

Fall 2022

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10-11:30 am

Orillia: OA 2019

Instructor: Dr Timothy Kaiser

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office: OA 3008

Office Hours: By appointment or by chance

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Supplementary Course Website: [Desire2Learn](https://www.desire2learn.com)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Examination of the built worlds that enable and constrain human cultural and social life. From everyday objects like cups, houses, and clothes to extraordinary works such as feasts, aqueducts, and skyscrapers, material worlds have framed our lives in culturally constituted ways. Different cultural configurations of materiality and their relation to human social action are considered.

Credit Weight: 0.5

Prerequisite(s): [Anthropology 1032](#) and [1034](#), or permission of the Chair of the Department of Anthropology

<https://csdc.lakeheadu.ca/~Catalog/ViewCatalog.aspx?pageid=viewcatalog&catalogid=29&topicgroupid=31364>

SUPPLEMENTARY COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the material correlates of human cultural behavior, from food getting to conspicuous consumption, across space and through time. We learn a lot about people's lives from the things they make and the things they use.



Above: Lorenzo Lotto's *Husband and Wife*, 1523, with a Turkish carpet showing the keyhole re-entrant motif. Below: Re-entrant prayer rug, Anatolia, late 15th to early 16th century.



Material culture studies involve a consideration of men's and women's social and environmental relationships as seen in their construction of their material worlds. The term, material culture, thus refers to the meanings that physical objects have to people of a certain culture. At the same time, it refers to the range of artifacts that are "typical" of a culture and that is, in part, the basis for cultural identity. Thus, material culture studies are particularly concerned with the intersection of object and meaning.

Material culture is learned behavior and therefore can be studied by ethnographers analyzing the production, consumption, and symbolism of contemporary artifacts. Equally, it can be studied by archaeologists looking to recover the material evidence of past societies. And, as a result, material culture is an issue that acts as a meeting place for these two branches of the discipline of anthropology.

COURSE OUTCOMES

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- demonstrate a practical understanding of the role of material culture in human lives, past and present
- articulate general and specific levels of knowledge regarding anthropology's engagement with material culture
- critically evaluate existing research results and methods
- deploy the skills they have developed in observation, analysis and writing

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Kawabata, Yasunari (1996 [orig. 1952]) *A Thousand Cranes*. New York: Knopf Doubleday
ISBN 9780679762652

Other readings on D2L or internet.

EVALUATION

1. **Summary/critiques of readings** (4 x 5% = 20%) You will be assigned to write five very short pieces each critically summarizing a particular set of readings (normally one week's worth). Of these 5 summaries, only the 4 best marks will be counted. Since each week the readings are either numerous and/or extensive, summaries should be concise and you should aim to devote 2-3 paragraphs per article or chapter. Summaries must be submitted by uploading to D2L (Assignments tab) before or at the beginning of the first class to which the readings pertain. It is expected that you will be a vocal participant in the week's discussions if you have written a summary of that week's readings. It is therefore important that these critiques be written and



K. Kardashian celebrates her 30th birthday, 2013.
<http://www.zimbio.com/Kim+Kardashian/articles>

handed in *before* the discussion begins. Consequently, any late submission will be subject to a 50% deduction.

- 2. Thanksgiving observations, analysis, and report (30%).** The Thanksgiving long weekend (October 8-10, this year) is “traditionally” a time for feasting and socializing with family and friends. It is, for some, a time for conspicuous consumption. For this project, you will observe the multiple uses of material culture and the practices associated with material cultural items that are exhibited at your Thanksgiving dinner, or, if you do not engage in Thanksgiving festivities, then at any other meal you had that weekend. Your observations will be recorded in field notes which you will hand in on October 19; this part of the project is worth 5%. You will then analyze your observations and write them up in the form of a report no longer than 10 pages, double spaced. Discuss, where possible, how your observations relate to theoretical discussions of feasting (see readings). Class time will be set aside for a full discussion of this project. The report is due November 2 and is worth 25%.



Norman Rockwell, *Freedom from Want*, 1943.

- 3. Essay (30%).** Read *Thousand Cranes*, a novel by the Nobel Prize winner Yasunari Kawabata. In an essay of no more than 12 pages length, discuss Kawabata’s description of the Japanese tea ceremony and how the things it involves have “social lives” in the sense(s) of Arjun Appadurai’s now-classic volume, *The Social Life of Things*. Relate your discussion to broad anthropological issues such as the transmission of culture, authenticity, and the invention of tradition. Your essay is due November 30.
- 4. Participation (20%).** Our study of material culture will be collaborative and interactive. Your active participation via class discussions will be crucial to the success of this course.

