**Objects as History 1: Prehistory to Industrialization**

**Fall 2013**

CRN: ADHT 7306

Course Code: PLHT 1000

Day and Time: Wednesdays, 1210pm to 1450pm

Course Dates: 08/28/13 - 12/11/13

Instructor: Michelle Millar Fisher

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Office Hours: by appointment

Location: Parsons, 2 W 13th Street, Room 612

**Course Description**:

This course introduces students to major trends in world history and to the considered study of objects as expressions of a particular place and time. Its structure is roughly chronological, beginning in prehistory and continuing until the dawn of mass industrialization—a development that occurred at different times for different cultures.

The focus will be on objects—from ordinary tools of daily life to extraordinary monuments of skill and design—on display in local museum collections. These objects will be explored in terms of how and why they were made, by whom and for whom, how they were used, what they meant to their users, and what social structures are embedded in them.

The course also serves as an introduction to artistic styles and stylistic change, and will build upon interrelationships among societies and types of objects across time. Students will gain an understanding of the broad arc of historical eras and the varieties of human culture as well as training in the visual analysis of design objects. This is a lecture and discussion-based course; assignments will be research and writing projects.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the successful completion of this course, students will be able to, at an introductory level:

1. Engage with historical examples of material culture as generators, embodiments and transmitters of cultural values.
2. Exhibit an awareness of and sensitivity toward differing cultural specificities and their relevance to historical material culture.
3. Assess the value and impact of historical examples of material culture and their makers with regard to larger systems and their interrelationship: whether technical, financial, natural, spiritual, social or political.
4. Begin to develop skills and vocabulary necessary for persuasive argumentation by writing clear and cogent text-based analyses, including the critical thesis-driven essay.
5. Evidence the process of reading, i.e. understanding multiples types of communication as forms of critical thought by identifying the central arguments and supporting evidence in various types of texts.
6. Utilize and understand the benefits of a variety of sources of research material, including electronic catalogs and indices, books, periodicals, exhibition materials, databases, web sites, and network-based research tools which connects traditional research skills to global social networks, as well as one's own experiences.
7. Articulate their ideas and the assist in the development of the ideas of others in oral and written form, through constructive critique and feedback.
8. Successfully attribute the use of other's ideas using a standard citation format.

**Required Reading/Additional Resources:**

**Assigned readings are listed ON A GOOGLE DOC ON CANVAS**, the online Learning Management System (LMS). These readings are relevant to the selected objects covered in our lectures and contextualize the historical and cultural flashpoints we will discuss in this course. They are absolutely required. Failure to demonstrate that you have undertaken them and can discuss them in class will result in a lowered grade.

Many course readings are sourced from **Neil McGregor's** ***A History of the World in 100 Objects*,** which is cheap to buy second hand and fun to read in text form if you prefer. However you are **not** required to purchase a copy, as these readings will always be accessible via a Google Doc on Canvas.

**Smarthistory** (http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org) and the **Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Timeline of Art History** (http:www.metmuseum.org/toah) are both excellent (and free) academic resources for this course.

**Grading and Evaluation:**

Students’ ability to meet the course’s learning outcomes will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

* evidence of the understanding of the course material taught in lecture and presented through readings in the form of written examinations
* evidence of research in the development of annotated bibliographies and cumulative research project
* participation in class discussion and online discussion
* participation in collaborative work including self and peer assessment
* improvement in analytic skills, research skills, conceptual grasp of history, and knowledge of historical material culture
* attendance in class and the timely completion of assignments

**Assignments and Grading outline:**

Multiple writing (in-class and at-home) and research assignments will build in complexity through the semester. All assignments must be completed in order to receive a grade for the course.

**IMPORTANT: your instructor wants you to succeed in this class! ☺ Make sure that you communicate early if you are having difficulty understanding the assignment, falling behind, or have any other concerns. Every assignment and quiz will be talked over together in class and clearly explained. You can make an individual appointment at any time, or email at any time. Questions are always encouraged.**

1. **Class participation, museum visits, and general attendance**

**15% of final grade**

Please carefully read the attendance policy below. You will be expected to regularly participate in class discussion, and attend all museum visits. If you are less confident about speaking in class, communicate with your instructor and we will find a way to work through it! Failure to participate in the class learning community in some manner will result in a lowered grade.

1. **Short reading responses (both in-class and take-home)**

**15% of final grade**

You will be given readings and short online films on a weekly basis throughout the course, found on the Google Doc on Canvas.

Assigned Readings will always be discussed in class in large or small groups, and y**ou will be asked to undertake written in-class and at-home reading responses** throughout the semester which will constitute part of your final grade.

You need to do these readings before you come to class. They will enhance your understanding of the course material discussed in class, and you will not be able to undertake in-class activities without having done them. You will find it useful to take notes as you read, and to print the readings for your reference during class time, or bring them with you on your e-reader.

