

## **CURRENT DEBATES IN ARCHAEOLOGY - ANTHRO 4FO3**

**McMaster University, Fall 2008**  
**Day and Time: W 11:30 am -2:20 pm**  
**Location: CNH 223**

**Professor: Dr. Kostalena Michelaki**  
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**Office Hours: W 9:00-11:00 am**

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Some claim that humans are ‘natural born cyborgs,’ intricately tied to the material world around them, without which they could not develop or exist. Archaeology has always recognized the intimate connection between humans and their things, claiming that it can access human experiences in past times through material remains. Yet, still in archaeological analyses materials are often seen as passive, distinct, inert surfaces on which humans can some times impose meaning. The use of archaeological material strictly for the creation of ethno-chronological typologies is still very common. Is that the human experience? Is that all archaeology can access of the human experience?

This class will introduce the newly established discipline of ‘material culture studies’ to students through readings from cognitive science, sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology and archaeology. Students will explore current ideas about the lack of clear boundaries between humans and their material surroundings and the implications of these ideas for archaeology. The goal is to acquire a new way of looking upon the world of humans and of the things that surround them (natural, co-opted and constructed alike) and learn to observe their interactions in the hopes of extending such understanding and observation skills to past human lives and altering ultimately archaeological practice.

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### **Course Format**

The class will meet for 3 hours on Wednesdays and will be taught as a seminar, depending entirely on the discussions generated and led by students. While the first half of the class will be dedicated to the analysis and discussion of readings, the second half will allow students to work on their projects.

### **Course Requirements**

#### ***1) Participation – 40%***

Participation consists of three elements:

- a) being present in class and actively participating in the weekly discussions and projects,
- b) submitting each week a discussion question for each reading assigned, and
- c) leading the class discussion (who leads the discussion will be decided randomly in class)

## **2) Observing the world - 8%**

On **September 17<sup>th</sup>** you will have to hand in a two-page essay (typed, 1" margins, 1.5 spacing, Times New Roman font, size 12) describing your wristwatch. A detailed discussion of the assignment will have taken place in class on September 10<sup>th</sup>.

On **November 1<sup>st</sup>** you will have to hand in a three-page essay (typed, 1" margins, 1.5 spacing, Times New Roman font, size 12) describing your wristwatch again, taking into consideration all the readings we will have covered in class by that time. The goal is to become aware of how your observations and insights about objects (objects as mundane as your wristwatch) have changed.

## **3) Observing archaeological practice – 28%**

Starting on September 17<sup>th</sup> we will spend time during the second half of the class discussing the presentation of ceramics in the archaeological report of the Hamilton site, an Iroquoian village in Ontario. After examining how the material is actually presented in the report (on September 17<sup>th</sup>) we will discuss how the readings of each week apply to the Iroquoian ceramics from the Hamilton site, what other analyses of the material could have been undertaken and what issues were not raised. On the following class a brief (no more than 3 typed pages) essay will be due where each individual student will summarize the previous week's discussions and highlight their own insights about how the Hamilton ceramics could have been analyzed and presented differently.

## **4) Telling the stories of people through things – 24%**

The final project for the class will be a personal one. Through the analysis of no more than 5 objects you will attempt to say the story of someone you know. On October 17<sup>th</sup> you will have to make a brief oral presentation in class of the person(s) you have chosen and of the object(s) that will tell their story. On October 24<sup>th</sup> you will come prepared with ideas about how you will execute your project and be ready to discuss the ethical parameters of your project, especially if it involves the participation of humans (Make sure you have read the information provided at: [http://www.mcmaster.ca/ors/ethics/faculty\\_guidelines\\_framework.htm](http://www.mcmaster.ca/ors/ethics/faculty_guidelines_framework.htm)) The largest part of the second half of the class will be devoted to the sharing of ideas and advice about how to develop a research design. Each week following October 24<sup>th</sup> part of the second half of the class will be devoted to oral presentations of your progress on your project. Finally, on November 29<sup>th</sup> the majority of the class will be devoted to the presentation of your projects. You are greatly encouraged to be creative and use any kind of media you consider appropriate to undertake and execute your project.

