

Georgetown University
Department of History

HIST 099 (Section 1):
Material Culture: The Material Atlantic
1450-1888

Professor Bents, Summer 2022

Course Meetings

Lecture: Monday-Friday 3:15 - 5:15 PM
White-Gravenor 213

Contacting Professor Bents

Email: cmb408@georgetown.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday, 1 - 3 PM, and by appt.

Course Description:

“Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”

-*Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*

The field of material culture encompasses objects that have been created by humans, from everyday items like pots and chairs to extravagant paintings and sculptures. Material sources reveal information about how people in the past lived, interacted with each other, and conceptualized the world and their place in it. These objects and the locations that they are displayed in can also provide insight into the process of historical memory making and mythmaking. In this course, we will use material culture to explore the history of the Atlantic World from 1450-1888 and its legacies today.

One way that we will engage with material culture is through *slow looking*. *Slow looking*, popularized by Shari Tishman and Harvard’s *Project Zero*, allows us to carefully assess our surroundings and observe details that we may miss during our busy lives, such as the rustle of leaves in the trees or the smile of a stranger on the metro. The process of *slow looking* also allows us to engage with material objects to uncover more about our present day and our history.

About the 099 Format:

HIST 099 is one of the required core classes in History. All sections of HIST 099 fulfill the same role, though each instructor will develop a specific topic. The general aim of HIST 099 is to introduce students to various elements of historical work and thinking, within the context of looking at a particular historical period, event, or theme in some depth. Though lectures and discussion will focus on particular topics, there will also be class exercises, assignments, and readings that will allow instructors and students to explore how historians identify, define, and employ primary sources of all types, how historians analyze those sources, how they formulate questions, how they engage with the work of prior historians, and how they aim to reconstruct various elements of the human experience in particular times and places.

Please note that if you receive AP/IB placement or credit, you cannot take HIST 099 (or 007 or 008) for credit.

Course Goals:

Students will be able to:

- Understand how material artifacts shape our understanding of patterns of consumption and commerce across the early modern Atlantic World
- Grow in their ability to assess and compare historical developments in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, and North and South America, and to formulate analytical questions about these processes
- Evaluate the role of material objects in processes of memory making through museums, commemorations, monuments, and memorials
- Identify, analyze, and contextualize different types of material sources, such as maps, paintings, engravings, bowls, and jewelry, and analyze the use of such sources in the production of historical memory
- Refine their reading, writing, and oral communication skills
- Develop strong *slow looking* skills to change how they observe and interact with material objects

Covid-19 & Public Health:

Because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, our class meetings will follow protocols designed by the University to protect the health of all members of the community. Students are required to wear masks at all times unless they have a university-approved disability accommodation, and no eating or drinking in class will be permitted except for students who have a medical accommodation. Free surgical-style masks are available at the entrances to university buildings and if you forget to bring your own or are wearing a cloth mask, please take a free mask and put it on before entering the building.

Course Materials

I believe that you or someone else has already made a significant financial commitment to your education. To alleviate any further stress, almost all course materials are available via the Lauinger Library site. The exceptions will be made available to you via Canvas. Your only financial responsibility will be getting yourself to the National Mall for our museum site visits. How you choose to do so (Metro vs. carpool vs. Lyft) is up to you.

Items may be added or subtracted during the semester at Professor Bents's discretion.

Grading System

A: 94-100; A-: 90-93; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; etc.

Course Assignments and Grading:

Participation in Discussion Sessions and Workshops (40%)

Critical reading, active participation, and engagement in class activities and discussions are crucial to your successful learning and the success of our class itself. It is expected that you will show respect for yourself by coming to discussion sessions prepared to learn and show respect to your peers by actively listening to their ideas. If a peer says something you disagree with, it is expected that you respond respectfully to facilitate a productive discussion. Discussion participation, engagement on Canvas discussion boards, and conversations with Professor Bents may all contribute to your participation grade.

Throughout this course, we will have workshops focused on different skills that will be of use to you as a historian, such as critically evaluating primary sources, navigating library resources, and assessing current scholarship. Many of these workshops will have a corresponding assignment, which will either be completed in class or will be due the following day.

