



### How to cite this syllabus:

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ANTH UN3723

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office:

What does the history of North America look like when our analysis is focused on the swirl of objects left behind in history's wake? What social logics can be found in the toys children play with, or the appliances their parents cook with, or the gravestones that mark their final resting places? What can we learn about race, class, or gender by studying the stuff lying about a late 19<sup>th</sup> century parlor room, or an early 20<sup>th</sup> century office building, or an 18<sup>th</sup> century Algonquian village, or a 1960s Hippie commune? What does it mean to talk of a pill or a chip or a light as revolutionary? What does our trash tell us that our newspapers do not? How are materials political? How can critical inquiry into the past and present be organized around things?

This seminar provides an intensive introduction to material culture analysis and its potential contributions to the study of American history. As such, our focus is methodological. In seminar discussions, we will consider both (1) key texts that give intellectual shape to the central questions in modern material culture studies (namely, "what do things mean?", "what do things do?", and "what do things want?") and (2) published case studies demonstrating how to engage in serious object-based research (including studies of Victorian homes in New England, garbage disposal in modern American cities, post-Katrina reclamation in New Orleans, and the campsites of undocumented migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border). Our seminar discussions will be supplemented by visits to three NYC museums (the American Museum of Natural History, the 9/11 Museum, and the Tenement Museum) and one Archaeology Repository (Rothschild Research Center), as well as by three laboratory practicums (in which we will collectively analyze the material remains of a Spanish colonial village, a 1960s Hippie commune, and a contemporary homeless encampment).

The seminar is designed for Archaeology/Anthropology and American Studies majors, as well as other students who plan to use the methods of material culture analysis in their senior thesis or research essay projects. (Depending on the student's choice of a research paper topic, this seminar also fulfills either the pre-1800, the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or the post-1900 Foundations requirement of the American Studies major.) No prerequisites.

## assignments

% of grade

- ongoing participation in seminar discussions and lab practicums . . . . . 10%
  - grade posted on [date]
- 8 blog posts reflecting on and placing into question the seminar's readings . . . . . 10%
  - graded on a 0-2 scale after each submission (0 = no submission, 1 = satisfactory submission, 2 = excellent submission; aggregate grade: 16-15 = A+, 14-13 = A, 12-11 = A-, 10-9 = B+, 8-7 = B, 7-6 = B-, 5 = C)
- 3 museum-based object essays, 900+ words each (15% each) . . . . . 45%
  - object essay 1 (American Museum of Natural History) due [date]
  - object essay 2 (9/11 Museum) due [date]
  - object essay 3 (Tenement Museum) due [date]
- 1 research presentation (extended [date] gathering) . . . . . 5%
- 1 research paper (2,000+ words) due [date] . . . . . 30%
  - research papers may be developed around either the object assemblages introduced during the three laboratory practicums, from materials at the NYC Archaeology Repository, or another object assemblage selected by the student in consultation with the instructor.
  - Archaeology students will have the opportunity to study assemblages excavated by the Barnard Archaeological Field Program in New Mexico.
  - American Studies students will have the opportunity to focus on a pre-1800, 19<sup>th</sup> century, or post-1900 time period, in keeping with the Foundations requirements for the major.

## laboratory practicums

All practicums will be held in the Columbia Center for Archaeology lab (954 Schermerhorn Ext), and each will provide opportunities to work with assemblages of objects collected as part of research programs at Barnard and Columbia. See syllabus for details.

- Spanish colonial object worlds of northern New Mexico ([date])
- remains of a 1960s Hippie commune [date]
- twentieth century homelessness in NYC [date]

## field trips

Group field trips to three New York City museums and one Archaeology Repository will be arranged at throughout the semester. Students who are unable to join the group are expected to tour the museums on their own. Each museum field trip will serve as the basis for one of the three objects essays. The field trip to the Archaeology Repository is not a course requirement but will be immensely pleasurable and particularly useful for students interested in undertaking object-based studies of New York history.

- American Museum of Natural History (week of [date])
- NYC Archaeology Repository [date]
- 9/11 Museum (week of [date])
- Tenement Museum (week of [date])

## learning outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to...

- organize a material culture assemblage into a database.
- undertake basic stylistic and compositional analyses of a material culture assemblage.
- undertake close readings of particular objects.
- make and support historical claims using stylistic and compositional analyses as well as close readings of objects.
- situate their individual projects within the wider intellectual history of material culture studies.

