AMERICAN MATERIAL CULTURE AND FOLKLIFE

American Studies Program, Penn State Harrisburg AM ST 531, Summer 2010, 1st session, MW 6-9:15 p.m.

Schedule No.: 477250

Location: E310 Olmsted Building

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American Studies Program
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Description

This course offers perspectives on American material culture as the interconnection of tangible, human-made forms reflecting cultural ideas and traditions. It sets folk art, craft, and architecture as special evidence of people's relation to place—in community, region, nation, ethnicity, and individuality—within American experience. The seminar centrally questions the symbols, identities, and functions that diverse communities have created in that American experience. The structure of the course is as follows:

- 1. It begins with an overview of American material culture and ways of documenting it.
- 2. It follows with a regional survey of folk architecture, and then consideration of other ways of organizing folk architectural study by community, ethnicity, and occupation.
- 3. The next section takes up craft and art that can be integrated with and applied to aspects of material culture such as food, furnishing, and clothing.
- 4. Examples of folk museum applications will be interspersed throughout the semester, but the last class will be devoted to folk museum interpretation and public heritage as representational and documentary contexts for material culture.

Students will engage folk art and architecture in the field as well as in the classroom. Weather permitting, two meetings will be done at historic material culture sites in Middletown near the campus. As a seminar, it will encourage presentation and exchange of research among students. The class will utilize multiple media and computer resources, including an "Angel" web site for the course at cms.psu.edu.

Required Texts

Bronner, Simon J. *The Carver's Art: Crafting Meaning from Wood*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996. NK9712.B749 1996.

______. *Grasping Things: Folk Material Culture and Mass Society*. 1986 rpt., Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005. E161.B78 1986

Glassie, Henry. *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968. GR105.G56 1971.

Supplementary Texts (On Angel):

- Bronner, Simon J. "Folk Objects," in *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres*, ed. Elliott Oring, pp. 199-224. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986. Web
- _____. "Material Culture" and "Folklife Movement," in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand, pp. 463-66, 282-85. New York: Garland, 1996. Web
- _____. "Folkloristic," In Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World, 3 vols., ed. Paul Oliver, pp. I, 40-42, III, 1845-47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Dethlefsen, Edwin and James Deetz. "Death's Heads, Cherubs, and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries." *American Antiquity* 31 (1966): 502-510.
- Fleming, E. McLung. "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," Winterthur Portfolio 9 (1974): 153-73.
- Francaviglia, Richard V. "Mormon Central-Hall Houses in the American West." Annals of the Association of American Geographers 61 (1971): 65-71.
- Jones, Michael Owen. "How Can We Apply Event Analysis to 'Material Behavior,' and Why Should We?" Western Folklore 56 (1997): 199-214.
- Marshall, Howard Wight. "Folklife and the Rise of American Folk Museums." *Journal of American Folklore* 90 (1977): 391-413.
- Roberts, Warren. "Fieldwork: Recording Material Culture," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, pp. 431-44. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.
- Turner, Tim. "Sod Houses in Nebraska." Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology 7 (1975): 21-37

Course Requirements:

<u>Grading</u> is determined by evaluating the student's demonstration of scholarship and communication skills in written and oral presentations. 20 percent of the grade consists of evaluation of the artifact report (due June 8); another 20 percent of the grade consists of oral remarks in assignments (see task list for May 20 and June 22). These assignments lead to the final project (June 24) which consists of your answers to a questionnaire (referred to as the interpretation project). It is worth 60 percent of the grade. The interpretation project extends the work on the artifact report by demonstrating interpretation of a collection of artifacts, artifacts in context, or a behavioral/psychological study of a maker. <u>Forms and guidelines for the assignments will be posted on Angel. Submissions will be done through the electronic "Drop Box" on Angel; students will be shown how to complete this process.</u>

Oral Remarks Grading Rubric (maximum of 20 points):

ATTRIBUTE	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
1. Student followed guidelines and instructions of assignment (e.g., length, theme, timeliness)	4	3	2	1	0
2. Student communication is engaging and articulate	4	3	2	1	0
3. Student contribution demonstrates knowledge and/or research of subject	4	3	2	1	0
4. Student contribution demonstrates insight, creativity, and/or imagination	4	3	2	1	0
5. Remarks are well composed, and logical in sequence and content	4	3	2	1	0
Subtotal	20				

Written Assignments (artifact report) Grading Rubric (20 points):

