

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF MATERIAL CULTURE

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OVERVIEW

This class explores objects and sociality in mutual determination. Drawing on examples from the built environment (architecture, infrastructure), from the world of ordinary household goods (toasters, clothes, toilets), from various cultural and historical contexts (Renaissance England, Victorian America) and from worlds of waste (garbage, recycling), we ask questions about the politics of things and about their shifting roles in everyday life. We explore the logistics of fashion systems, the link between goods and geography, and the impact of changing corporate organizational modes. Our perspective includes political economy as well as theoretical standpoints influenced by the likes of Bruno Latour and Howard Becker, along with the empirical guide of what Mary Douglas calls “an anthropology of consumption.”

Students are responsible for weekly readings, active class participation, regular responses to questions posted on our Blackboard discussion forum, and a research project that will be the basis of a 5-minute conference presentation and a 15-page final paper. The research topic must be approved by the instructors.

Project Deadlines

September 26	Abstract (250 words maximum; less is better)
October 24	Outline
November 14	Preliminary bibliography
December 5	Rough draft to Harvey and Robin for comment (optional)
December 10	Rough drafts back to students
December 15	Conference
December 18	Final papers due

1. September 5 | Orientation and Contesting Approaches; Goods as Bads

Ewen, Stuart. 1976. *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill. --Chapters 2 and 3 (p125-138); Chapter 7 (p177-184).

Klein, Naomi. 2000. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador.
--Chapters 9, 10, 11 (p195-278); Conclusion (p439-446) Pp. 195-278

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
--excerpt

Recommended

Calhoun, Craig. *Pierre Bourdieu in Context*.

Veblen, Thorstein. 1934 (1899). *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. New York: The Modern Library.

Ewen, Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen. 1982. *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Mintz, Sidney. 1979. Time, Sugar and Sweetness. *Marxist Perspectives* 2:56-73.

2. September 12 | Goods as OK (and a lot more)

Douglas, Mary, and Baron Isherwood. 1996 (1979). *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, rev'd ed. New York: Basic Books. --Chapter 3 (p36-47)

Latour, Bruno. 1992. Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts. In W. Bijker and J. Law, eds., *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (e-book through Bobst)

Molotch, Harvey. 2003. *Where Stuff Comes From*. New York: Routledge. (ebrary)
--Chapter 1: Goods, Bads, and the Lash-Ups in Between

Arjun Appadurai. 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. --Introduction (p5-63)

Recommended

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Rochberg-Halton, Eugene. 1981. *The Meaning Of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
--Chapters 1 and 2 (p1-54)

Lears, Jackson. 1989. Beyond Veblen. In S. J. Bronner, ed., *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880-1920*. New York: Norton. --p73-98

Schudson, Michael. 1986. *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion*. New York: Basic.

Myers, Fred, ed. 2001. *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Studies.

Jeffrey T. Schnapp. 1997. The Fabric of Modern Times. *Critical Inquiry*. 24(1):191-245.

Sackett, James R. 1990. Style and Ethnicity in Archaeology. In M. W. Conkey and C. Hastorf, eds., *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. --p32-43

Starck, Miriam. 1998. Technical Choices and Social Boundaries in Material Culture Patterning: An Introduction. In Miriam Starck, ed., *The Archaeology of Social Boundaries*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press. --p1-11

3. September 19 | Methods from Stuff

Miller, Daniel. 1995. Consumption and Commodities. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:141-161.

Star, Leigh. 1999. Ethnography of Infrastructure. *The American Behavioral Scientist* 43(3):377-391.

Star, Leigh and James R. Griesemer. 1989. Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39. *Social Studies of Science* 19(3):387-420.

Riggins, Stephen. 1994. Fieldwork in the Living Room: An Autoethnographic Essay. In S. H. Riggins, ed., *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. --p101-147

Lechtman, Heather. 1977. Style in Technology: Some Early Thoughts. In H. Lechtman and R. S. Merrill, eds., *Material Culture: Style, Organization, and Dynamics of Technology*. New York: West Publishing --p3-20

Rathje, William and Cullen Murphy. 1992. *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*. New York: HarperCollins. --Chapter 3 (p53-78)

Boas, Franz. 1989 (1887). The Principles of Ethnological Classification. In G.W. Stocking, Jr., ed. *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. --p61-67

Recommended

Hoskins, Janet. 1998. *Biographical objects : how things tell the stories of people's lives*. New York: Routledge.

4. September 26 | Lash-Up, Habitus and Actor-Network Approaches

Becker, Howard. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
--Chapters 1 – 3 (p1-93); Chapter 5 (p131-164) (on Google Books – go through Bobst)

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1983. The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed. *Poetics* 12:311-356.