## readings

This seminar is reading intensive, and the expectation is that students will read, on average, a book a week. If you are able to afford copies of the following 9 books, please purchase them. If money is tight, be assured that you will be able to read copies placed on reserve at Butler. In most cases, pdf versions of the entire book are available as well—these will be circulated whenever possible.

- Ames, Kenneth. 1992. *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture*. Temple.
- Dawdy, Shannon Lee. 2016. *Patina: A Profane Archaeology*. Chicago.
- Deetz, James. 1996. *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life*. Anchor Books.
- De Leon, Jason. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. University of California.
- Hodder, Ian. 2012. *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Keltz, Iris. 2000. *Scrapbook of a Taos Hippie: Tribal Tales from the Heart of a Cultural Revolution*. Cinco Puntos Press.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. 2005. *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*. Chicago.
- Nagle, Robin. 2013. *Picking Up: On the Streets and Behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Rathje, William and Cullen Murphy. 2001. *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*. University of Arizona Press.

## **barnard honor code**

*We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.*

## **wellness**

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself—your own health, sanity, and wellness—your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <http://barnard.edu/counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>

## **students with disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, please visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for assistance. Students requesting eligible accommodations in their courses will need to first meet with an ODS staff member for an intake meeting. Once registered, students are required to visit ODS each semester to set up new accommodations and learn how to notify faculty. Accommodations are not retroactive, so it is best to register with ODS early each semester to access your accommodations. If you are registered with ODS, please see me to schedule a meeting outside of class in which you can bring me your faculty notification letter and we can discuss your accommodations for this course. Students are not eligible to use their accommodations in this course until they have met with me. ODS is located in Milbank Hall, Room 008.

# syllabus

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## Material Culture as Method

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Topic: Introductions and an opening conversation about material culture studies.

Readings: A history of New York in 50 objects. *New York Times*.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/09/02/nyregion/a-history-of-new-york-in-50-objects.html#/?gridItem=all>

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## Museums and their Limits

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Topic: The history of collecting, cabinets of curiosities, and museums. Objects as epistemology and as memory. The decisions behind what gets included in museums and what does not. The object-based intersections of archaeology, anthropology, art history, history, history, and American studies.

Readings: Hicks, Dan. 2010. The material-cultural turn: event and effect. In *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, edited by Dan Hicks and Mary Beaudry, pp. 25-98. Oxford University Press, New York.

Jacknis, Ira. 1988. Franz Boas and exhibits: on the limitations of the museum method of anthropology. In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums*, edited by George W. Stocking, pp. 75-111. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

Scales, Laura W. L. 1917. The museum's part in the making of Americans. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 12(9):191-193.

Dorsey, George A. 1907. The anthropological exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History. *Science* 25(641):584-589.

Clifford, James. 1988. Objects and selves—an afterword. In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums*, edited by George W. Stocking, pp. 236-246. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

Extra: Shelton, Anthony Alan. 2006. Museums and museum displays. In *Handbook of Material Culture*, edited by Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, pp. 480-499. Sage.

Williams, Elizabeth A. 1988. Art and artifact at the Trocadero: *Ars Americana* and the primitivist revolution. In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums*, edited by George W. Stocking, pp. 146-166. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

• Due: Blog reflections/questions due at 10pm on the evening prior to class.

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## Field Trip: American Museum of Natural History

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A group outing to the American Museum of Natural History will be arranged at the end of the second week of class. Seminar participants may participate in the scheduled outing or visit the museum independently. Either way, your assignment is to contemplate the Native American objects on display (particularly those in the Northwest Coast Hall), select one or a small number for special consideration, and compose a 900+ word close reading of that object or group of objects. Your essay will be due on [date] at the start of class.

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## Objects as Texts (What do Things Mean?)

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Topics: Interpretive approaches to the analysis of objects.

Readings: Deetz, James. 1996. *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life*. Expanded and Revised Edition. Anchor Books, New York. (260 pages)

- Due: Blog reflections/questions due at 10pm on the evening prior to class.

