This course focuses on the consumptive decisions we make and the ways we manage desire and power through the most seemingly commonplace material acquisitions. We will examine the following:

- How power and politics are invested in such things as cars, clothing, and food using historical and object study methods.
- How everyday goods are potently symbolic and politically invested vehicles of communication.
- How objects are dynamic and how they provide critical insights into who we are, who we wish to be, and how goods are used to negotiate, accept, and resist our positions.
- How historical evolutions and developments between goods and people reveal the connections between systems of inequality and material consumption.

Theme: Culture of Consumption

This course focuses on the consumptive decisions we make and the ways we...
Objectives

Students will have the opportunity to refine their skills in critical inquiry, communication, cultural knowledge, and learn to apply interdisciplinary methods to “the critical understanding of the beliefs and values in and through which Americans make sense of themselves and their worlds.” To this end, there are six objectives for the course:

- To introduce material culture studies as a mode of inquiry that combines an awareness of artifacts as sources of historical information and techniques for doing material culture analysis.
- To develop skills in analysis, hearing objects “speak,” and constructing an argument, particularly as applied to the study of visual artifacts.
- To provide an analytical framework for recognizing and comprehending diverse cultural systems and by doing so draw attention to the historical complexity of American culture and life.
- To foster knowledge about the ways we—as consumers, observers, and cultural critics—interpret and make sense of the material objects in our lives and how those objects help to shape social norms and cultural values.
- To develop a critical understanding of the role of the Internet in disseminating historical sources, and for the purposes of visual representation.
- Increase skills in reading, writing, organizing information, and working collaboratively with other scholars.
**Required…**

♦ Locavore challenge (this will require you to purchase locally produced food)
♦ Visit Greenbelt Museum exhibit
♦ Readings are on ELMS and on RESEARCHPORT
♦ *Marwencol, Big Meat, Weeds, The Wire, Dirty Pretty Things*— ELMS course reserves media

**Grading…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1 – Artifact analysis</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #2 – Exhibit Review &amp; WIKI upload</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locavore challenge</td>
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<td>Final Presentation</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article Presentation</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
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**Grades are calculated accordingly:**

91-100 points = A; 81-90 = B; 71-80 = C; 61-70 = D; 60 and below = F

*You are welcome to make an appointment to discuss the evaluation of your work at any time.*
**Readings** – The readings indicated above are selected to introduce you to the scholarship in this field. They are there for your understanding. Failure to read will reflect in your grade. We will read articles that will form the core of our course over the course of the semester. To this end, you will be assessed on your understanding of the readings.

**Cell Phones, etc** - The use of cell phones, smart phones, or other mobile communication devices is disruptive, and is prohibited during class. Except in emergencies, those using such devices must leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.

**Assignments & Guidelines...**

**Computer** – Are to be used in class only with prior permission! Do not bring your laptops to use in this class unless you have a documented need.

**Code of academic integrity**: All students enrolled in AMST 498Q are expected to abide by the university’s Code of Academic Integrity, which is reprinted in the Undergraduate Catalog. In particular, academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism) will not be tolerated. See the Schedule of Courses and familiarize yourselves with them. “Academic dishonesty is a serious offense which may result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

**Students with disabilities**: Please identify yourselves to us early in the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements for you through the Office of Disabled Student Services.

**Late policy**: Late papers may receive lower grades. I reserve the right not to accept papers later than one week except in cases of documented illness or family emergency.

**STUDENT ABSENCES** - Again, regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles being discussed. However, in the event that a class must be missed due to an illness, the policy in this class is as follows:

- For every medically necessary absence from class, a reasonable effort should be made to notify the instructor advance of the class. When returning to class, students must bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate.
  - If you are absent more than twice in a single week, you will need documentation signed by a health care professional.
  - If a student is absent on days when tests (quiz or midterm) are scheduled, papers are due, presentations are taking place she or he is required to notify the instructor in advance, and upon returning to class, bring documentation of the illness, signed by a health care professional. **Failure to provide an accurate statement is a violation of the Honor Code.**
Class Schedule
(subject to change)
Readings due on the date they appear

08.31  Introduction to the Class - What is Material Culture?/Consumer Culture?

09.06  Lury, Ch. 1 - Material Culture and Consumer Culture; Ch. 2 - Econ & Culture

09.08  Why study objects
  ▪ Lury, Ch. 3 - Objects, Subjects, and Signs
  ▪ Csikszentmihalyi, “Why We Need Things” (ELMS)

09.13  Methods for studying objects
  ▪ Barbara Carson, “Interpreting History Through Objects,” Journal of Museum Education 10.3 (Summer 1985)

09.15 Method application
  ▪ I. Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things” (ELMS)
  ▪ E. Listfield, “The Underage Drinking Epidemic” (ELMS)
  Artifact Analysis Applied To Musical Bear Figurine
  http://individual.utoronto.ca/spike/Bear_Method.htm

Artifact Analysis Applied To Chicken Imagery
Williams-Forson, “Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs”

09.20  History of Consumption [in perspective]
  ▪ Lury, Ch. 4 - Capital, Class, and Consumer Culture
  ▪ G. McCracken, “Culture and Consumption,” J of Consumer Research
  ▪ In-class viewing - American Psycho