### Assignments at a glance

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
<i>Discussion questions</i>	Weekly September 17 <sup>th</sup> – November 29 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Leading the discussion</i>	Once in the semester Date randomly selected during class
<i>Observing the world</i> Wristwatch – a Wristwatch - b	September 17 <sup>th</sup> November 1 <sup>st</sup>
<i>Observing archaeological practice</i> Hamilton site ceramics	September 24 <sup>th</sup> How are the ceramics presented? October 3 <sup>rd</sup> - Technology October 10 <sup>th</sup> – Chaîne Opératoire & Choice October 17 <sup>th</sup> – Boundaries and Identity October 24 <sup>th</sup> – Agency and Materiality November 8 <sup>th</sup> – Cultural Biography and Memory November 15 <sup>th</sup> - Space
<i>Telling the stories of people through things</i>  Progress report (oral)     Project presentation	October 17 <sup>th</sup> - Who and what? October 24 <sup>th</sup> - How? Ethical conduct of research November 1 <sup>st</sup> – Progress November 8 <sup>th</sup> – Progress November 15 <sup>th</sup> – Progress November 22 <sup>nd</sup> – Progress and preparation  November 29 <sup>th</sup>

## **Provisional Schedule of Weekly Topics**

***Sept. 10 Introduction***

***Sept. 17 Matter – Mind***

READING: Burkitt 1998; Williams and Costall 2000; Ingold 2000; Clark 2003

***Sept. 24 Practice and the Anthropology of Technology***

READING: Lemonnier 2002; Ingold 1999; Dobres 2000; Akrich 1992

***Oct. 3 Choice and the Chaîne Opératoire***

READING: Dobres 1999; Mahias 2002; Sinclair 1995; van der Leeuw 1994

***Oct. 10 Do Things Make People? Boundaries, Identity, Gender***

READING: Dietler & Herbich 1998; Gosselain 2000; Stig Sørensen 2004; Michelaki 2008

***Oct. 17 Do Things Act? Agency and Materiality***

READING: Latour 1992; Latour 2000; Boivin 2004; Miller 2005; Ingold 2007

***Oct. 24 Do Things Have Lives? Cultural Biographies of Objects***

READING: Gosden & Marshall 1999; Kopytoff 1986; Holtorf 1998; Saunders 1999

***Nov. 1 How Do Things Help Us Remember? Memory***

READING: Olivier 2004; Lillios 1999; Lillios 2003; Van Dyke 2003; Jones(a-d) 2007

***Nov. 8 Things in Space. Taskscapes, Fragmentation***

READING: Ingold 2000a; Ingold 2000b; Bradley 2000; Chapman 2000 (pages 23-48); Gamble 2004

***Nov. 15 How Do Things Change? Learning***

READING: Crown 2007; Minar & Crown 2001; Minar 2001; Sassaman & Rudolphi 2001

***Nov. 22 How Do Things Change? Innovation***

READING: Torrence & van der Leeuw 1989; van der Leeuw 1989; Law & Callon 1992; Ingold 2000c

***Nov. 29 Conclusion and Presentations***

### **In-Class Behavior**

Students are expected to treat each other with respect and courtesy. The use of cellular phones is not permitted in any way. Laptop computers are to be used **only** to take notes. Late arrival will not be tolerated and repeated lateness will result in a lower participation grade for the course.

### **Handing in Late Assignments**

All late assignments must be put in the Anthropology Drop Box (opposite the elevator on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of CNH). Assignments are collected and date-stamped at **4:00 pm** that day. If you drop your assignment in the box after 4:00 pm it will be dated the following day. Each day (including weekends and holidays) your assignment is delayed will cost you 3% of your final grade!!! No assignment will be accepted beyond one week from its due date.