Pessin, Alain and Howard Becker. 2006. A Dialogue on the Ideas of ‘World’ and ‘Field.’ *Sociological Forum* 21(2):275-286.

Latour, Bruno. 1987. Laboratories. *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Shove, Elizabeth and Dale Southerton. 2000. Defrosting the Freezer: From Novelty to Convenience. *Journal of Material Culture* 5(3):301-319.

Akrich, Madeleine. 1992. The De-Description of Technical Objects. In W Bijker and J. Law, eds., *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (e-book through Bobst) --pp. 205-324

Schofield, John. 2009. Office Cultures and Corporate Memory: Some Archaeological Perspectives. *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* 5(2):293-305.

Recommended

Pickering, Andrew. 1995. *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency and Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Law, John. 1986. On the Methods of Long-Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation, and the Portuguese Route to India. *Power, Action, and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Latour, Bruno. 1986. *Aramis or The Love of Technology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

5. October 3 | Gender, Race, Class

Chaplin, Charlie. 2010 (1936) “Modern Times.” New York: The Criterion Collection. (on reserve at the Avery Fisher Media Center in Bobst)

Reno, Josh. 2009. Your Trash is Someone’s Treasure: The Politics of Value at a Michigan Landfill. *Journal of Material Culture* 14(1):29-46.

Wajcman, Judy. 2004. Technoscience Reconsidered. *TechnoFeminism*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
--Chapter 2

Burke, Timothy. 1996. *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*. Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press.
--Chapter 4 (p91-124)

Clunas, Craig. 1999. Modernity Global and Local: Consumption and the Rise of the West. *American Historical Review* 104(5):1497-1511.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998 (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. --p200-208

Recommended

Francesca Bray. 1997. Encoding Patriarchy. *Technology and Gender*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. --Chapter 2 (p91-150)

6. October 10 | Form and Function

Norman, Donald. 1988. The Design Challenge. *The Design of Everyday Things*. New York: Doubleday. --p141-186

Daniel Miller. 2010. Why Clothing is Not Superficial. *Stuff*. London: Polity Press. --p13-41

Petroski, Henry. 1994. Form Follows Failure. *The Evolution of Useful Things*. New York: Random House. --Chapter 2 (p22-33)

Smith, Cyril Stanley. 1971. Art, Technology, and Science: Notes on Their Historical Interaction. In D. Roller, ed., *Perspectives in the History of Science and Technology*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press. --p166-194

Gell, Alfred. 1988. Technology and Magic. *Anthropology Today* 4(2):6-9.

Isaacson, Walter. 2011. *Steve Jobs*. New York: Simon & Schuster. --excerpt

Recommended

King, William Davies. 2009. *Collections of Nothing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Downey, Gary Lee. 1998. Locating Me Inside It: Coding (Chapter 7); Locating It Inside Me: Confusion (Chapter 8). *The Machine in Me*. New York: Routledge.

Armstrong, Robert Plant. 1971. *The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology*. Urbana, IN: University of Illinois Press.

Clunas, Craig. 1991. *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Cranz, Galen. 1999. *The Chair: Rethinking Culture, Body and Design*. New York: Norton.
--Part I (p21-148)

Garfield, Simon. 2001. *Mauve: How One Man Invented a Color That Changed the World*. New York: Norton.

Hollander, Anne. 1988. *Seeing through Clothes*. New York: Penguin.

Tilley, Charles. 1992. Social Values, Social Constraints, and Material Culture: The Design of Contemporary Beer Cans. In M. Shanks, ed., *Re-constructing Archaeology*. New York: Routledge.

Varnedoe, Kirk, and Adam Gopnik. 1991. *High & Low*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Molotch, Harvey. 2003. *Where Stuff Comes From*. New York: Routledge. (ebrary)

Baudelaire, Charles. 1970. *The Painter of Modern Life*, trans. by Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon.

Mukerji, Chandra. 1983. *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Myers, Fred. 2003. *Painting Culture: The Making of an Aboriginal Fine Art*, Duke University Press.

Cyril Stanley Smith. 1981. *A Search for Structure: Selected Essays on Science, Art, and History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Basalla, George. 1988. *The Evolution of Technology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

7. October 17 | Fashion

Elias, Norbert. 1994 (1939) A Review of the Curve Marking the ‘Civilizing’ of Eating Habits. *The Civilizing Process*. London: Blackwell. --p89-114

Richard Klein. 1993. *Cigarettes are Sublime*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
--Chapter 1: What Is a Cigarette? (p23-50); Conclusion (p181-194)

Hodder, Ian. 1990. Style as Historical Quality. In M. Conkey and C. Hastorf, eds., *The Uses of Style in Archaeology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. --p44-51