ATTRIBUTE	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
1. Student followed guidelines and instructions of assignment (e.g., length, theme, timeliness)	4	3	2	1	0
2. Student contribution is thorough and properly documented	4	3	2	1	0
3. Student contribution demonstrates knowledge and/or research of subject	4	3	2	1	0
4. Student contribution demonstrates insight, creativity, and/or imagination	4	3	2	1	0

5. Written or visual contributions are clear, well composed, and logical in sequence and content	4	3	2	1	0
Subtotal	20				

Interpretation Project Grading Rubric (1 @ 60 points each):

ATTRIBUTE	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsatisfactory or Incomplete
I. Composition	30	27	24	21	18
A. Clarity and Tone	10	9	8	7	6 or below
B. Mechanics	10	9	8	7	6 or below
C. Strength of Documentation	10	9	8	7	6 or below
II. Scholarship	30	27	24	21	18
A. Design of Topic and Research Problem	10	9	8	7	6 or below
B. Application of Analytical Tools and Strength of Interpretation	10	9	8	7	6 or below
C. Use of Scholarly Sources	10	9	8	7	6 or below
Total possible points	60 (A)	54(B+ to B-)	48(C+ to C-)	42(D)	36 (F)

Summary of Assignments, Dates Due, and Grading:

Type of Assignment	Date Due	Maximum Course Points
Participation	Assignments in Syllabus May 20, June 22	20

Written Assignment	Artifact report (see worksheet in Class Information folder under Lessons tab), June 8	20
Interpretation Project	Using Questionnaire Template (see Class Information folder under Lessons tab in ANGEL) and taking one of the following: Textual, Contextual, or Behavioral Approach, June 24	60
TOTAL		100

Points Conversion to Grades:

Points	Grade	Quality of Performance (for Graduate Work)	GPA Equivalent
94-100	Α	Exceptional Achievement	4.00
90-93	A-	Excellent Achievement	3.67
87-89	B+	Good Achievement	3.33
83-86	В	Acceptable Achievement	3.00
80-82	B-	Below-Average Achievement	2.67
77-79	C+	Below-Average Achievement	2.33
70-76	С	Below-Average Achievement	2.00
60-69	D	Inadequate for Graduate Work	1.00
Below 60	F	Did not complete requirements of class	0.00
	XF	Academic Dishonesty	0.00

Regular attendance and constructive participation in class discussions by students are important to the effectiveness of the class. If the student cannot attend classes, he or she should report problems to the instructor and arrange to make up the work. Penn State Policy states that a student whose irregular attendance causes him or her, in the judgment of the instructor, to become deficient scholastically, may run the risk of receiving a failing grade or receiving a lower grade than the student might have secured had the student been in regular attendance. Participation by students in class should not be disruptive or offensive to other class members. See university policies on attendance for more information and note the summary of policies on attendance, academic honesty, and access at the end of this syllabus.

<u>The interpretation project</u> should use one of the approaches to interpreting artifacts: textual (by reference to a comparative collection), contextual (by reference to an artifact ethnographically examined in situ), or behavioral (by reference to interview or observation of a maker or user). It should utilize artifactual evidence in relation to American culture. The assignments in the class take you through the research and writing process, with feedback from the instructor at each step. Students should use Word or Word Perfect for essays.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Lesson Number and Date	Title (Summaries Below)	Student Tasks
1 Monday, May 17	Objectives of Course History and Philosophy of Material Culture and Folklife Studies	Read syllabus Review course schedule

READ: (all readings in Readings 2 Differentiating folder under Lessons tab in ANGEL) **Between Folk** Wednesday, As Background of Material Culture and Popular May 19 and Folklife Approaches: Objects; Bronner, "Folk Objects" in Oring, Models of Folk Groups and Folklore Genres Bronner, "Material Culture" in Identification and American Folklife: An Encyclopedia Interpretation Bronner, "Folkloristic" from Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World Roberts, "Recording Material Culture" As Textual Approach Deetz and Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow" Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model" pp. 162-73 As Contextual Approach: Bronner, "Folklife Movement" in American Folklife: An Encyclopedia As Behavioral Approach: Jones, "Material Behavior" REVIEW links: (See Links folder under Lessons tab) American Memory Project Cataloguing Examples Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies Online Archive of American Folk Medicine Quilt Index Vernacular Architecture Forum

3 Monday, May 24	Native, Transplanted, and Adapted forms of Folk Architecture in the US: New England Extended	READ: Glassie, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture, pp. 1-153, BRING TO CLASS: folk object to discuss
4 Wednesday, May 26	Development and Diffusion of Folk Architecture: The South	READ: Complete Glassie, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture, pp. 154-241.
5 Wednesday, June 3	Special Problems of a Pluralistic Society: Pennsylvania	Confer with Professor on topic for interpretation project (by appointment or through Angel discussion forum)

