

HIST 4000/7772  
Premodern things: Material Culture in the Premodern Past  
Thursdays, 8:30 am  
Roisin Cossar  
454 Fletcher Argue  
[roisin.cossar@umanitoba.ca](mailto:roisin.cossar@umanitoba.ca)

Office hours: Thursdays after class (11:30-12:30) or by appointment

In this course we will investigate how material culture contributes to our understanding of premodern history (roughly 400-1800 CE). The course is divided into two units. In the first unit we will examine how historians have approached material culture in the medieval and early modern past, and in the second unit we will analyze some specific aspects of material culture ourselves.

Required Text (available at the Bookstore)

Karen Harvey, ed. *History and Material Culture: a Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, Routledge, 2009.

Other texts can be accessed via the Library website, on UMLearn, or on the reserve shelves at the Elizabeth Dafoe library.

Assignments and evaluation for HIST 4000:

1. Research paper, 4000-5000 words. Select an artifact, a group of artifacts, or a text or texts from the medieval or early modern period in which artifacts appear. Set the artifact(s) in their historical context, explain how studying the artifact(s) illuminates a historical question, and, where possible, critically examine how other historians have engaged with the artifact or text in question. You will present a proposal of your work in class on Feb. 11 for comment and critique. You will also present the completed project (as both an oral and visual presentation) at a class symposium on April 7. The final version of the paper is also due on April 7. Total marks: proposal (5%)+presentation (7.5%) + paper (30%) = 42.5% of final mark.
2. Class participation: This includes both general participation (speaking AND active listening) in weekly discussions and leadership of one of our seminar meetings (to be scheduled on the first day of class). As seminar leader, you will come to class prepared to raise questions arising from the readings, and you will work with me to manage the class discussion. I will meet with the week's leader in advance of the class to discuss how to do this. Total marks: seminar leadership (7.5%) + general participation (25%) = 32.5% of final mark.
3. Annotations of each reading/video/podcast assigned for class, prepared according to the general principles of the template attached to this syllabus. These are to be handed in three times in the term (Feb.4, March 17 and March 31). Annotations for each week are worth 2.5% of your final mark, for a total of 25% of your final mark.

Assignments and evaluation for HIST 7772:

1. Research paper, 6000-8000 words. Select an artifact, a group of artifacts, or a text or texts from the medieval or early modern period in which artifacts appear. Set the artifact(s) in their historical context,

explain how studying the artifact(s) illuminates a historical question, and critically examine how other historians have engaged with the artifact or text in question. You will present a proposal of your work in class on Feb. 11 for comment and critique. You will also present the completed project (as both an oral and visual presentation) at a class symposium on April 7. The final version of the paper is also due on April 7. Total marks: proposal (5%)+presentation (7.5%) + paper (30%) = 42.5% of final mark.

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3. Annotations of each reading assigned for class, prepared according to the general principles of the template attached to this syllabus. These are to be handed in three times in the term (Feb.4, March 17 and March 31). Annotations for each week are worth 2.5% of your final mark, for a total of 25% of your final mark.

*Uncollected term work will become the property of the Faculty of Arts and will be subject to confidential destruction.*

*Students who wish to appeal a grade given for term work must do so within 10 working days **after the grade for the term work** has been made available to them.*

Please approach me about extensions before assignment due dates. I reserve the right to deduct 2% per day (excluding weekends) from late work.

Evaluative feedback will be provided before the VW date, March 18, 2016.

#### Grade distribution

A+	88-100
A	80-87
B+	75-79
B	70-74
C+	65-69
C	60-64
D	50-59
F	Below 50

#### Classroom routines

Class will run from 8:30 to 11:15 every Thursday. We will usually take a break at about 10 am. Coffee or other drinks are fine during class meetings; please have breakfast before we begin. If you are going to be late, or if you must leave early, please let me know ahead of time (email is best, and I do see messages before class on Thursday mornings).

### Academic Integrity

*The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism on a written assignment is a grade of F on the paper and a final grade of F (DISC) (for Disciplinary Action) for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as purchase of an essay and repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five (5) years from registration in courses taught in a particular department/program in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty.*

*The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism or to other experts for authentication.*

*The common penalty in Arts for academic dishonesty on a test or examination is F for the paper, F (DISC) for the course, and a one-year suspension from courses acceptable for credit in the Faculty. For more serious acts of academic dishonesty on a test or examination, such as repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or program in Arts or from all courses taught in or accepted for credit by this Faculty.*

## Reading List

**Subject to changes and additions before our first meeting in January, and thereafter with the consensus of the class**

Readings (articles, monographs, and essays from collected volumes) are usually available in the UM Library system. If UM does not own the journal/essay collection/book in which readings appear, I will make them available before class meetings.