*If you miss an assignment or turn it in late, because of medical or other legitimate reasons, you must provide the Dean's Office with a medical or counsellor's note to that effect. Unless I am notified by the Dean's office, grade penalties will be applied.*

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic Dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at:

**[http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac\\_integrity.htm](http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm)**

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group-work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Academic Skills Counseling and Services for Students with Disabilities**

Available through the Centre for Student Development: **tel:** 905-525-9140 x 24711,

**e-mail:** [csd@mcmaster.ca](mailto:csd@mcmaster.ca), **website:** <http://csd.mcmaster.ca>

Guides to effective writing are also available at the university bookstore.

## READING LIST (in alphabetical order)

Akrich, M.

1992 The de-description of technical objects. In *Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, edited by W. E. Bijker and J. Law, pp. 205-224. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Boivin, N.

2004 Mind over matter? Collapsing the mind-matter dichotomy in material culture studies. In *Rethinking Materiality: The Engagement of Mind with the Material World*, edited by E. DeMarras, C. Gosden and C. Renfrew, pp. 63-71. McDonald Institute Monographs, Cambridge.

Bradley, R.

2000 Seeing through stone: Rock art research as landscape archaeology. In *An Archaeology of Natural Places*, edited by R. Bradley, pp. 64-80. Routledge, London and New York.

Burkitt, I.

1998 Bodies of knowledge: beyond Cartesian views of persons, selves and mind. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 28(1):63-82.

Chapman, J.

2000 *Fragmentation in Archaeology: People, Places and Broken Objects in the Prehistory of South Eastern Europe*. Routledge, London.

Clark, A.

2003 *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Crown, P. L.

2007 Life histories of pots and potters: Situating the individual in archaeology. *American Antiquity* 72(4):677-690.

Dietler, M. and I. Herbich

1998 Habitus, techniques, style: An integrated approach to the social understanding of material culture and boundaries. In *The Archaeology of Social Boundaries*, edited by M. T. Stark, pp. 232-263. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London.

Dobres, M.-A.

1999 Technology's links and chaînes: The processual unfolding of technique and technician. In *The Social Dynamics of Technology: Practice, Politics, and World Views*, edited by M.-A. Dobres and C. R. Hoffman, pp. 124-146. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and New York.

- 2000 Social agency and practice: The heart and soul of technology. In *Technology and Social Agency*, edited by M.-A. Dobres, pp. 127-163. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
- Gamble, C.  
2004 Social archaeology and the unfinished business of the Palaeolithic. In *Explaining Social Change: Studies in Honour of Colin Renfrew*, edited by J. Cherry, C. Scarre and S. Shennan, pp. 17-26. McDonald Institute Monographs, Cambridge.
- Gosden, C. and Y. Marshall  
1999 The cultural biography of objects. *World Archaeology* 31(2, The Cultural Biography of Objects):169-178.
- Gosselain, O. P.  
2000 Materializing identities: An African perspective. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 7(3):187-217.
- Holtorf, C. J.  
1998 The life-histories of megaliths in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany). *World Archaeology* 30(1, The Past in the Past: The Reuse of Ancient Monuments):23-38.
- Ingold, T.  
1999 Foreword. In *The Social Dynamics of Technology: Practice, Politics, and World Views*, edited by M.-A. Dobres and C. R. Hoffman, pp. vii-xi. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and New York.  
  
2000 Making culture and weaving the world. In *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, edited by P. M. Graves-Brown, pp. 50-71. Routledge, London and New York.  
  
2000a Building, dwelling, living: How animals and people make themselves at home in the world. In *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, edited by T. Ingold, pp. 172-188. Routledge, London and New York.  
  
2000b The temporality of the landscape. In *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, edited by T. Ingold, pp. 189-208. Routledge, London and New York.  
  
2000c The dynamics of technical change. In *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*, edited by T. Ingold, pp. 362-372. Routledge, London and New York.  
  
2007 Materials against materiality. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14(1):1-16.

Jones, A.

2007a Memory and material culture? In *Memory and Material Culture*, edited by A. Jones, pp. 1-26. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

2007b From memory to commemoration. In *Memory and Material Culture*, edited by A. Jones, pp. 27-46. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

2007c People, time, and remembrance. In *Memory and Material Culture*, edited by A. Jones, pp. 47-69. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

2007d Continuous houses, perpetual places: Commemoration and the lives of Neolithic houses. In *Memory and Material Culture*, edited by A. Jones, pp. 91-121. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Kopytoff, I.

