

AMERICAN MATERIAL CULTURE AND FOLKLIFE



American Studies Program, Penn State Harrisburg
AM ST 531, Summer 2011, 1st session (5/16-6/24), MW 6-9:15 p.m.
Location: C212 Olmsted Building



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Office Hours: 3-5 p.m., MW, and by appointment



Description

This course offers research and interpretative perspectives on **American material culture**, defined as the interconnection of tangible, human-made forms reflecting cultural ideas and traditions. The forms receiving emphasis in this course are folk art and architecture. The course's theme is one of **space and place**: the course sets folk art, craft, food, dress, and architecture as special evidence of people's connection to, and expression of, location—in community, region, nation, ethnicity, and individuality--within American experience. The seminar centrally questions the symbols, identities, and functions that diverse groups have created “on the move” in that American experience. The structure of the course is as follows:

1. The course begins with an overview of American material culture and ways of documenting it. Emphasis is given to fieldwork techniques from folklife (historical and ethnographic) for method, and theoretically for perspectives labeled “textual” (or formalistic), “contextual,” and “behavioristic.”
2. Presenting a “textual approach” to study emphasizing a combination of historical and geographic perspectives, the course follows with a regional survey of folk architecture, and then with attention to a “contextual approach,” consideration of other ways of organizing folk architectural study by community, ethnicity, and occupation.
3. The next section emphasizing a “behavioristic approach” takes up contemporary craft and art that can be integrated with and applied to aspects of material culture such as food, furnishing, and clothing.

Students will engage folk art and architecture in the field as well as in the classroom. Weather permitting, two meetings will be held at historic material culture sites in Middletown near the campus to gain practice in documentation and interpretation. As a seminar, the course will encourage presentation and exchange of research among students. Accordingly, the course includes activities such as bringing in a folk artifact from home to discuss in terms of symbol, function, and context and giving a précis of the student's research to colleagues in class. The course 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. ISBN 0813108632
- _____. *Grasping Things: Folk Material Culture and Mass Society*. 1986 rpt., Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005. E161.B78 1986. ISBN 9780813191423
- Glassie, Henry. *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968. GR105.G56 1971. ISBN 9780812210132

Supplementary Texts (On Angel):

- Allen, Barbara L. 1996. "The Ranch-Style House in America: A Cultural and Environmental Discourse." *Journal of Architectural Education* 49: 156-65.
- Blake, Kevin S., and Jeffrey S. Smith. 2000. "Pueblo Mission Churches as Symbols of Permanence and Identity." *Geographical Review* 90: 359-80.
- Bronner, Simon J., ed. 1985. "Material Culture Studies: A Symposium." Special issue. *Material Culture* 17, nos. 2-3 (Summer-Fall).
- _____. 1986. "Folk Objects," in *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres*, ed. Elliott Oring, pp. 199-224. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- _____. 1992. "Elaborating Tradition: A Pennsylvania-German Folk Artist Ministers to His Community." In *Creativity and Tradition in Folklore: New Directions*, ed. Simon J. Bronner, 277-325. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- _____. 1996. "Material Culture" and "Folklife Movement," in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand, pp. 463-66, 282-85. New York: Garland.
- _____. 1998. "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.
- Dethlefsen, Edwin and James Deetz. 1966. "Death's Heads, Cherubs, and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries." *American Antiquity* 31 (1966): 502-510.
- Eliason, Eric. 2006. "Mormon Culture Region." In *Encyclopedia of American Folklife*, ed. Simon J. Bronner, 825-29. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Falk, Cynthia G. 1998. "Symbols of Assimilation or Status? The Meanings of Eighteenth-Century Houses in Coventry Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania." *Winterthur Portfolio* 33: 107-34.
- Faragher, John Mack. 2001. "Bungalow and Ranch House: The Architectural Backwash of California." *Western Historical Quarterly* 32: 149-73.

- Fife, Austin. 1988. *Exploring Western Americana*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.
- _____, and James M. Fife. 1948. "Hay Derricks of the Great Basin and Upper Snake River Valley." *Western Folklore* 7: 225-39.
- Fleming, E. McLung. 1974. "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9: 153-73.
- Grider, Sylvia. 2007. "Public Grief and the Politics of Memorial." *Anthropology Today* 23: 3-7.
- Jones, Michael Owen. 1995. "Why Make (Folk) Art?" *Western Folklore* 54: 253-76.
- _____. 1997. "How Can We Apply Event Analysis to 'Material Behavior,' and Why Should We?" *Western Folklore* 56: 199-214.
- _____. 2000. "'Tradition' in Identity Discourses and an Individual's Symbolic Construction of Self." *Western Folklore* 59: 115-41.
- Meinig, D.W. 1965. "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847-1964." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 55: 191-220.
- Milspaw, Yvonne. 1980. "Plain Walls and Little Angels: Pioneer Churches in Central Pennsylvania." *Pioneer America: Journal of Historic American Material Culture* 12:77-96.
- Newton, Sarah. 1992. "The Jell-O Syndrome: Investigating Popular Culture/Foodways." *Western Folklore* 51: 249-267.
- Peterson, Sally. 1988. "Translating Experience and the Reading of a Story Cloth." *Journal of American Folklore* 101: 6-22.
- Pitman, Leon S. 1992. "The Domestic Tankhouse as Vernacular Architecture of Rural California." *Material Culture* 24: 13-32.
- Price, Edward T. 1968. "The Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat." *Geographical Review* 58: 29-60.
- Prown, Jules David. 1980. "Style as Evidence." *Winterthur Portfolio* 15: 197-210.
- Roberts, Warren. 1972. "Fieldwork: Recording Material Culture," in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, pp. 431-44. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Santino, Jack 1992. "Yellow Ribbons and Seasonal Flags: The Folk Assemblage of War" *Journal of American Folklore* 105: 19-33.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2003. "Anatomy of a Quilt: The Gees' Bend Freedom Quilting Bee." *Anthropology Today* 19: 15-21.
- Sciorra, Joseph. 1989. "Yard Shrines and Sidewalk Altars of New York's Italian-Americans." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 3: 185-98.
- Turner, Tim. 1975. "Sod Houses in Nebraska." *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 7: 21-37.
- Weaver, William Woys. 1986. "The Pennsylvania German House: European Antecedents and New World Forms." *Winterthur Portfolio* 21: 243-64.
- Yoder, Don. 1990 [1976]. "Folklife Studies in American Scholarship." In *Discovering American Folklife: Studies in Ethnic, Religious, and Regional Culture* by Don Yoder, 43-61. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.
- Zelinsky, Wilbur. 1958. "The New England Connecting Barn." *Geographical Review* 48: 540-53.

