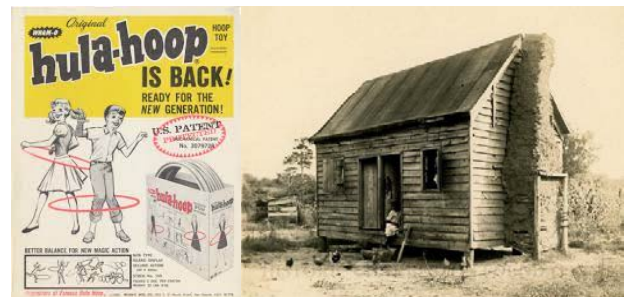


History and Material Culture

Professor Jennifer M. Jones
History Department, Rutgers University
Fall 2021

Class meets in person: Wednesdays from 1 pm to 4 pm, AB 2150 (College Avenue Campus)

Office hours: Thursday, 10:30 to 11:30 am in Van Dyck room 109, or by Zoom appointment
Contact: jemjones@sas.rutgers.edu



The sheen of silk, the aroma of roasted coffee, the piercing weight of chains, the crackle of a transistor radio, the punch of a time card, the surprise of a child's first bite of a Pop-Tart We live in a material world and we connect to the past not only through words and texts but also through material objects. Food, clothing, furniture, buildings, tools, toys, heirlooms and souvenirs, instruments, and technology shape our lives, mediate our social relations, activate and reproduce values, and enmesh us in webs of power. This seminar will allow us explore how historians have used the objects that people in the past touched, viewed, heard, smelled, and tasted to analyze and interpret their worlds. The meaning of things is never transparent: material objects may reinforce, contest, or undermine entrenched power relations based on sex, gender, class and race in a given society. And for precisely these reasons, the study of things provides a particularly illuminating approach to understanding the past.

The course will introduce students to the key theoretical literature and methodological approaches concerning the history of material culture and the interdisciplinary field of Material Culture Studies. Students will encounter debates over the distinction between "objects" and "things," the agency of objects, the role of objects in shaping memories, and the totemic/numinous quality of things. Students will gain experience writing object-based histories, and will acquire the tools they need to write a professional research paper based on historical primary sources and engagement with relevant secondary literature. Although the course will focus on developments in Europe and America, we will be attentive to the histories of material culture in non-Western and global contexts and students are welcome to explore research topics outside of US and European history. All final research paper topics must focus on a period before 2000.

Format

The first half of the semester will be devoted to six **case studies** that will stimulate students to consider a range of key questions related to researching, interpreting, and writing the history of material culture.

- Mr. Coffee's impact on American lives and gender relations
- Men's wigs in 18th-century France
- The sofa and new patterns of leisure in 18th-century France
- Homemaking and the culture of enslaved African-Americans
- Fashion and the material culture of prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau
- The transatlantic voyage of the VW Beetle

In these **case studies**, we will pay close attention to the ways that scholars frame their research questions, use primary sources, build upon secondary scholarship, deploy theoretical insights and concepts, structure their arguments, and engage their readers with lively and effective prose.

Students will also read and discuss several foundational, and frequently-cited essays that theorize and reflect on the study of material culture and histories of material culture. You will find these essays listed in the right-hand column of each week's readings.

In addition, each week students will explore a different set of databases, libraries, online archives, and other research resources.

The small seminar-style class will place a premium on participation and discussion. We will devote time each session to brainstorming students' research questions, trouble-shooting the problems that inevitably arise in any project requiring the challenging intellectual work of research and writing, critiquing each other's work, and offering constructive advice.

Each student will be responsible for co-leading one part of a class discussion with the professor. This will require the student to consult with the professor 48 hours in advance (via email or Zoom by Monday afternoon) during the week in which they co-lead discussion.

In addition to several short assignments, students will each write an 18- to 20-page research using primary sources on a topic they develop in consultation with the professor. Students will submit a rough and final drafts of essay and will provide and respond to peer review of their classmates' essays.

Required reading

All required readings will be available on our course Canvas site or electronically at Rutgers University Library.