Tentative Schedule

Week Date

- 1** **Sept 7** **Introduction to the course**
Why is there so much stuff in our lives? What does our stuff mean to us?
- Molotch, Harvey
2003 *Where stuff comes from: How toasters, toilets, cars, and computers come to be as they are*, pp. 1-15. New York: Routledge. D2L
- Moranis, Rick
2006 My days are numbered. *New York Times* 22 Nov 2006 A.27. D2L
- Marx, Patricia
2010 Graduation graft. *The New Yorker*. 31 May 2010. D2L
- Greif, Mark
2012 The hipster in the mirror. *New York Times* 12 Nov 2012 BR 27. D2L
- 2** **Sept 12, 14** **History of material culture studies in anthropology and archaeology**
- Woodward, Ian
2007 *Understanding Material Culture*, Parts 1 and 2, pp. 1-110. Library Reserve.
- Miller, Daniel
1983 Things ain't what they used to be: Material culture studies in anthropology, in D. Miller (ed.) *Royal Anthropological Institute News* 59: 5-7+1
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/stable/pdfplus/3033463.pdf?acceptTC=true>
- Gosden, C. and Y. Marshall,
1999 The cultural biography of objects. *World Archaeology* 31: 169-178.
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/stable/pdfplus/125055.pdf?acceptTC=true>
- Recommended, not required:*
Morphy, Howard, and Morgan Perkins,
2006 The anthropology of art: a reflection on its history and contemporary practice. In H. Morphy and M. Perkins (eds.) *The Anthropology of Art: A Reader*, pp 1-32. Oxford: Blackwell.
- 3** **Sept 19, 21** **From objects to identity**
- Appadurai, Arjun
1986 Introduction: commodities and the politics of value. In Appadurai, Arjun (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, pp. 3-63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
http://townsendgroups.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/appadurai_social_life_of_things_0.pdf
- Kopytoff, Igor

1986 The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. In A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective*, pp. 64-91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. http://www.english.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Kopytoff_CulturalBiography.pdf

Woodward, Ian

2007 *Understanding Material Culture*, Ch 7, Material Culture and Identity. Objects and the Self. Library Reserve.

From objects to identity: archaeological perspectives

Robb, John

2007 *The Early Mediterranean Village*, pp. 1-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L.

Hayden, Brian

2001 "Fabulous feasts: a prolegomenon to the importance of feasting," in M. Dietler and B. Hayden (eds.), *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, pp. 23-64. Washington, DC: Smithsonian. D2L

4 Sept 26, Exchange, consumption, and display

28

Davenport, William H.

1986 Two kinds of value in the Eastern Solomon Islands. In A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective*, pp. 95-109. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L

Gell, Alfred

1986 Newcomers to the world of goods: consumption among the Muria Gonds. In A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective*, pp. 110-140. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L

Douglas, Mary, and Christopher Isherwood

1996 *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*.

5 Oct 3, 5 Prestige, commemoration, and value

Renfrew, Colin

1986 Varna and the emergence of wealth in prehistoric Europe. In A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective*, pp. 141-168. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L

Chapman, John, et al.

2006 The social context of the emergence, development and abandonment of the Varna cemetery, Bulgaria. *European Journal of Archaeology* 9(2-3): 159-183. D2L

Geary, Patrick

1986 Sacred commodities: the circulation of medieval relics. In A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective*, pp. 169-195. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L

STUDY BREAK, October 11-14

- 6** **Oct 17,
19** **The invention of tradition, part 1**
- Trevor-Roper, H.
1983 The invention of tradition: The Highland tradition of Scotland. In E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, pp 15-42. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L
- Hobsbawm, E.
1983 Mass-producing traditions: Europe, 1870-1914. In In E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, pp 263-308. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L
- Stevens, P.A.
2001 *Cross-border culture: Holidays, nationalism and the origins of Canadian Thanksgiving*. Paper presented at the Multidisciplinary Conference on Holidays, Ritual, Festival, Celebration & Public Display, Bowling Green State University, Ohio, June 2001
D2L

- 7** **Oct 24,
26** **Embodied material culture: the anthropology of food, drink, and drugs**
- Dietler, M.
2006 Alcohol: Anthropological / archaeological perspectives. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35: 229-249.
<http://www.annualreviews.org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.anthro.35.081705.123120> and D2L
- Robb, John
2007 *The Early Mediterranean Village*, pp. 119-158. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cassanelli, Lee V.
1986 Qat: changes in the production and consumption of a quasilegal commodity in northeast Africa. In In A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective*, pp. 236-260. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L
- Recommended, not required:
Braudel, F.
1981 *The Structures of Everyday Life*, pp. 183-265. New York: Harper and Row. D2L