1986 The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by A. Appadurai, pp. 64-91. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Latour, B.

1992 Where are the missing masses? The sociology of a few mundane artifacts. In *Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, edited by W. E. Bijker and J. Law, pp. 225-258. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

2000 The Berlin key or how to do words with things. In *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, edited by P. M. Graves-Brown, pp. 10-21. Routledge, London and New York.

Law, J. and M. Callon

1992 The life and death of an aircraft: A network analysis of technical change. In *Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, edited by W. E. Bijker and J. Law, pp. 21-52. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Lemonnier, P.

2002 Introduction. In *Technological Choices: Transformation in Material Cultures Since the Neolithic*, edited by P. Lemonnier, pp. 1-35. Routledge, London and New York.

Lillios, K. T.

1999 Objects of memory: The ethnography and archaeology of heirlooms. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 6(3):235-262.

2003 Creating memory in prehistory: The engraved slate plaques of Southwest Iberia. In *Archaeologies of Memory*, edited by R. M. Van Dyke and S. E. Alcock, pp. 129-150. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.



- Mahias, M.-C.  
2002 Pottery techniques in India: Technical variants and social choice. In *Technological Choices: Transformation in Material Cultures Since the Neolithic*, edited by P. Lemonnier, pp. 157-180. Routledge, London and New York.
- Michelaki, K.  
2008 Making pots and potters in the Bronze Age Maros villages of Kiszombor-Új-Élet and Klárafalva-Hajdova. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 18(3):327-352.
- Miller, D.  
2005 Materiality: An Introduction. In *Materiality*, edited by D. Miller, pp. 1-50. Duke University Press, Durham and London.
- Minar, J.  
2001 Motor skills and the learning process: The conservation of cordage final twist direction in communities of practice. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 57(4, Learning and Craft Production):381-405.
- Minar, J. and P. L. Crown  
2001 Learning and craft production: An introduction. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 57(4, Learning and Craft Production):369-380.
- Olivier, L.  
2004 The past of the present. Archaeological memory and time. *Archaeological Dialogues* 10 (2): 204-213.
- Sassaman, K. E. and Rudolphi, W.  
2001 Communities of practice in the early pottery traditions of the American Southeast. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 57(4, Learning and Craft Production):407-425.
- Saunders, N.  
1999 Biographies of brilliance: pearls, transformations of matter and being, c. AD 1492. *World Archaeology* 31(2, The Cultural Biography of Objects):243-257.
- Schlanger, N.  
1995 The technique as a symbol in Late Glacial Europe. *World Archaeology* 27(1, Symbolic Aspects of Early Technologies):50-62.
- Stig Sørensen, M. L.  
2004 Stating identities: the use of objects in rich Bronze Age graves. In *Explaining Social Change: Studies in Honour of Colin Renfrew*, edited by J. Cherry, C. Scarre and S. Shennan, pp. 167-176. McDonald Institute Monographs, Cambridge.
- Torrence, R. and S. E. van der Leeuw

1989 Introduction: What's new about innovation? In *What's New? A Closer Look at the Process of Innovation*, edited by S. E. van der Leeuw and R. Torrence, pp. 1-15. Unwin Hyman, London.

van der Leeuw, S. E.

1989 Risk, perception, innovation. In *What's New? A Closer Look at the Process of Innovation*, edited by S. E. van der Leeuw and R. Torrence, pp. 300-329. Unwin Hyman, London.

1994 Cognitive aspects of 'technique'. In *The Ancient Mind: Elements of Cognitive Archaeology*, edited by C. Renfrew and E. B. W. Zubrow, pp. 135-142. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Van Dyke, R. M.

2003 Memory and the construction of Chacoan society. In *Archaeologies of Memory*, edited by R. M. Van Dyke and S. E. Alcock, pp. 180-200. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.

Williams, E. and A. Costall

2000 Taking things more seriously: Psychological theories of autism and the material-social divide. In *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, edited by P. M. Graves-Brown, pp. 97-111. Routledge, London and New York.