1. **Visual Analysis paper**

**15% of final grade**

Students will choose an object currently on display and falling within the course chronology to analyze during our visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Week 3. Undertaking formal analysis at the museum, the resulting 2-page draft will be peer workshopped in class before a final 2-3 page paper is handed in during Week 5.

1. **Object presentation**

**10% of final grade**

Students will choose another object currently on display in a NYC museum. Each student will be asked to give a short presentation (4-6 minutes) on their research object. This will include presenting your thesis statement (i.e. the specific focus of interest in this work) to the class as well as background information about the work and its context. These presentations will take place in weeks 12 & 13 of the course. Your presentation time will be assigned to you after you have chosen your research object in Week 6. The process of research and presentation development will be supported throughout the course, and will culminate in a final research paper.

1. **Final Research paper & annotated bibliography**

**25% of final grade**

Your research paper for this class will investigate an object currently on display a NYC museum. What was this object used for? Why? What is interesting or historically compelling about this object? What is visually compelling about this object? You will undertake formal analysis, and create a bibliography of 3-5 academic sources in order to research your object. You will present to the class on this object and solicit feedback from your instructor and peers. Your final paper will describe in detail the form and context of your object from an academic viewpoint, as well as include your own thoughts, questions, and ideas. Your final paper should be between 4-6 pages long, double-spaced, and use 1-inch margins.

1. **Two quizzes (5% each) and a final exam (10%)**

**20% of final grade**

There will be **two quizzes** based on the material covered in class, assigned readings, and required images. The quizzes will be slide-based – you will be shown images during the quiz and expected to be able to identify and contextualize them. The quizzes will emphasize identification of key images, major themes, historical contexts, and visual analysis. Each quiz will last about 15-20 minutes and be given at the beginning of class. Since these quizzes are image-based, no makeups are possible.

The **final exam** will involve 3 parts: 1) a multiple-choice/matching section based on slides, terms and themes, 2) slide-based questions and answers, and 3) a slide-based short essay of approximately 300 words. The exam will last approx 45 minutes. We will review and prepare for this exam during class.

**Museum visits:**

The class relied on close study of objects, so museum visits are crucial. While Parsons will help with some entrance fees, you will need to pay for some of these museum visits. No visit will be more than $6, and often less.

**Attendance and Class Participation:**

Attendance at every class meeting and museum visit is mandatory. Excuses must be supported by a doctor’s note. **Two absences** will result in a lowered grade. **Three absences** **may result automatic failure**.

Arriving **on time** is essential. **Each late arrival or early departure will count as half an absence**. Students are expected to take notes on all lectures and participate in class discussion. Participation includes asking and responding to questions, expressing knowledgeable opinions on certain issues, and interacting with the instructor and the class.

**You should arrive at each class meeting having completed, and prepared to discuss, the day’s assignments.** High participation grades (B+ or above) will be awarded for participation that: (1) reflects careful attention to readings, assignments, and discussions; (2) is expressed clearly; and (3) demonstrates respect for the instructor and classmates, especially when you disagree with them. The attendance and class participation grade will also include brief oral presentations to the class on your research paper topics, which will be scheduled throughout the semester.

**Plagiarism:**

**Plagiarism** is the use of another person's words or ideas in any academic work using books, journals, Internet postings, or other student papers without proper acknowledgment. Examples of this include using an author's words in your own essay and not citing them; paraphrasing an author's words—that is changing the exact wording but lifting the exact meaning—and not citing them; lifting sentences from websites (Wikipedia or other online sources) and not citing them. For further information on proper acknowledgment and plagiarism, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and proper forms of citation in research and writing, students should consult the *The Bedford Handbook*.

**Plagiarism is one of the most serious infractions possible within the academic community.** Its commission will result in a failing grade for the written assignment in question.  Its commission can lead to failing this course, and being placed on academic probation. Its repeated commission in multiple courses can result in expulsion from Baruch.

**Laptop use in the classroom**

Given their persistent abuse, **laptops are not allowed in the classroom**.  The exception to this policy is students who can provide documentation of a learning disability from Student Disability Services that requires the use of their laptops.

**Cell phone use in the classroom**

Given their persistent abuse, **the use of cell phones is not allowed in the classroom**. This means **NO TEXTING** or any other use of a cell phone during class time.

**Paper Grading Standards**

**A** **-** These are exceptionally good papers that go above and beyond the expectations and requirements set forth in the assignment. They demonstrate substantial effort and achievement in the areas of critical thinking and scholarship. They also demonstrate considerable interpretative connections between concrete ideas or textual moments, a high level of analysis and flexibility of argument. The argument or point of view that is offered is consistent throughout the paper, and governs the use and interpretation of all examples, and primary and/or secondary source material. "A" papers are very well organized, and are free from grammatical and editorial errors.