Course Requirements, grading, and policies

- Active participation in class discussions (20%)
- Canvas post on one assigned reading (5%)
- Leadership of one class discussion (5%)
- Primary source analysis, 2 pages (5%)

- Research proposal with primary and secondary bibliography (15%)
- Rough draft (15%)
- Final presentation (5%)
- Final draft (30%)
- Students are expected to attend all classes. Please let the professor know if the class conflicts with a religious holiday or observation or if you are sick.
- The final essay will conform to Turabian/ Chicago Manual of Style (notes and bibliography) format for footnotes and bibliography.
<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/turabian-notes-and-bibliography-citation-quick-guide.html>
- Failure to complete any assignments may result in failure for the course.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 September 1 **Introduction to the History of Material Culture**

Theory/reflections	Case studies	Databases/resources
<p>Leora Auslander, "Beyond Words." <i>American Historical Review</i> 110, no. 4 (October 2005): 1015-1045.</p> <p>Note: You will read this essay after the first class.</p>	<p>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "A Field-Hockey Dress: Fit for a Knockabout Sport."</p> <p>Sarah Anne Carter, "A Board Game: Tracking Blondie."</p> <p>Both short essays are in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, et. al. <i>Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015 (available as an ebook at RU library).</p>	<p>Familiarize yourself with some of the archives and resources on the handout, "Resources for the History and Material Culture."</p> <p>Browse online recent volumes of <i>Journal of Material Culture</i>.</p> <p>Prize-winning RU history seminar papers.</p>

Week 2 September 8
(No class – go to your Monday classes)

Week 3 September 15 **What stories can an automatic drip coffee maker tell?**

Theory/reflection	Case study
<p>Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method." <i>Winterthur Portfolio</i> 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982):1-19.</p>	<p>Rebecca K. Shrum, "Selling Mr. Coffee: Design, Gender, and the Branding of a Kitchen Appliance." <i>Winterthur Portfolio</i>, 46, No. 4 (Winter 2012).</p>

Week 4 September 22 **Material Culture of Enslaved Americans**

Meet in Pane room, Alexander Library, 1st floor with Christine Lutz (NJ Regional Studies Librarian) and Erika Gorder (Interim University Archivist)

Theory/reflection	Case Study	Databases/primary sources
<p>Tiya Miles, "Packed Sacks and Pieced Quilts: Sampling Slavery's Vast Materials." <i>Winterthur Portfolio</i>, 54, no.4 (Winter 2020): 205-222.</p>	<p>Whitney Nell Stewart, "A Protected Place: The Material Culture of Home-Making for Stagville's Enslaved Residents." <i>Wintherthur Portfolio</i> 54, no. 4 (Winter 2020): 245-270.</p>	<p>National Museum of African American History and Culture (collections): https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/collection</p> <p>The Fashion and Race Database https://fashionandrace.org</p> <p>Fashioning the Self https://www.fashioningtheself.com/?fbclid=IwAR2ZhzFfLwXTIoTSNhX3zDZrctqO8_Z-2fOHbXfgSMluFo5Ktk0sDQZo</p> <p>North Carolina Historic sites (collections): https://historicsites.nc.gov/resources/collections</p> <p>Historic Stagville: https://historicsites.nc.gov/all-sites/historic-stagville</p> <p>The Rutgers Scarlet and Black Project digital archive: https://www.scarletandblackproject.com</p>

Week 5 September 29 **Fashion and Social Distinction: two case studies**

Theory/reflection	Case studies	Bring 2-page primary source analysis to class and submit on Canvas; see details for assignment on Canvas.
<p>Daniel Miller. "Why Clothing is not Superficial." In <i>Stuff</i>. Malden, MA and Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2010.</p>	<p>Select the article below that most closely matches your interests.</p> <p>Michael Kwass, "Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in 18th-Century France." <i>The American Historical Review</i> 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 631-659.</p> <p>or,</p> <p>Noah Benninga, "The Bricolage of Death: Jewish Possessions and the Fashioning of the Prisoner Elite in Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1942-1945." In <i>The Things They Carried: War, Mobility, and Material Culture</i>, edited by Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018.</p>	

Week 6 October 6 **Furniture, interior space, and arguing from an absence**

Theory/reflection	Case Study
Glenn Adamson, "The Case of the missing footstool: Reading the absent object." In <i>History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources</i> , edited by Karen Harvey. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.	Mimi Hellman. "Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century France." <i>Eighteenth-Century Studies</i> 32, no. 4 (1999): 415-45.

Week 7 October 13 **Globalization and Crossing Cultures**

Theory/reflection	Model essays <i>Select the article below that most closely matches your interests.</i>
Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, "Spaces of global interactions: The material landscape of global history." In <i>Writing Material Culture History</i> , second edition, edited by Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2021.	Bernhard Rieger. "From People's Car to New Beetle: The Transatlantic Journeys of the Volkswagen Beetle." <i>The Journal of American History</i> 97, no. 1 (2010): 91–115. or, Timothy Lecain, "The Silkworm: The Innovative Insects behind Japanese Modernization," in <i>The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past</i> (2017), p. 185-243.