6 Monday, June 8	Visit to Star Barn and Tools for Research (Computer Lab/Art Studio)	REVIEW: Star Barn Website (see links list in Links folder under Lessons tab) Location: Meet at 6 p.m. Nissley Drive, Middletown, PA Return to lab or art studio Review Interpretation Questionnaire in Class Information folder under Lessons tab Artifact Report Due (Worksheets available in Class Information folder under Lessons tab)
7 Wednesday, June 10	Development and Diffusion of Folk Architecture: The West, with case studies of Mormon and Sod Houses	READ: Francivaglia, Mormon Central-Hall Houses Turner, "Sod Houses"
8 Monday, June 15	Urban and Community Issues in Folk Architecture and Craft Other Material Culture Genres: Food and Dress	READ: Bronner, Grasping Things REVIEW: Food Timeline link Online Archive of American Folk Medicine link Traditional Dress link

9 Wednesday, June 17	Folk Art and Craft: Behavioral and Psychological Perspectives	Bronner, Carver's Art
10 Monday, June 22	Folk Craft and Art: Historical and Social Perspectives	Oral Student Project Descriptions REVIEW: Index of American Design link

11 Wednesday, June 24	Presenting Material Culture and Folklife: Museums, Festivals, and other Applied/Research Settings	LAST CLASS! (No exam period) READ: Marshall, "Rise of American Folk Museums" REVIEW LINKS: (See Links folder under Lessons tab in ANGEL) American Folklife Center American Folklore Society Folk Streams Material Culture Caucus Material Culture Journal PHMC Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage Winterthur Portfolio Interpretation Questionnaires Due (see Class Information folder under Lessons tab for questionnaire and drop box)

N.B. Schedule Subject to Change

Descriptions of Lessons

1. Monday, May 18

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE
HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF MATERIAL CULTURE STUDIES

-The first session will cover the significance of material culture and folklife in American Studies, the requirements of the course, and the course web site. The second part of the session will cover the rise of material culture studies and significance of the artifact as intellectual evidence in the nineteenth century and its changing purposes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The directions for material culture studies in the twenty-first century will be discussed and an outline of sources for material culture will be provided. The research project and the steps leading to it: artifact report, proposal, oral remarks, and interpretation project will be explained.

2. Wednesday, May 20

FOLK AND POPULAR OBJECTS MODELS OF INTERPRETATION

—This session will discuss the analytical distinctions of folk, popular, and elite in material culture studies. It will introduce models of interpretation under the general categories of textual, contextual, and behavioral approaches and their relations to American Studies. Historical, sociological, geographical, anthropological, and archaeological concerns will be discussed in the rise of an interdisciplinary material culture field. This session will cover the distinctive challenge and potential in conducting field work in material culture, and the skills and tools needed. The requirements of the interpretation project, following guidelines in material culture scholarship, will be discussed. We will also discuss resources for American fieldwork. The applications as well as research of material culture in public and academic fields will be discussed. Students will bring in "traditional" artifacts for the class to analyze orally.

READING:

Bronner, "Folk Objects" in Oring, Folk Groups and Folklore Genres (on ANGEL)

Bronner, "Material Culture" and "Folklife Movement" in American Folklore: An Encyclopedia (on ANGEL)

Bronner, "Folkloristic" in *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World* (on ANGEL) Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model" from *Winterthur Portfolio* (on Angel) Deetz and Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow" from *American Antiquity* (on

ANGEL)

Jones, "Material Behavior" from *Western Folklore* (on Angel)
Roberts, "Fieldwork: Recording Material Culture" in Dorson, *Folklore and Folklife* (on ANGEL)

REVIEW: (all links in Links folder under Lessons tab)

American Memory Project
Cataloguing Examples
Center for Pennsylvania Culture Studies
Quilt Index
Vernacular Architecture Forum

N.B. NO CLASS ON MEMORIAL DAY, MONDAY, MAY 25

3. Wednesday, May 27

NATIVE, TRANSPLANTED, AND ADAPTED FORMS OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

—These sessions emphasize the comparison of forms to arrive at a historical-geographical "morphology" and typology of American folk architecture. We cover the definitions of "folk" and "vernacular" architecture and their relations to "folklife" and "popular culture." Students will discuss Native-American architecture and the settlement patterns and architecture types brought by European settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particularly in New England. The hybridization and adaptation of forms will be discussed.