**B / B+ -** These are very good papers. The "B/B+" paper does everything a "C/C+" paper does, but offers a sustained and meaningful structure to a critical endeavor that is more complex than a paper at the "C/C+" level. What also distinguishes a "B/B+" paper is the author's ability to offer a unique insight, to ask questions of primary or secondary source material, and/or to set up a debate between texts or points of view. The author's point of view is clear and an argument is sustained fairly consistently throughout the paper. "B/B+" papers are logically organized, and also respond to the assignment in thoughtful and distinctive ways. Although minor grammatical and editorial errors may be present, they are under control and do not impede meaning or clarity in the paper.

**C / C+ -** These are average papers. They will demonstrate some success in engaging with the assigned readings or material. The paper will show that the student can identify and work with key terms and passages in a text and apply them to ideas and examples found in other texts, or other outside material. Additionally, the paper will demonstrate effort in the areas of analysis and critical thinking by posing an interesting problem or question. Typical of a "C/C+" paper, however, is that the original problem or question, once asked, does not move the paper forward. Often, there is no real solution given, or there is a variety of possible solutions put forward without a clear sense of where the author's commitment lies. "C/C+" papers may also have significant organizational, grammatical and/or editorial errors in evidence. These errors may periodically impede the reader's ability to understand the author's point, or may lead to a paper that seems repetitive and circular.

**D -** The paper adheres to all of the general guidelines of formatting, page-length, and the minimum terms of the assignment. Written work receiving a "D" grade may be a simple restatement of fact or commonly-held opinion. These kinds of papers also will tend to put forward obviously contradictory or conflicting points of view. "D" papers may also have serious organizational and grammatical errors in evidence, which may or may not impede the reader's ability to understand the author's point.

**F -** The work submitted by the student fails to meet the minimum expectations and requirements of the assignment and does not merit credit.

**COURSE OUTLINE (Schedule is subject to change)**:

\*\*\*\*YOU HAVE READING TO DO ALMOST EVERY WEEK OF THE SEMESTER. THESE READINGS ARE LISTED ON THE CLASS GOOGLE DOC\*\*\*\*

Readings for the entire course are clearly linked to on Canvas and are contained in an easily accessible Google Doc that you can download and save at the beginning of the semester.

Note: assigned readings should be completed for the day upon which they are posted, and will always be discussed in class.

You should expect to do around 1 hour reading/watching homework per class, plus any extra work for assignments.

**Week 1 – AUG 28**

Focus: Introduction: On Telling History with Objects and Telling the Histories of Objects.

Reading: In-class reading of Neil MacGregor’s “Olduvai Stone Tool” from *A History of the World in 100 Objects*

Due: ---

**Week 2 – SEPT 4**

Focus: The First Tools and the Invention of Writing (300,000 – 1,800 BCE) & Religion and the State (1,200 BCE – 100 CE)

*In-class library research demonstration*

**Week 3 – SEPT 11**

Focus: Metropolitan Museum of Art Visit

Due: Choose object for first paper (visual analysis) and add to Google Doc on Canvas

**Week 4 – SEPT 18**

Focus: Patterns of Daily Life in the Ancient World (500 BCE – 750 CE)

*Peer Review of Formal Analysis Papers*

*Review of materials for Quiz 1*

Due: Bring in rough draft of visual analysis papers

**Week 5 – SEPT 25**

Focus: Growth and Spread of Religious Philosophies (300 – 900 CE, 1800-1950 CE)

🡪 QUIZ 1

Due: Visual Analysis Final Paper

**Week 6 – OCT 2**

Focus: Rubin Museum of Art Visit

Due: Your research object choice should be added to the class Google Doc on Canvas by the end of this week. Your presentation dates will be assigned this week.

**Week 7 – OCT 9**

Focus: Warfare, Technology and Political Power (1100 – 1600 CE)

Due: Annotated Bibliography

**Week 8 – OCT 16**

Focus: Contemplative Spaces (1130 – 1500 CE)

*Review of materials for Quiz 2*

**Week 9 – OCT 23**

Focus: Cloisters Visit

**Week 10 – OCT 30**

Focus: Royal and Aristocratic Patronage (750 – 1600 CE)

🡪 QUIZ 2

**Week 11 – NOV 6**

Focus: The rise of International Commerce (1300 – 1900 CE)

*In-class peer review of research papers*

Due: Preliminary Draft of Research Paper

**Week 12 – NOV 13**

Focus: At home (1650–1790 CE)

Student Presentations I

Due: Second Draft of Research Paper & presentation group 1

**Week 13 – NOV 20**

Focus: Student Presentations II & Individual Student Meetings with Instructor

Due: Research paper draft returned to you with instructor comments & presentation group 2

**Week 14 – NOV 27**

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

**Week 15 – DEC 4**

Focus: Measuring time (1500–1650 CE) – Frick Collection Visit

Due: Final research paper

**Week 16 – DEC 11**

Focus: FINAL EXAM

Due: ---