Week 8 October 20 **Proposal Workshop**

Proposal, outline, and annotated bibliography due in class	Your paper proposal (3 to 4 pages, not including the outline, and annotated bibliography) should pose your central question, describe the contours of your research topic, and make a case for its importance. Your proposal should describe how you plan to use the primary sources you have collected so far to support your argument. Your proposal should clearly indicate how your research relates to at least one major historical theme and/or a key question in the history of material culture. Include an outline that maps out at least 3 or more subsections of your essay. The annotated bibliography should include at least five secondary sources which will help you to contextualize your primary materials. Provide a brief 2-3 sentence annotation describing the main content and/or argument of your secondary sources and an explanation of how you will use them for your project. Come to class prepared to introduce your research topic and research plan to your classmates.
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Week 9 October 27 **Individual conferences**, sign up on Canvas

Devote your time and energy to writing your rough draft.

Week 10 November 3 **Individual conferences**, sign up on Canvas

Devote your time and energy to writing your rough draft.

Week 11 November 10 **Group Discussion of Rough Drafts**

Rough draft due in class	Your rough draft will include a well-developed introduction (at least 3 paragraphs), an analysis of at least three primary sources, and engagement with at least three scholars whose topic connects to your topic. Your rough draft must be a minimum of 10 pages and must include an outline of the entire final paper.
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Week 12 November 17 **Peer Editing In class**

Week 13 November 24 (NO Class – Thanksgiving Break)

Week 14 November 29 **Flex Day – stay tuned** (Wednesday classes meet on Monday)

Week 15 December 1 **Final Presentations**

Week 16 December 8 **Final Presentations**

Final essays due by 5 pm on Wednesday, December 15

Notes and University Policy

Reading Days:

Tuesday, December 14 Reading Day
Wednesday, December 15 Reading Day

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all sessions and to be active and thoughtful participants in class discussion. Unexcused absences (i.e., other than a documented illness, documented emergency, religious observance, or university-approved absence) will have an adverse effect on your grade. Please contact me as soon as possible if you are required to quarantine so that we can arrange alternative assignments.

Citizenship

The Department of History's "[Policy on Mutual Responsibilities and Classroom Etiquette](#)" states, "Our commitments to a strong learning community are expressed in many ways. Respectful professors convey their commitment to the discipline of history and their desire to share its delights and challenges. They are well prepared for class, provide students with clear goals and expectations, listen carefully to student questions and comments, and conscientiously evaluate their students' work. Respectful students bring a strong work ethic to the history courses that they select. They expect to attend the scheduled classes, to be on time, to be prepared for class, and to be attentive during class. A shared respect for the discipline of history and for one another as teachers and students of history is essential to the academic integrity of our program. We must all do our part to maintain an environment of openness and civility that encourages and honors the intellectual achievement represented by the discipline of history."

Your grades

Our Canvas gradebook will be updated regularly throughout the semester, so please be sure to check your grades so that you know where you stand. If you would like to discuss your grades at any point, I am always happy to meet with you during office hours or via Zoom.

Academic Integrity

The foundation of this course and any scholarly endeavor is academic integrity. I fully expect that all students will adhere to principles of academic integrity in their work. You are responsible for understanding the [Rutgers University policies regarding academic integrity](#). Ignorance of these policies or the consequences for violations is not an acceptable excuse.

All written work must be a student's own original work. Collaboration on written work is not permitted. Any and all references to other sources within your own paper must be properly cited according to the bibliographic conventions of the [Chicago Manual of Style](#), which is available at the Alexander Library and online at the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#).

Staying safe during the Covid-19 Pandemic

In order to protect the health and well-being of all members of the University community, masks must be worn by all persons on campus when in the presence of others (within six feet) and in buildings in non-private enclosed settings (e.g., common workspaces, workstations, meeting rooms, classrooms, etc.). Masks must be worn during class meetings; any student not wearing a mask will be asked to leave. Masks should conform to CDC guidelines and should completely cover the nose and mouth: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

Each day before you arrive on campus or leave your residence hall, you must complete the brief survey on the [My Campus Pass symptom checker](#) self-screening app.

Students with Disabilities

Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, Sections 504 and 508, which mandate reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities and accessibility of online information. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact me during the first week of the semester so that we can arrange accommodations. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disability Services, Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Ave., Suite A145. Phone: 848.445.6800 Online: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>