 19) Riordan, Teresa  
2004 *Inventing Beauty: A History of the Innovations that have made us Beautiful*. New York, Broadway Books.
- 20) Perani, Judith  
1999 *Cloth, Dress, and Art Patronage in Africa*. New York, Berg.
- 21) Crane, Diana  
2000 *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. Chicago, University of Chicago.
- 22) Glassie, Henry (Prof. Kus' personal copy)  
*Folkhousing in Middle Virginia*

## Final Project/Report Due March 18<sup>th</sup>

This is your time “to shine.” This is also your time to explore a topic of particular fascination and interest to yourself and/or to apply what you have learned about material culture studies to your culture or to a topic within the academic field in which you are majoring.

Some possible topics of investigation include the following:

- 🎬 Why do people, who have no contact with each other, build pyramids all over the world?
- 🎬 The materialization of “resistance” – other than guns
  - “...the street will always find a use for things...” Gibson
- 🎬 Gender and materiality
- 🎬 Look at a contemporary artifact from a theoretical perspective
- 🎬 Examine a “small thing forgotten” in the present or the recent past (e.g., wooden clothespin, paper clip, zipper, frozen TV dinner)
- 🎬 Class and materiality
- 🎬 Materiality in literature – physical descriptions and “metaphors” used in literature
- 🎬 Heirlooms
- 🎬 What do people collect? Why do people collect things like beanie babies, salt and pepper shakers, tea cups, and sports paraphernalia? You might want to consider interviewing collectors and documenting their collections.
- 🎬 Group project – do a study of material culture on Rhodes Campus.
- 🎬 Hollywood films and the accuracy of historical reconstruction of material culture
- 🎬 Bodies and/or minds affected by technology
- 🎬 Power and materiality (sacred stools, crowns, Excalibur, etc.)
- 🎬 Material markings of ethnicity
- 🎬 Museum agendas – NMAI – National Museum of the American Indian
- 🎬 Critiquing and analyzing a current museum display (e.g., Wonders exhibit, Pink Palace exhibit on history)