Liebertson, Stanley. 2000. *A Matter of Taste: How Names, Fashions, and Culture Change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. --Chapter 6 (p143-171) and Chapter 7 (p172-222)

Atkinson, J. Maxwell. 1984. Claptrap. *Our Masters' Voices: The Language and Body Language of Politics*. New York: Methuen. --p47-123

Schneider, Jane. 2000. Fantastical Colors in Foggy London: The New Fashion Potential of the Late Sixteenth Century. In L.C. Orlin, ed., *Material London, ca. 1600*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. --p109-127

Recommended

Hobsbawn, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. 1984. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Auslander, Leora. 1996. *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lubbock, Jules. 1995. *The Tyranny of Taste*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

8. October 24 | Shopping, Choosing and Identity

McCracken, Grant. 1988. The Evocative Power of Things: Consumer Goods and the Preservation of Hopes and Ideals. *Culture and Consumption*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. --p104-117

Molotch, Harvey. 2003. Venues and Middlemen. *Where Stuff Comes From*. New York: Routledge. (ebrary) --p127-156

Collins, Lauren. 2011. House Perfect: Living in an IKEA World. *The New Yorker*, Oct. 3; p54-65.

Halttunen, Karen. 1989. From Parlor to Living Room: Domestic Space, Interior Decoration, and the Culture of Personality. In S. J. Bronner, ed., *Consuming Visions*. New York: Norton. --p157-189

Dorment, Richard. 2002. The Great Room of Art. *New York Review of Books*, June 13; p32-36. (Review of David Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*. New Haven: Yale University Press).

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2000. The Pitchman: Ron Popeil and the Conquest of the American Kitchen. *The New Yorker*, Oct. 30; p64-73.

Recommended

Miller, Daniel, Peter Jackson, Nigel Thrift, Beverly Holbrook, and Michael Rowlands. 1998. *Shopping, Place, and Identity*. London: Routledge.

Biggart, Nicole. 1990. *Charismatic Capitalism: Direct Selling Organizations in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Blumer, Herbert. 1969. Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection. *Sociological Quarterly* 10(3):275-291.

Carrier, James G. 1995. *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700*. London: New York: Routledge.

Kirkham, Pat, ed. 1996. *The Gendered Object*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Leach, William. 1993. *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*. New York: Pantheon.

Pine, B. Joseph and James H. Gilmore. 1999. *The Experience Economy: Work is Theater and Every Business a Stage*. Cambridge: Harvard Business School.

Popeil, Ron, with Jefferson Graham. 1995. *The Salesman of the Century*. New York: Dell.

Walkowitz, Judith. 1998. Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment, and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London. *Representations* 62:1-30.

Zukin, Sharon. 1995. While the City Shops. *The Cultures of Cities*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

9. October 31 | Sanctification and Preservation

Guest: Glenn Wharton

Wharton, Glenn. 2012. *The Painted King: Art, Activism, and Authenticity in Hawai'i*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. --excerpt

Weiner, Annette. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. --p131-148

Geary, Patrick. 1986. Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics. In Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. --p169-191

Findlen, Paula. 1989. The Museum: Its Classical Etymology and Renaissance Genealogy. *Journal of the History of Collections* (1)1:59-78.

Grant McCracken. 1990. 'Ever Dearer in Our Thoughts': Patina and the Representation of Status before and after the Eighteenth Century. *Culture and Consumption*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. --p31-43

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1998. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press. -- p17-78; p131-176

Recommended

O'Doherty, Brian. 1986. *Inside the White cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. Santa Monica: Lapis Press.

Freedberg, David. 1991. *The Power of Images*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pomian, Krzysztof. 1990. *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500-1800*,. trans. Elizabeth Wiles-Portier. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2000. Performing Knowledge. In P. J. Anttonen, et al., eds., *Folklore, Heritage Politics, and Ethnic Diversity: Festschrift for Barbro Klein*. Botkyrka: Mångkulturellt Centrum. --p125-139

10. November 7 | Buildings

Molotch, Harvey. 2012. *Against Security: How We Go Wrong at Airports, Subways, and Other Sites of Ambiguous Danger*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. --excerpt

Venturi, Robert. 1977. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. New York: Museum of Modern Art. --excerpt

Brand, Stewart. 1995. *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built*. New York: Penguin.

Muschamp, Herbert. 2006. The Secret History of 2 Columbus Circle. *The New York Times*, January 8.

Gieryn, Thomas. 2002. What Buildings Do. *Theory and Society* 31(1):35-74.