Slow Looking in the Museum (20%)

We have the unique privilege of living in Washington, D.C., and will capitalize on that opportunity by visiting some of its museums. During each museum site visit, you will be tasked with finding an object or work of art that connects to the Atlantic world. Professor Bents will give you an assignment sheet that gives you instructions for analyzing your piece using a thinking routine modeled in class or an additional one from Harvard's [Project Zero](#). As part of the assignment, you will write a short reflection where you describe the piece, your reactions to it, how the thinking routine influenced your perceptions of it, and how your slow look at the piece helped you to think more deeply about something that we have covered in class.

Final Project: Every Object Has a Story (40%)

For your final project, you will select and research a material object that you think provides interesting insight into the Atlantic World from 1450-1888 or of its material legacies. You have two choices for how you present your findings:

- A traditional short paper of no more than 2,000 words, excluding footnotes or bibliography. Your essay should be driven by a clear thesis and provide information about the history of your object, its connections to the material Atlantic, and how it shapes our understanding or memory of a specific time and place.
- An “unessay:” Present your findings about your selected object in any manner *except* a traditional term paper. You could create a podcast, comic book, short film, board game, book of poetry, original song, etc.! Your unessay must be accompanied by a reflection of no more than 1,000 words that explains how your research drove your creative process in addition to a bibliography of your sources.

Regardless of which method you choose, your final project should reflect a good grasp on primary and scholarly secondary materials. You will present your project to the class during the final two days of class. Your project will be scaffolded as follows:

Preliminary Meeting with Professor Bents: <i>Due June 1</i>	5%
Object Selection & Project Proposal: <i>Due June 3</i>	5%
Preliminary Annotated Bibliography: <i>Due June 8</i>	5%
In-Class Presentation (5 Minutes): <i>Due June 16 or 17</i>	10%
Final Draft: <i>Due at the Time You Present</i>	15%

Classroom Procedures

Attendance

You cannot benefit from lecture or discussion if you are not present in class. During the semester, students are permitted one excused absence, no questions asked, as long as I am notified via email (preferably beforehand). This policy *excludes* the final two days of class. Please let me know if you have any extenuating circumstances that could hinder your attendance.

Communication

Educational studies show that good relationships between students and teachers leads to better learning. To get to know you, I require you to come to my office hours *at least twice* over the course of the term. I will communicate any updates or changes to class via email and will answer emails sent during the business day as promptly as possible.

Academic Honesty

I am required to report violations of the university's rules concerning academic integrity, as described in the Student Handbook. Fair use of sources is a complex issue and learning about it is part of your training as a scholar and community member. If you have any questions about whether something in your writing might constitute plagiarism, come to see me about it *before submitting your assignment—preferably well in advance of the due date*. You are also invited to bring it up in class. We will all benefit from hashing out fair use issues openly. Details on the Honor System: <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system/>

Resources

- CAPS: Stress and Mental Health: <https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/mental-health/>
 - Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are overwhelmed by coursework or need assistance in reaching out to CAPS.
- Academic Support Center: <https://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>
 - Please let me know of any accommodations you have as soon as possible so that I can best modify my instruction to your needs.
- Gender Inclusivity: <https://lgbtq.georgetown.edu/resources/transatgu/>
 - Please let me know your preferred name and pronouns.

Title IX Syllabus Statement (endorsed by Faculty Senate)

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include:

Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: confidential email sarp@georgetown.edu

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202.687.6985 or after hours, call (833) 960-3006 to reach Fonemed, a telehealth service; individuals may ask for the on-call CAPS clinician

More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#).

(Above statement and TIX faculty resources found at:

<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help/guidance-for-faculty-and-staff-on-how-to-support-students/>)

Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments/modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need.

SCS students must complete the [Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form](#) (<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/>) and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process.

More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the [Title IX at Georgetown University Website](#).

Course Schedule and Readings

Unit 1: What is Material Culture? What is Atlantic history? How can Material Culture help us understand Atlantic history?

Monday, May 23: What is Material Culture?