### ***I. Theoretical and methodological perspectives***

#### Week 1, January 7

Course Introductions; sign up for weekly seminar leadership

Giorgio Riello, "Introduction to Material Culture" lecture video

#### Week 2, January 14

Approaches to Histories of Material Culture I

a. Karen Harvey, "Introduction," *History and Material Culture: a Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*

b. Giorgio Riello, "Things that Shape History: Material culture and historical narratives," in Harvey, ed. *History and Material Culture: a Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, 24-46

c. Jules David Prown, "The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction," in Steven Lubar and W. David Kingesly, eds. *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington: the Smithsonian Institution, 1993)

d. Glenn Adamson, "The case of the missing footstool: reading the absent object," in Harvey, ed. *History and Material Culture: a Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, 192-207

e. Paula Findlen, "Early Modern Things: Objects in Motion, 1500-1800," in Findlen, ed. *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500-1800*, (Routledge, 2013), 3-27 (on reserve at Dafoe)

#### Week 3, January 21

Approaches to Histories of Material Culture II

a. AHR conversation: "Historians and Material Culture," *American Historical Review* (2009): 1355-1404

b. Giorgio Riello, "'Things Seen and Unseen': The material culture of early modern inventories and their representation of domestic interiors," in Paula Findlen, ed. *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500-1800*, (Routledge, 2013), 125-150 (on reserve at Dafoe)

#### Week 4, January 28

Approaches to Histories of Material Culture III

a. Roisin Cossar, "Notaries, Registers, and Archives," (typescript book chapter)

b. Carolyn Dean, "Beyond prescription: notarial doodles and other marks," *Word & Image*, 25:3 (2009): 293-316

c. Kathryn Burns, "Notaries, Truth, and Consequences," *The American Historical Review* 110, 2 (2005): 350-380

d. 2014 panel discussion with Filippo de Vivo, Erik Ketelaar, Jesse Sponholz at the British Academy: Archives and Society: Record Keeping in Historical and Contemporary Perspective,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1mhiPrwrMg>

### Week 5, February 4

#### Primary sources

- a. Wills (*Lincoln Wills, 1271-1489* online at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lincoln-wills/vol1/pp1-19>), selections
- b. *Letters to Francesco Datini*, selections
- c. Visual sources (to be determined together, including the *Bayeux Tapestry* and suggestions in the Harvey volume)

### **First set of annotations due in class**

### Week 6, February 11

Presentation of paper proposals for discussion and critique

February 18

**No Class, Winter break**

## **II. *Things in History***

### Week 7, February 25

#### House and Home

- a. Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, "Introduction," *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, (on reserve at Architecture/Fine Arts)
- b. Roisin Cossar, "At Home in the Cleric's House in Trecento Italy," (typescript book chapter)
- c. Elizabeth S. Cohen and Thomas V. Cohen, "Open and Shut: the Social Meanings of the Cinquecento Roman House," *Studies in the Decorative Arts*, 9,1 (2001): 61-84
- d. Sara Pennell, "Mundane materiality, or, should small things still be forgotten?" in Harvey, ed. *History and Material Culture: a Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, 173-191
- e. Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey, *Healthy Living in late Renaissance Italy* podcast (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAKJTzi7XfQ>)

### Week 8, March 3

#### Clothing, Textiles, and Fashion

- a. Beverleu Lemire, "Draping the Body and Dressing the Home: the material culture of textiles and clothes in the Atlantic world, c. 1500-1800," in Harvey, ed. *History and Material Culture: a Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, 85-102.
- b. Ulinka Rublack, "Matter in the Material Renaissance," *Past and Present* 219 (2013): 41-85
- c. Anne Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge, 2000), selections
- d. Patricia Allerston, "Reconstructing the Second-hand Clothes Trade in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Venice", *Costume. The Journal of the Costume Society* 13 (1999): 46-56
- e. Michelle A. Laughran and Andrea Vianello, "Grandissima Gratia: The Power of Italian Renaissance Shoes as Intimate Wear", in *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories*, ed. Bella Mirabella (Ann Arbor, 2011)

### Week 9, March 10

## Global Things

- a. Mark A. Peterson, "The World in a Shilling: Silver coins and the challenge of political economy in the early modern Atlantic world," in Findlen, ed. *Early Modern Things*, 252-273 (on reserve at Dafoe)
- b. Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (Cambridge, 2015) (on reserve at Dafoe)

## Week 10, March 17

### Matter, Materials, and Religious Culture

- a. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality: an essay on religion in late medieval Europe* (New York: Zone, 2011), selections (on reserve at Dafoe)
- b. Maureen Miller, *Clothing the Clergy: Virtue and Power in Medieval Europe, c. 800-1200* (Ithaca: Cornell, 2014), selections
- c. Caroline Walker Bynum Stanford lecture on miracles and Christian Materiality:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCvy2SY5Dd4>