READ: Introductory and New England sections of Glassie, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture

4. Monday, June 1

DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFUSION OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE IN AMERICAN MATERIAL CULTURE: THE SOUTH

--These sessions will show the uses of folk architecture to identify cultural geographical movements, landscapes, and regions in the United States. Beginning with early American regions to form, the sessions will take up the distinctive settlement and architectural patterns of the South. Issues of subregional development (Appalachia, Creole Region of Louisiana, Carolina Low Country) and racial material culture (African-American suppression and

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expression) will be discussed.

READ:

Complete Glassie, Pattern in the Material Folk Culture

5. Wednesday, June 3

THE SPECIAL PROBLEM OF A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY: PENNSYLVANIA

-Pennsylvania is a special problem in American material culture studies because it was arguably the last region to form and it reflected mixed ethnic influences more than other regions. Among the influences are German, English, Scots-Irish, and Welsh. These sessions will explore the process of hybridization and adaptation in Pennsylvania with the examples of the barn and farmhouse.

6. Monday, June 8

--In this session, we will practice documentation of a historic site, including measuring and mapping. We will return to the art studio or computer lab to use drawing tools to prepare floor plans and elevations.

REVIEW:

Star Barn website

WEATHER PERMITTING, MEET AT 6 P.M. AT STAR BARN, NISSLEY DRIVE, MIDDLETOWN, PA. AFTER FIELD PRACTICE, RETURN TO ART STUDIO OR COMPUTER LAB.

ARTIFACT REPORT DUE.

N.B. CONFER WITH YOUR PROFESSOR ON TOPIC FOR INTERPRETATION PROJECT (See Discussion Forum in Angel)

7. Wednesday, June 10

DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFUSION OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE IN AMERICAN MATERIAL CULTURE:
THE WEST AND BEYOND

-Henry Glassie's book and many historical-geographic approaches to folklife stop at the Mississippi River, and the question arises about extending coverage to the West and off-shore areas of the United States. In these sessions, we examine architectural patterns of the "Mormon Culture Region" and "the Great Plains" as examples, and discuss the importance of "context" and "landscape" in analyzing material culture.

READ:

Francivaglia, "Mormon Central-Hall Houses" Turner, "Sod Houses in Nebraska"

8. Monday, June 15

URBAN AND COMMUNITY ISSUES IN FOLK ARCHITECTURE AND CRAFT: MATERIAL CULTURE OF IMMIGRANT, RELIGIOUS, OCCUPATIONAL, RECREATIONAL, AND OTHER FOLK COMMUNITIES

OTHER MATERIAL CULTURE GENRES: FOOD AND DRESS

—In this session, we will examine the variety of forms and functions exhibited by folk communities, including communal societies, immigrant groups, and age groups such as children, toward an understanding of the social process of architecture in material culture. Bringing the study of folk architecture up to the present, we consider emergent forms of vernacular architecture such as the case study of a gentrifying neighborhood in Harrisburg. We will discuss the distinctions often given between art and craft, and the definitional controversies over locating an American "folk art." We examine the way that folk art was a constructed category in the twentieth century that became contested. In the last part of the session, other material culture genres in relation to architecture and craft will be discussed: food , landscape, and dress.

READ:

Bronner, Grasping Things, pp. 1-86.

REVIEW:

Food Timeline
Online Archive of American Folk Medicine
Traditional Dress Links

9. Wednesday, June 17

FOLK CRAFT AND ART IN A BEHAVIORAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

-This session takes up behavioral perspectives on folk art and craft, particularly consideration of the individual uses of tradition in building identity, adapting to age and environment, and responding to expressive needs. The example for discussion is woodcarving by elderly men in Indiana and urban "environmental" artists in Pennsylvania. Social psychological interpretations of individuals using folk traditions and "performing" identity and creativity will be discussed.

READING:

Bronner, Carver's Art

10. Monday, June 22

FOLK CRAFT AND ART: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

--This session considers folk craft and art in relation to economic and social history, including revivals such as the Arts and Crafts Movement, Colonial Revival, and Back to Earth Movement. It also will examine new forms of folk craft and art in response to technology. Overall, it takes up the American Studies question of image and representation to gain perspectives on the role of craft in American consciousness. Students will give short informal presentations on their research project that will include: (1) summary of the problem, (2) evidence gathered and/or fieldwork conducted, and (3) findings and/or hypotheses addressed.