09.22  DUE: Paper #1 (3-pp) analysis of an artifact symbolic of contemporary college consumption using Fleming, Kopytoff and/or Carson - must be uploaded to the Blackboard WIKI for class presentation

The BASICS - CONSUMING FOOD

9.27  Talking about food...
  ▪ Counihan and VanEsterik, “Introduction,” Food and Culture (ELMS)
  ▪ Miller and Deutsch, “Using Material Objects in Food Studies,” (ELMS)
  ▪ In class viewing - Good Meat
The Localvore Challenge (abbreviated)

This is an event that will challenge you to eat only locally grown and produced foods for several days. It is designed to help you think about how food is complicated and simply more than what you consume. For this assignment you will consume foods largely produced only within a 150 mile radius of College Park. You will then blog your experience online. By Tuesday, October 4, you need to have made several submissions to the blog. Make sure they are in dialog with other comments that have already been posted. No need to post your entire journal unless you are the first writer. Use the notes you have taken to engage in a running dialog.

You are allowed some exceptions:

Choose from 0 to 4 foods that you will eat during the challenge that are not local—items you feel you can't live without (e.g. coffee, chocolate, bananas) and keep them in your diet. These are called “Marco Polos”

9.29 Eating Locally (con’t)
- Lury, Ch. 5 - Circuits of Culture and Economy: Gender, Race, & Reflexivity
- Margaret Robinson, “Indigenous Veganism” (ELMS)
- Mary P. Quinn, “Fresh Fare: Exploring the Local Foodscape” (ELMS)
- Assignment: Submit a short but detailed description of what you ate for ONE meal, where, why, and with whom (no more than 1-pg).

10.04 Revealing what you know…
- Julie Guthman, “‘If they only knew’: Colorblindness…” The Professional Geographer 60(3), (2008)
- J. Cognard-Black, “The Feminist Food Revolution” (ELMS)
- Lauren Fleming, “Lesbian Localvores” (ELMS)
- A. Gibbs, “Sometimes you have to grow it to get it” (ELMS)

CONTESTED CULINARY LANDSCAPES

10.06 Contested Landscapes - Food and Space
- Alice E. Ingerson, “What are Cultural Landscapes” (ELMS)
- T. Middlekauff, “Romancing the Farm” (ELMS)
- S. Shapiro, “A Haven on the Block” (ELMS)

10.11 Just because it glitters… - When a Green Landscape is a Contested Landscape
- Vick, “In FDR Years, ‘Sleepy Southern Town’ Woke Up” Washington Post (ELMS)
- Sies and Gournay, “Greenbelt, Maryland: Beyond the Iconic Legacy” (ELMS)
- Virtual Greenbelt - http://otal.umd.edu/~vg/students.html
- Discuss Greenbelt Museum Exhibit and Paper
10.13 Midterm Review and Paper #2 - Exhibiting Consumption

10.18 Midterm

10.20 No class - Conference - American Studies Association. Paper #2 uploaded by 12:15pm

HOW WE ACQUIRE WHAT WE CONSUME -
Formal & Informal Economies

10.25
- In class - Maxed Out, The Wire, Weeds

WHAT WE CONSUME...AND WHY

10.27 Lifeworlds - Sex and Social Media
- Morimoto and Friedland, “The Lifeworld of Youth in the Information Age,” Youth and Society 43(2), 2011: 549-567
- Lenhart, “Teens and Sexting,” (ELMS)
- The Scholars Speak, “When Sexting Crosses the Line” (ELMS)

11.01 Lifeworlds - Dollar Stores, Knock-offs, Positional & Luxury Goods
- Lury, Ch. 6, Brands: Markets, Media and Movement
- The Economist, “Inequality Unbottled Gini” (ELMS)
- H. Meyerson, “What $5500 an Hour Buys” (ELMS)

11.03 Lifeworlds - Consuming Culture ... a Way of Life
- Darby, “Big Fat Disgrace: TLC’s ‘My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding’....” (ELMS)

11.08 Lifeworlds - When consumption goes a bit...excessive??? [Choose 1 topic]
- Hoarders and Extreme Coupon
- Huffington Post - Baby Portrait Tattoos - Not Your Teenagers Tattoo (ELMS)
- McCracken, “Clothing as Language” (ELMS)
- Ghiven, “Lady Gaga’s a Fashion Plate, but it Takes More for her to Be an Icon.” (ELMS)
11.10 Lifeworlds - Is Everything for Sale?
- Lury, Ch. 8, When Are You (Not) a Consumer?
- Marwencol

11.15 finish

11.17 Lifeworlds - Is Everything for Sale?
- Lury, Ch. 7, Consuming Ethics, or What Goes Around, Comes Around
- J. Amber, “Black Girls for Sale” (ELMS)
- Farley, “Prostitution, Trafficking, and Cultural Amnesia” (ELMS)
- Chris Ewart, “Kidneys to Go: Dis-Ordering the Body in a Pretty Dirty Economy, “ (ELMS)

11.22 Exhibiting Consumerism - final paper review

11.24 No Class - Thanksgiving Holiday

11.29 Final presentations

12.06 Final presentations

12.08 Final presentations

12.13 Final presentations and wrap up

12.15 Final paper due on ELMS by 10:00 a.m.