History 134 (Honors): Material culture in the US since 1877

Instructor: Bao Bui (buib@sfasu.edu)
Office: Liberal Arts Building 346
Class place & time: Ferguson 472, MW 1PM
Office: Liberal Arts Building 346
Office hours: TTh. 2-4PM

IMPORTANT: This syllabus is a written memorandum of understanding between you, the student, and me, your instructor. The syllabus outlines both my obligations as your instructor and your responsibilities as a student.

Course Description and Objectives:

This class will look at American history since 1877 through the lens of material culture. In particular, this class will consider Americans’ relationship with mass-market consumer goods. Put another way, we will look at our desire for, pursuit and possession of, and utilization of products from dishwashers and refrigerators to smart phones and passenger planes. What is the cultural, social, economic, political, and international history of these every day products? How do these items tie individuals to a larger social structure? To social norms? To a national economy? To a global economy and society? What do these items tell us about our how we perceive our individual identities? About what it means to be “American”? About what it means to be modern?

History 134 meets Texas state requirements for all graduates. In this course students will develop the skills of critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and social responsibility.

Required textbook and readings:

- Additional readings will be assigned on a weekly basis.

Course Requirements:

1. Quizzes: Throughout the semester there will be 8-10 short quizzes; each quiz will be based on the week’s assigned readings.

2. Attendance and participation: Since this course is discussion-centered, it is critical that students come to class having read the materials and ready to contribute to the discussion.

3. Take-home essays: At mid-semester and in late April students will be assigned a take-home essay. Students will have 7-10 days in which to complete each essay and turn in a printed copy. Each essay will be 6-7 pages long and will require students to write an analysis that integrates both the readings with class discussion. Detailed instructions will appear on the essay prompt sheets.

4. Presentation: Students will be assigned to groups of 3 or 4. Each group will pick a consumer product or material object, research and assemble the class readings for the project, and present on the subject during the Wednesday of their assigned week. Students may choose from the items below or, after consulting with the instructor, another item not listed. More details will be given after Week 4 of the semester.
- Sports sneakers or other kinds of footwear (ex. high-heeled shoes)
- Birth control pills
- Personal computer/mobile phone
- Radios/televisions
- Personal music devices (phonograph, CD player, Walkman, etc.)
- Personal automobile (including autonomous passenger vehicles)
- Lowriders, Ford Mustang, or Toyota Prius, Model T (or other iconic passenger vehicle)
- Office cubicle
- Household appliances (washer, dryer, dishwasher, fridge, etc.)
- Men’s tie and related neckware
- Bras, underwear, and undergarments
- Cigarettes and cigars
- Potato/McD’s French fries
- Twinkies
- Hotdogs
- Hamburger/Big Mac
- Artificial sweeteners (or other diet-related products)
- Tampons and other menstrual products
- Viagra and related products
- Home gym equipment and related exercise/diet products
- Boeing 747 or Douglas DC-3
- M-16 semi-automatic rifle
- Television set
- Wristwatch
- Men’s hats
- Corsets, Spandex, or other shapewear
- Legos or other children’s toys
- Home electronic gaming consoles (XBox, Playstation, Wii, Atari 2600, etc.)
- Tupperware and related products
- Doritos and other kinds of snack chips
- Marijuana and/or hemp
- Cocaine and/or heroin
- Sriracha or other condiment
- Wedding dress
- Cigars, cigarettes, and related tobacco products (including e-cigarettes)

**Grading:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentation</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays (2)</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A: 900-1000  
B: 800-899  
C: 700-799  
D: 600-699  
F: 599 or less

**Attendance Policy:**

Attendance is an integral part of the course and is mandatory. You must sign the attendance sheet to get credit. An attendance sheet will go around for each session.
An absence is defined as being absent for more than 10 minutes of one class meeting. For an absence to be “excused” you must have a note from the Emergency Dean, the Health Center, or your doctor. You must give me this note within one week of the absence. You may have three (3) unexcused absences without penalty. Each subsequent unexcused absence will lower the overall final score by 2%. After 7 unexcused absences the student will receive an F-grade for the class.

If you are part of a University sponsored activity that will cause you to be absent from class, please make sure that I have a letter from the coach/leader noting the specific dates you will be absent. Please keep a copy of all documents for your records.

Your attendance/participation grade (100 points) is determined by you coming to class and making active and positive contributions to our class meetings. NOTE: Attendance does not equal participation. The instructor reserves the right to adjust the student’s final grade in cases of extraordinary contributions to class discussions.

Your classmates will be comprised of individuals with a wide variety of experiences, beliefs, orientations, and identities leading inevitably to differences in perspective and viewpoint. All students - irrespective of race, gender and sexual identities, nationality, political persuasion or religious belief – have the right to politely express their own interpretation of historical events based upon the material at hand. Students are encouraged to challenge conflicting interpretations and opinions but they may not personally disrespect their peers.

**E-mail policy**

I will reply to most email inquiries within 24 hours of receiving them; however, I am not obliged to respond to emails outside of 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.
Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

**Withheld Grades (Semester Grades Policy, A-54)**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

**COURSE CALENDAR (in progress)**

**Week 1**
Wednesday, January 17: “Why Women Proposing is Still Rare,” NYT, Feb. 25, 2016

**Week 2**
Monday, January 22: Various articles on Conspicuous Consumption
Wednesday, January 24: Various articles on theories of material culture

**Week 3**
Monday, January 29: Standage’s *6 Glasses*, Chapters 1-3
Wednesday, January 31: Standage’s *6 Glasses*, Chapters 4-6

**Week 4**
Monday, February 5: Standage’s *6 Glasses*, Chapters 7-9
Wednesday, February 7: Standage’s *6 Glasses*, Chapters 10-12

**Week 5**
Monday, February 12: The material objects of love, PART I
Wednesday, February 14: The material objects of love, PART II

**Week 6**
Monday, February 19: The tomato
Wednesday, February 21: Cotton undergarments
Thursday, February 22: Writing exercise paragraph due at 430PM

**Week 7**
Monday, February 26: Sugar
Wednesday, February 28: Essay writing and editing workshop
Friday, March 9: 1st essay due

**Week 8**
Monday, March 5: TBD
Wednesday, March 7: Group 1 Presentation

**Week 9**
Monday, March 19: TBD
Wednesday, March 21: Group 2 presentation

**Week 10 (Easter Holiday begins Thursday, March 29)**
Monday, March 26: Group 3 presentation
Wednesday, March 28: TBD

**Week 11**
Monday, April 2: TBD
Wednesday, April 4: Group 4 presentation

**Week 12**
Monday, April 9: TBD
Wednesday, April 11: Group 5 presentation

**Week 13**
Monday, April 16: TBD
Wednesday, April 18: Group 6 presentation

**Week 14**
Monday, April 23: TBD
Wednesday, April 25: Group 7 presentation

**Week 15**
Monday, April 30: Group 8
Wednesday, May 2: The history of trash

Congratulations! You’ve done the smart move by looking at the very last item posted on the syllabus. Now email me a picture of an ice cream truck to show me that you did what you were supposed to do.