8 **Oct 31,** **Biographies of Neolithic things**

Nov 2

Hodder, Ian

2011 Human-thing entanglement: towards an integrated archaeological perspective. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)* 17: 154-177. D2L

Robb, John

2007 *The Early Mediterranean Village*, pp. 159-218. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robb, John

2015 What do things want? Object design as a middle range theory of material culture. *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association*, Vol. 26, pp. 166-180 D2L

Materials science and material culture analysis in archaeology

Radivojević, Miljana and Thilo Rehren

2015 Paint it black: The rise of metallurgy in the Balkans. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 22(1): xx-yy. D2L

9 **Nov 7, 9** **Authenticity + connoisseurship**

Woodward, Ian

2007 *Understanding Material Culture*, Ch 6. Objects and Distinction. The Aesthetic Field and Expressive Materiality. Library Reserve.

Spooner, B.

1983 Weavers and dealers: the authenticity of an oriental carpet. In A. Appadurai (ed.) *The Social Life of Things*, pp. 195-235. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. D2L

Linnekin, Jocelyn

1991 Cultural invention and the dilemma of authenticity. *American Anthropologist* 93: 446-449. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/stable/pdfplus/681307.pdf>

Shanks, Michael

1993 Style and the design of a perfume jar from an Archaic Greek city state. *Journal of European Archaeology*, 1:77-106. Also in R. Preucel and I. Hodder (eds) *Contemporary Archaeology in Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 364-393. 1996 D2L

10 **Nov 14,** **Thousand Cranes / Social Life of Things**

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Kawabata, Yasunari

1958 *Thousand Cranes*. New York: Vintage.

Kondo, D.

1985 The way of tea: a symbolic analysis. *Man* NS 20: 287-306. D2L

11

Nov 21,
23

Owning things of the past

Kaiser, Timothy

1990 The antiquities market: dealing for dollars. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 17(2): 205-210. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/stable/pdfplus/529822.pdf>

Staley, David P.

1993 St. Lawrence Island's Subsistence Diggers: A New Perspective on Human Effects on Archaeological Sites. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 20 (3) 347-355
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/stable/pdfplus/530058.pdf>

Kersel, Morag

2007 Transcending borders: Objects on the move. *Archaeologies: Journal of the the World Archaeology Congress* 3 (2): 81-98
<http://www.springerlink.com/content/673013p033x113kj/fulltext.pdf>

Cuno, James

2008 The crux of the matter. *Excerpted from Who Owns Antiquity?: Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120904994893541791.html>

Destroying material culture

Gladstone & Sengupta

2015 ISIS Bulldozing of Ancient Nimrud Site in Iraq Stirs Outrage. *New York Times* 6 Mar 2015

Mashberg & Bowley

2015 Islamic State Destruction Renews Debate Over Repatriation of Antiquities. *New York Times* 30 Mar 2015

12

Nov 28,
30

Consumption reconsidered: Shopper/gatherers of the 21st century

Miller, D.

1995 Consumption and commodities. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:141-161.
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/stable/pdfplus/2155933.pdf?acceptTC=true>

Wilson, D. and W. Rathje

2001 Garbage and the modern American feast. In M. Dietler and B. Hayden (eds), *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, pp. 404-421. Washington, DC: Smithsonian.

Woodward, Ian

2007 *Understanding Material Culture*, Ch 9. Library Reserve.

COURSE POLICIES

- It is your responsibility to attend classes and to do the readings. Regular absences will seriously affect your grade in this course.
- To aid your review, Powerpoint notes from lectures and other course material will be posted on Desire2Learn at regular intervals.
- Literature summaries/critiques should be submitted electronically (via the Desire2Learn page) before class.
- Late submissions of the literature summary/critiques will be docked 50%. No assignment that is more than ten days late will be accepted. Late submissions of the essays will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Student Affairs (Orillia) coordinates services and facilitates reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Academic accommodations are provided on the basis of documentation of a disability. Additional information is available at the following campus website:

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/accessibility/>

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The University takes a most serious view of offences against academic honesty such as plagiarism, cheating and impersonation. Penalties for dealing with such offences will be strictly enforced. A listing of University Regulations can be found at:

<http://calendar.lakeheadu.ca/current/contents/regulations/univregsintro.html>

The code of student behaviour and disciplinary procedures can be found at:

<http://policies.lakeheadu.ca/policy.php?pid=60>

We respectfully acknowledge that Lakehead University campuses are located on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples. Lakehead University acknowledges the history that many nations hold in the areas around our campuses, and is committed to a relationship with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples based on the principles of mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration in the spirit of reconciliation.