## **Second set of annotations due in class**

## Week 11, March 24

### Production and Consumption

- a. Tessa Storey, "Prostitution and the Circulation of Second-Hand Goods in Early Modern Rome," in Laurence Fontaine, ed. *Alternative Exchanges* (2008), 61-75
- b. Jaco Zuijderduijn and Roos van Oosten, "Breaking the piggy bank: what can historical and archeological sources tell us about late-medieval saving behaviour?" CGEH Working Paper Series, no. 65
- c. Corey Tazzara, "Capricious Demands: Artisanal goods, business strategies, and consumer behavior in seventeenth-century Florence," in Findlen, ed. *Early Modern Things*, 204-224 (on reserve at Dafoe)
- d. Karin Dannehl, "Object biographies: From production to consumption," in Harvey ed. *History and Material Culture: a Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, 123-38
- e. Pamela H. Smith, "Making Things: Techniques and books in early modern Europe," in Findlen, ed. *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500-1800*, 173-203 (on reserve at Dafoe)

## Week 12, March 31

### Modern responses to premodern things

- a. Caroline Walker Bynum "The Presence of Objects: Medieval Anti-Judaism in Modern Germany," *Common Knowledge* 10,1 (2004): 1-32
- b. Randolph Starn, "A Historian's Brief Guide to New Museum Studies," *AHR* (2005): 68-98
- c. Paula Findlen, "The Renaissance in the Museum," in Allen J. Grieco, Michael Rocke, and Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi, eds., *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century: Acts of an International Conference, Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 9-11, 1999* (Florence, 2002), 93-116

## **Third set of annotations due in class**

## Week 13, April 7

### Final symposium

### **Final paper due**

## ANNOTATING FOR RESEARCH

### A primer by Judith Bennett (edited/adapted by RC)

Annotation will help you survive fifty years in academia. If you read an article today, you will likely remember absolutely nothing about it when you need to write about the subject in three months. But if you have annotated that article, you will always have ready access to its essentials. (“Ready access” will be further facilitated if you start placing all your annotations in a good searchable database, such as Access or Zotero).

A good annotation relates all the essential points about an article or book. It includes:

**CITATION:** Be complete. Adhere to a standard form (Chicago, in most cases).

**TOPIC AND THESIS:** these are different! Keep them separate.

**SOURCES, METHODS, THEORY:** identify the sources used as specifically as possible. Look at how they are interpreted. Is their content taken “at face value”? Or is there evidence of critical analysis? What methodological approaches have been used? What is the explicit or implicit theoretical perspective?

**HISTORIOGRAPHIC CONTEXT:** Locate this work within discussions and debates that scholars are having about the topic. Use the notes to help with this.

**ASSESSMENT:** Certainly give your own assessment, although don’t do too much of this and (try to) downplay evaluative language like “good,” “bad,” “incomprehensible,” or “sucks.”

**SPECIFICS:** Here are the detailed (and even lengthy) notes that only you can love.

**KEYWORDS:** for later searching. Be consistent with your choice of these and keep a separate list of them.

**DATE:** Give the date you did the annotation. Why? In 2018, you might want to know that you read this in 2016, when you were young and naïve.

Be concise; be precise. Occasional wit can be a welcome relief (for yourself now and yourself later).

#### Here’s a fast example:

12. Doe, Jane, “Blah, Blah,” *Academic Journal* 12:3, 12-53.

**TOPIC AND THESIS:** Doe tackles blah blah, arguing specifically that . . . .

**SOURCES AND METHODS:** Records of xyz, as found in abc. Doe reads these records closely, in the fashion of a literary critic, but she also crunches them quantitatively. I was particularly struck by how she . . . .

**HISTORIOGRAPHIC CONTEXT:** This article fits generally into discussions about blah blah (see items 3 and 4). Doe also critiques the methods of Other Historian (item 7) as insufficient blah blah.

**ASSESSMENT:** Blah, but Third Historian (give ref.) also says blah.

**SPECIFICS:**

- Chapter 2 is a really good summary of blah.
- On page 210, She says blah. Can this be right?
- **KEYWORDS:** blah; blah blah; blah blah blah **DATE:** 25 January 2016

For extra fun, here are a few talks online from the Bard Graduate Centre you might want to watch:

Peter Burke, History and Material Culture, concluding discussion of History and Material Culture Workshop at Bard Graduate Centre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7AL09vVY1Y>

Other talks from the same workshop include "Understanding People through Their Things" — Edward Cooke, Daniel Lord Smail: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMUdzR11JSE> (search the workshop title for more talks)

Paula Findlen on the crocodile in early modern culture: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uU6RVh-m8c0>

Brendan Dooley, Angelica's Book: Material Culture and the Power of Reading: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEP4OXo-KT8>

Nathan Schlanger, 'Material Culture': The Concept and its Use in Historical Perspective: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WD8mopXzfmQ>

Giorgio Riello on global things, talk will live stream on April 5 2016, 4:30 pm EST here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYwOh0OcVTE>

On the history of science, see:

Simon Schaffer: "Understanding (through) Things": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BAZO9AWCwk>