REVIEW:

Index of American Design

N.B. STUDENT ORAL REMARKS ON INTERPRETATION PROJECT

11. Wednesday, June 24

PRESENTING MATERIAL CULTURE AND FOLKLIFE: MUSEUMS, FESTIVALS, AND OTHER APPLIED SETTINGS

As a conclusion to suggest the ways that the knowledge of the course can be applied in Page $17\ of\ 21$

American Studies, we will take up the application of material culture in museums and other historical, educational, and cultural agencies, and we will take up the question of material culture's relationship to a public heritage.

READING:

Marshall, "The Rise of American Folk Museums." (On Angel)

REVIEW:

American Folklife Center
American Folklore Society
Folkstreams
Material Culture Caucus
Material Culture Journal
PHMC homepage
Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
Winterthur Portfolio

N.B. INTERPRETATION PROJECT DUE (Use Interpretation Questionnaire; place in drop box in Angel)

POLICY STATEMENTS: Academic Freedom, Academic Integrity, Attendance, Confidentiality, Disability Services, Weather and Campus Closing

Academic Freedom: According to Penn State policy HR64, "The faculty member is expected to train students to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials which they need if they are to think intelligently. Hence, in giving instruction upon controversial matters the faculty member is expected to be of a fair and judicial mind, and to set forth justly, without supersession or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators." See http://guru.psu.edu/policies/OHR/hr64.html.

Academic Integrity: According to Penn State policy 49-20, Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an education objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating,

plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. The instructor can fail a student for major infractions. For more information, see http://www.psu.edu/dept/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20. I may choose to use Turnitin as a plagiarism detection tool.

Attendance: Although an on-line course does not meet in a classroom at a set time, attendance policies stated in 42-27 apply. On-line students are expected to complete every lesson in the course and are held responsible for all work covered in the course. A student whose irregular attendance causes him or her, in the judgment of the instructor, to become deficient scholastically, may run the risk of receiving a failing grade or receiving a lower grade than the student might have secured had the student been in regular attendance. Participation by students in the course should not be disruptive or offensive to other class members. See http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/42-00.html#42-27.

Confidentiality: The right of students to confidentiality is of concern to your instructor and to the University. According to Penn State policy AD-11, "The Pennsylvania State University collects and retains data and information about students for designated periods of time for the expressed purpose of facilitating the student's educational development. The University recognizes the privacy rights of individuals in exerting control over what information about themselves may be disclosed and, at the same time, attempts to balance that right with the institution's need for information relevant to the fulfillment of its educational missions. Student educational records are defined as records, files, documents, and other materials that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by The Pennsylvania State University or by a person acting for the University pursuant to University, college, campus, or departmental policy. Exclusions include: Notes of a professor concerning a student and intended for the professor's own use are not subject to inspection, disclosure, and challenge." For more information, see http://guru.psu.edu/policies/Ad11.html.

Disability Services and Accessibility: Any student who cannot complete requirements of the class because of physical disabilities should make circumstances known to the instructor. In cases where documentation of disability is available, alternative ways to fulfill requirements will be made. For more information, see Penn State's disability services handbook at

http://www.hbg.psu.edu/studaf/disability/dshandbook.htm

Cancellations Due to Weather or Campus Closing:

When the Provost and Dean makes the decision to close the Harrisburg campus or delay the start of classes, the regional media will be notified at least two hours prior to the standard 8:00 a.m. reporting time for staff and before the start of the earliest scheduled class. The college will make its announcement in the following ways:

- 1. The college's web page at www.hbg.psu.edu will carry a message regarding the status of classes.
- 2. The university's email system will also be used to notify email subscribers about the weather emergency.
- 3. An announcement will be placed on the college's AUDIX telephone system at the 948-6000 and 948-6029 numbers.
- 4. MEDIA OUTLETS OFFERING WEATHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

·RADIO	TELEVISION
WHP-AM (580)	WHP-TV 21
KISS-FM (99.3)	WLYH-TV 15
WRBT-FM (94.9)	WTMP-TV [FOX 43]
WHYL-AM (960)	WHTM-TV 27
WQXA-AM (1250)	WGAL-TV 8
WQXA-FM (105.7)	
WCAT-FM (106.7)	
WRKZ-FM (102.3)	
WNNK-FM (104)	
WITF-FM (89.5)	

WLAN-AM (1390)	
WLAN-FM (96.9)	
WSBA-AM (910)	
WARM-FM (103)	
WRVV-FM (97.3)	

For more information, see the weather policy web page at http://www.hbg.psu.edu/hbg/weather.html