Lecture: Introduction to the Course & Every Object Has a Story

Assigned Materials

- Select an object that is of personal or sentimental value to you, preferably not your cell phone or laptop, and submit a photo of it via Canvas to Professor Bents by the end of the day on Friday, May 20. We will share them with each other during class today to introduce ourselves to our peers and to begin thinking with objects.
- Tishman, Shari. "Chapter 1: Introduction: Slow Matters." In *Slow Looking: The Art and Practice of Learning Through Observation*. New York: Routledge, 2018. Pages 1-7. (On Canvas)

Tuesday, May 24: What is Atlantic History?

Lecture: Introduction to Atlantic History

Workshop: Primary Source Analysis: Objects & Images

Assigned Materials

- Games, Alison. "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* (AHR) 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 741-757.

Unit 2: How Do Material Items Provide Deeper Understanding of the Atlantic World, 1450-1888?

Wednesday, May 25: How did interactions between people and animals lead to the creation of an Atlantic World?

Lecture: Encounters, Conquest, & Colonization

Workshop: Primary Source Analysis: Documents

Assigned Materials

- O'Toole, James M. "Cortes's Notary: The Symbolic Power of Records." *Archival Science* 2, no. 1 (2002): 45-61.

Thursday, May 26: How did the expansion of the Atlantic World influence producers and consumers?

Lecture: *A New Era of Commodities*

Discussion: *The Consequences of Consumption*

Assigned Materials

- Warsh, Molly A. "A Political Ecology in the Early Spanish Caribbean." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (2014): 517–48.
<https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.71.4.0517>.

Friday, May 27: How were new products from the Atlantic World captured in art?

Museum Site Visit: [National Gallery of Art](#) (West Building)

I highly recommend arriving at 3 PM if possible so that you get a full 2 hours in the museum. When you arrive, check in and get an assignment sheet from me in the Garden Cafe (located near the 6th Street entrance to the West Building). At 5 PM when the museum closes, we will gather outside on the mall side (Meeting spot: corner of 7th and Madison), have a 30-minute discussion about what we saw in the museum, and submit assignment sheets.

Monday, May 30: No Class, Memorial Day

Tuesday, May 31: How did eating and drinking change with the rise of the Atlantic World?

Lecture: *New Foods & Drinks*

Workshop: *Library Resources: Finding Secondary Sources and Using Databases*

Assigned Materials

- McWilliams, James E. "Negotiation: living high and low on the hog in the Chesapeake Bay region." In *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Pages 89-130. (On Canvas)
- Optional: "Episode 2: The Rice Kingdom." *High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*. Available on Netflix.

Wednesday, June 1: What can objects tell us about the transatlantic slave trade?

Lecture: *Slavery & The Atlantic World*

Workshop: *Studying Slavery*

Assigned Materials

- Morgan, Jennifer L. *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021. Excerpts (On Canvas)

Thursday, June 2: What can objects tell us about the transatlantic slave trade?

Museum Site Visit: [National Museum of African American History & Culture](#) (COVID-Depending)

I highly recommend arriving at 3 PM if possible so that you get a full 2 hours in the museum. When you arrive, check in and get an assignment sheet from me by the Welcome Desk (located on the floor you enter on). At 5 PM when the museum closes, we will gather outside on the mall side (Meeting spot: corner of 14th and Madison), have a 30-minute discussion about what we saw in the museum, and submit assignment sheets.

Friday, June 3: What can objects tell us about the dissemination of ritual and religion across the Atlantic?

Lecture: *Rituals & Religions*

Discussion: *Materials & Beliefs*

Assigned Materials

- Ogundiran, Akinwumi. "Cowries and Rituals of Self-Realization in the Yoruba Region, ca. 1600–1860." In *Materialities of Ritual in the Black Atlantic*, edited by Akinwumi Ogundiran and Paula Saunders, 68–86. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gh620.7>.
- "A string of cowrie shells." National Museum of African American History and Culture, Smithsonian Institution. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/cowrie-shells-and-trade-power>.

Monday, June 6: What can objects tell us about the entanglement of and conflicts between empires in the Atlantic World?

Lecture: *Empires in Conflict*

Workshop: *Paper Writing: Thesis Statements, Evidence, and Citations*

Assigned Materials

- "Speeches and treaties between William Johnson and the Iroquois, 1755-1756." Digital Public Library of America. <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/perspectives-on-the-french-and-indian-war/sources/213>.
- Farago, Jason. "The Myth of North America, in One Painting." *The New York Times*. November 25, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/11/25/arts/benjamin-west-general-wolfe.html>.