11. November 14 | Waste and Discards / Guest: Samantha MacBride

MacBride, Samantha. 2011. *Recycling Reconsidered*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. --Introduction (p1-22); Chapter 1: Rags and Bottles (p23-47)

Leonard, Annie. 2010. *The Story of Stuff*. New York: Free Press. --Chapter 5 (p182-236)

Strasser, Susan. 1999. Having and Disposing in the New Consumer Culture. *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash*. New York: Metropolitan Books. -- p161-201

DeSilvey, Caitlin. 2006. Observed Decay: Telling Stories with Mutable Things. *Journal of Material Culture* 11(3):318-338.

Healy, Maureen. 1999. Dictator in a Dumpster. *Rethinking History* 3(1):81-83.

Lupton, E., and J. Abbott Miller. 1992. *The Bathroom, the Kitchen, and the Aesthetics of Waste: A Process of Elimination*. New York: Kiosk. --excerpt

Recommended

Molotch, Harvey and Laura Noren, eds. 2010. *Toilet: Public Restrooms and the Politics of Sharing*. New York: NYU Press.

Marilyn Ivy. 1995. *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thompson, Michael. 1979. *Rubbish theory: the creation and destruction of value*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Scarry, Elaine. 1985. *The interior structure of the artifact. The body in pain: the making and unmaking of the world*. New York: Oxford University Press. --p278-326

George, Rose. 2009. *The Big Necessity: The Unmentionable World of Human Waste and Why It Matters*. New York: Henry Holt.

For many more suggestions, look at the Resources link on the Discard Studies blog (<http://discardstudies.wordpress.com/>)

12. November 21 | No Class**13. November 28 | Place and Region in the Making of Goods**

Amin, Ash, and Nigel Thrift. 1992. Neo-Marshallian Nodes in Global Networks. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16(4):571-587.

Molotch, Harvey. 2003. Place in Product. *Where Stuff Comes From*. New York: Routledge, 2003. (ebrary)

Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1980. The Significance of the Artifact. *Geographical Review* 70(4):462-72.

Recommended

Storper, Michael. 1997. *The Regional World*. New York: The Guilford Press. Chapter 5 (p107-133); Chapter 6 (p134-168); Chapter 8 (p195-218)

Williams, Raymond. 1973. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Scott, Allen. 1999. The US Recorded Music Industry. *Environment and Planning A* 31: 1965-1984.

Banham, R. 1969. *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment*. London: Architectural Press.

Porter, Michael. 1990. *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York: Free Press.

Jacobs, Jane. 2000. *The Nature of Economies*. New York: Random House.

Saxenian, AnnaLee. 1994. *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

14. December 5 | Corporate Organization

duGay, Paul, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus. 1997. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. London: Sage. --excerpt

Braithwaite, John, and Peter Drahos. 2000. Road Transport; Air Transport; Contests of Actors. *Global Business Regulation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. --excerpt

Bijker, Wiebe. 1992. The Social Construction of Fluorescent Lighting, or How an Artifact Was Invented in Its Diffusion Stage. In W Bijker and J. Law, eds., *Shaping Technology/Building Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (e-book through Bobst) --p75-104

Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Theory, Culture and Society* 7(2):295-310.

Gereffi, Gary. 2001. Shifting Governance Structures in Global Commodity Chains, With Special Reference to the Internet. *American Behavioral Scientist* 44(10):1616-1647.

15. December 12 | Ecology and Social Reform

Daly, Herman. 1996. *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development*. Boston: Beacon Press. --Introduction (p1-23); Chapter 4 (p75-93)

Hawken, Paul, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins. 1999. *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*. Boston: Little, Brown. --Chapter 4 (p62-81); Chapter 6 (p111-124)

Beamish, Thomas D. 2000. Accumulating Trouble: Complex Organization, a Culture-of-Silence, and a Secret Spill. *Social Problems* 47(4):473-498

Becker, Howard S. 1995. The Power of Inertia. *Qualitative Sociology* 18: 301-310.

Arthur, W. Brian. 1988. Self-Reinforcing Mechanisms in Economics. In Philip Anderson, et al., eds., *The Economy as an Evolving Complex System*. Redwood City, CA: Addison-Wesley. (Google Book; go in through Bobst) --p9-32

McDonough, William and Michael Braungart. 2002. *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. New York: Northpoint Press. --Chapter 4 (92-117)

Recommended

Ackerman, Frank. 2005. Material Flows for a Sustainable City. *International Review for Environmental Strategies* 5(2):499-510.

Goodman, Percival, and Paul Goodman. 1947. A New Community: The Elimination of the Difference Between Production and Consumption. *Communitas: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sachs, Wolfgang, Reinhard Loske, Manfred Linz, with Ralf Behrensmeier, et al. 1998. *Paradigms. Greening the North: A Post-Industrial Blueprint for Ecology and Equity*. London: Zed Books.

December 15 (Saturday): Social Life of Material Culture Student Conference

Final papers due December 18