### Optional Field Trip: NYC Archaeology Repository: Nan A. Rothschild Research Center

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A group outing to the NYC Archaeology Repository and Rothschild Research Center will be organized on Friday, February 2 for all participants in the seminar who can make it. From the Repository's website: "Opened in 2014, the purpose of the Repository is to curate the city's archeological collections and to make them accessible to archaeologists, researchers, teachers, students, and the public. Located at 114 West 47<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan... the Repository currently houses hundreds of thousands of artifacts from over 32 sites throughout the city and is open by appointment to researchers and scholars." The goal of our visit will be to tour the collections and discuss the possibilities for object-based research projects focused on the history of New York.

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### Lab Practicum: Spanish colonial object worlds of northern New Mexico

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Topics: Since 2011, the Barnard Archaeological Field Program in New Mexico has been excavating the remains of the Plaza del Embudo, a small Hispano community formally established by a royal land grant in 1725 in the midst of the Spanish colonial occupation of what is now the American Southwest. The artifacts recovered from these excavations include objects made of ceramic, bone, chipped stone, metal, and plastic, in addition to various charcoal and sediment samples collected for more specialized study. We will collectively consider this assemblage, laying the objects out on the table to discuss how such fragments can be transformed into historical narratives. The practicum will include exercises in the construction of ceramic typologies, the compositional study of ceramic pastes, glass bottle identification, and animal bone analysis.

Readings: Suina, Joseph. Unpublished. Getting accustomed to the light. (10 pages)  
Lopez, Larry S. 1975. The last will and testament of Juan Francisco Martin. In *Taos Valley: A Historical Survey*. Unpublished document in possession of the Bureau of Land Management, Taos District. (16 pages)

- Due: AMNH object essay due at start of class.

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## Objects as Texts (What do Things Mean?)

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Topics: Hall racks, pump organs, uncomfortable chairs and other scrutinized accoutrements of the Victorian parlor. Object-based approaches to history. Interpretive approaches to objects.

Readings: Ames, Kenneth. 1992. Selections. *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture*. Temple University Press, Philadelphia. (approx. 120 pages)

Stewart, Susan. 1993. The miniature. In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, pp. 37-69. Duke.

Extra: Schlereth, Thomas J. 1982. *Material Culture Studies in America*. Sage.

- Due: Blog response to readings by 10pm on evening prior to class.

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### Lab Practicum: Remains of a 1960s Hippie commune

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Topics: In 2010, Barnard's archaeological field program in New Mexico excavated portions of the New Buffalo Commune. New Buffalo was established in 1968 as a utopian project designed to build a neo-primitivist community based on what its founders perceived to be a Native American model. Excavations focused on the remains of a subterranean pit home and a trash dump, resulting in the creation of a strange assemblage of late 1960s and 1970s artifacts now curated here on campus. What do the material remains of the Hippie counterculture movement reveal? What do they hide? What do we learn from laying such things out on a laboratory table?

Readings: Fowles, Severin and Kaet Heupel. Absence. In *Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Contemporary World*, edited by Paul Graves-Brown, Rodney Harrison, and Angela Piccini, pp. 178-191. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Keltz, Iris. 2000. *Scrapbook of a Taos Hippie: Tribal Tales from the Heart of a Cultural Revolution*. Cinco Puntos Press. (228 pages, most of which are image-filled)

- Due: Blog response to readings by 10pm on evening prior to class.

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### Field Trip: 9/11 Museum

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A group outing to the 9/11 Museum will be arranged at the end of Week 6. Seminar participants may participate in the scheduled outing or visit the museum independently. Either way, your assignment is to attend to the objects on display, select one or a small number for special consideration, and compose a 900+ close reading of that object or group of objects. Your essay will be due on [date].

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### Objects as Agents (What do Things Do?)

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Topics: How nonhuman things subvert and redirect human goals. How humans always act in collaboration with things. How the human-nonhuman collective thus emerges as the analytical focus.

Readings: Hodder, Ian. 2012. *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*. Wiley-Blackwell. (222 pages)

Extra: Latour, Bruno. 1999. A collective of humans and nonhumans: following Daedalus's labyrinth. In *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, pp. 174-93. Harvard.

- Due: Blog response to readings by 10pm on evening prior to class.