Tuesday, June 7: How do objects increase our understanding of the Age of Revolutions?

Lecture: *The American Revolution*

Workshop: *What is Historiography?*

Assigned Materials:

- “Virtual Museum Tour.” Philadelphia, Museum of the American Revolution. Accessed October 17, 2021. <https://www.amrevmuseum.org/virtual-museum-tour>.
- Alexander, Kimberly S. “Purchasing Patriotism: Politicization of Shoes, 1760s-1770s.” *Age of Revolutions*. March 4, 2019. <https://ageofrevolutions.com/2019/03/04/purchasing-patriotism-politicization-of-shoes-1760s-1770s/>.

Wednesday, June 8: How do objects increase our understanding of the Age of Revolutions?

Lecture: *The Haitian Revolution*

Discussion: *An Unthinkable History?*

Assigned Materials:

- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. “Chapter 3: An Unthinkable History.” In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2015. Pages 70-107. (Available on Lauinger’s Site)
- John Carter Brown Library, [The Other Revolution: Haiti 1789-1804](#).
- “To Toussaint L’Ouverture” William Wordsworth (1770–1850). <https://www.bartleby.com/41/390.html>.

Thursday, June 9: How can objects increase our understanding of the new American republic?

Museum Site Visit (TBD)

Friday, June 10: What can material objects tell us about resistance and abolition?

Lecture: *Commerce and the Age of Abolition*

Discussion: *Resistance and Revolt*

Assigned Materials

- Cairus, José T. “Islamic Transnationalism and Anti-Slavery Movements: The Malê Rebellion as Debated by Brazil’s Press, 1835–1838.” In *The Middle East and Brazil: Perspectives on the New Global South*, edited by Amar Paul, by Silva Eduardo Viana Da, 182-98. Indiana University Press, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gzp54.12>.

Unit 3: Where Can We See The Material Legacies of the Atlantic World Today?

Monday, June 13: Where do we see the material legacies of Atlantic History in museums?

Museum Site Visit: [National Museum of the American Indian](#)

I highly recommend arriving at 3 PM if possible so that you get a full 2 hours in the museum. When you arrive, check in and get an assignment sheet from me (I’ll be near the Independence Ave entrance). At 5 PM when the museum closes, we will gather outside on the mall side (Meeting spot: corner of 4th and Jefferson), have a 30-minute discussion about what we saw in the museum, and submit assignment sheets.

Tuesday, June 14: Where do we see the material legacies of Atlantic History in museums and other sites?

Lecture: *Museums, Historic Sites, & Commemorations*

Discussion: *Material Memories*

Assigned Materials

- Angeleti, Gabriella. “North American museums face a reckoning on Indigenous rights.” *The Art Newspaper*. December 2, 2021. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/12/02/museums-face-reckoning-on-indigenous-representation>.
- Deloria, Philip J. “The New World of the Indigenous Museum.” *Daedalus* 147, no. 2 (2018): 106–15. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48563023>.
- “Rijksmuseum & Slavery: New light on the permanent collection.” Rijksmuseum. Accessed October 15, 2021. <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/rijksmuseum-and-slavery/>.
 - [10 Objects with a Connection to Slavery](#)

Wednesday, June 15: How are the material memories of Atlantic History captured or distorted in monuments and memorials?

Lecture: *Monuments & Memories*

Discussion: *Georgetown & Slavery*

Assigned Materials

- “The Price of Georgetown: A Walking Tour of Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation at Georgetown.”
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/dd3964df6f424558af3f65748b560e81>.
- AMTH 354 Fall 2016. “ARTH 354 Georgetown Memorial Proposal.” Georgetown Slavery Archive. <http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/211>.
- Georgetown Film and Media Studies [Organization]. “With the Promise to Always Remember.” YouTube. May 13, 2021. Video, 13:59.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkTJoEFHK94&t=2s&ab_channel=GeorgetownFilmAndMediaStudies%5BOrganization%5D.

Thursday, June 16: Every Object Has a Story

Final Project Presentations

Friday, June 17: Every Object Has a Story

Final Project Presentations