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## Lab Practicum: Twentieth Century Homelessness in NYC

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- Topics: Courtney Singleton, a PhD student at Columbia, has been studying the archaeological remains at Pelham Bay, where a long-term homeless camp was located during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this practicum, she will share her object finds and walk us through the process of analyzing the great array of largely plastic remains that constitute her research archive. Topics to be discussed include (1) the material construction of home by those described as homeless and (2) how modern refuse can cast a historical spotlight on the lives of those who are neglected by society and regularly misunderstood.
- Readings: Singleton, Courtney. 2017. Encountering home: a contemporary archaeology of homelessness. In *Contemporary Archaeology and the City: Creativity, Ruination, and Political Action*, edited by Laura McAtackney and Krysta Ryzewski, pp. 229-243. Oxford University Press.
- Zimmerman, Larry J. 2011. Displaced and barely visible: archaeology and material culture of homelessness. *Historical Archaeology* 45(1):67-85.
- Zimmerman, Larry J. 2013. Homelessness. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of the Contemporary World*, edited by Paul Graves-Brown, Rodney Harrison and Angela Piccini, pp. 336-350. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Due: 9/11 Museum object essay due in class.

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## Field Trip to the Tenement Museum

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- Topics: A group outing to the 9/11 Museum will be arranged for March 21. Seminar participants may participate in the scheduled outing or visit the museum independently. Either way, your assignment is to attend to the objects on display, select one or a small number for special consideration, and compose a 900+ close reading of that object or group of objects. Your essay will be due on March 30. Those who are able to join us on March 21 should come prepared to discuss the object worlds of immigrants to New York City during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as the question of ethnicity, class, and gender within object-based studies.
- Readings: Riis, Jacob August. 1890. *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. (297 pages)
- Your Story, Our Story: <http://yourstory.tenement.org/artifacts/page/1>. "Your Story, Our Story features objects that tell personal stories of American immigration and migration. This national project uncovers the patterns that bind us, no matter where we came from or how long we've been here. Explore stories from across the country by clicking on objects, upload an object that carries meaning in your own family history, and join us in telling the story of American immigration and migration" (from the Tenement Museum website).

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## The Garbage Project

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- Topics: Consumption and waste. The application of archaeological and ethnographic approaches to the study of modern refuse. The history and findings of the Tucson Garbage Project and Robin Nagle's ethnography of sanitation work in New York City.



Readings: Rathje, William and Cullen Murphy. 2001. Parts I and II. *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*. University of Arizona Press. (131 pages)

Nagle, Robin. 2013. Part I. *Picking Up: On the Streets and Behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City*, pp. 3-52. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.

Extra: Miller, Daniel. 2006. Consumption. In *Handbook of Material Culture*, edited by Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, pp. 341-354. Sage.

- Due: Blog response to readings by 10pm on evening prior to class.
- Due: Tenement Museum object essay due on [date]

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### **Profane Objects**

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Topics: The antique, the souvenir, memory, and the object worlds of post-Katrina New Orleans.

Readings: Dawdy, Shannon. 2016. *Patina: A Profane Archaeology*. Chicago. (156 pages)

- Due: Blog response to readings by 10pm on evening prior to class.

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### **Undocumented Objects**

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Topics: How the study of modern objects abandoned in the Sonoran Desert provides a means of understanding the crisis of undocumented migration. The necropolitics of things.

Readings: De Leon, Jason. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. University of California Press. (288 pages)

- Due: Blog response to readings by 10pm on evening prior to class.

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### **Objects as Subjects (What do Things Want?)**

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Topics: The provocative question, not of what we want of things, but rather what things want of us. The lives and loves of things. Visual culture as material culture. The object as subaltern.

Readings: Fowles, Severin. 2016. The perfect subject (postcolonial object studies). *Journal of Material Culture*. 21:9-27.

Mitchell, W.J.T. 2005. Chapter 1-3, 5-7. *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, pp. 5-75, 11-168. Chicago.

- Due: Blog response to readings by 10pm on evening prior to class.

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### **Presentations**

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Topics: In-class presentations of student research projects at an extended gathering, the timing of which is to be determined collectively. Each presentation is limited to 10 minutes and should be supported by images or objects.

- Due: Final papers due [date]