_____. 1977. "The Pennsylvania Town: An Overdue Geographical Account." *Geographical Review* 67: 127-47.

Course Requirements:

Grading is determined by evaluating the student’s demonstration of scholarship and communication skills in written presentations. Forty percent of the grade consists of evaluation of the artifact report (due June 7) and annotated project bibliography (June 14). These assignments lead to the final project (due 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. Forms and guidelines for the assignments will be posted to Angel. Submissions will be done through the electronic “Drop Box” on Angel; students will be shown how to complete this process in the computer workshop on May 16.

Written Assignments (artifact report and annotated bibliography) 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 and understanding	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 (in alphabetical order), Dates Due, and Grading:

Type of Assignment	Date Due	Maximum Course Points
Annotated Bibliography	June 13, midnight	20
Artifact Report	June 6, midnight	20
Interpretation Project	June 24, noon	60
TOTAL		100

Points Conversion to Grades:

Points	Grade	Quality of Performance (for Graduate Work)	GPA Equivalent
94-100	A	Exceptional Achievement	4.00
90-93	A-	Excellent Achievement	3.67
87-89	B+	Good Achievement	3.33
83-86	B	Acceptable Achievement	3.00
80-82	B-	Below-Average Achievement	2.67
77-79	C+	Below-Average Achievement	2.33
70-76	C	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 effective 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.

In the university calendar, no classes are held on Memorial Day, Monday, May 30.

The interpretation project should use one of the approaches to interpreting artifacts: textual (by reference to a comparative collection of objects analyzed textually, typologically, and stylistically often using historical, aesthetic, and/or geographic interpretation), contextual (by reference to an artifact ethnographically examined in a social situation often using sociological interpretation), or behavioral (by reference to interview with makers and/or users and/or

observation of behavioral/formative processes often using psychological interpretation). The project should utilize artifactual evidence in relation to American folk culture. The assignments in the class take you through the research and writing process, with feedback from the instructor at each step. Students must use Word or Word Perfect for essays (Works is not supported).

<i>COURSE SCHEDULE</i>

Lesson Number and Date	Title (Summaries Below)	Student Tasks
1 Monday, May 16	Objectives, Goals, and Resources of Course History and Philosophy of Material Culture and Folklife Studies	Read syllabus Review course schedule Meet in W138, second half of class.

<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>Wednesday, May 18</p>	<p>Differentiating Between Folk and Popular Objects;</p> <p>Models of Identification and Interpretation</p>	<p>READ: (all readings in Readings folder under Lessons tab in ANGEL) <u>As Background of Material Culture and Folklife Approaches:</u></p> <p>Bronner, "Folk Objects" in Oring, <i>Folk Groups and Folklore Genres</i></p> <p>Bronner, "Material Culture" in <i>American Folklife: An Encyclopedia</i></p> <p>Bronner, "Folkloristic" from <i>Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World</i></p> <p>Roberts, "Recording Material Culture"</p> <p><u>As Textual Approach</u></p> <p>Deetz and Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow"</p> <p>Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model" pp. 162-73</p> <p>Price, "Central Courthouse Square"</p> <p>Prown, "Style as Evidence"</p> <p><u>As Contextual Approach:</u></p> <p>Bronner, "Folklife Movement" in <i>American Folklife: An Encyclopedia</i></p> <p>Sciorra, "Yard Shrines and Sidewalk Altars"</p> <p>Yoder, "Folklife Studies in American Scholarship"</p> <p><u>As Behavioral Approach:</u></p> <p>Jones, Why Make (Folk) Art?</p> <p>Jones, "Material Behavior"</p>
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<p>3 Monday, May 23</p>	<p>TEXTUAL APPROACHES TO DIFFUSION AND CULTURAL DOMAIN OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE: Native, Transplanted, and Adapted forms of Folk Architecture in the US: New England Extended</p>	<p>READ: Glassie, <i>Pattern in the Material Folk Culture</i>, pp. 1-153.</p> <p>Zelinsky, "New England Connecting Barn"</p> <p>BRING TO CLASS: folk object to discuss in terms of context, symbol, and function</p>
<p>4 Wednesday, May 25</p>	<p>Development and Diffusion of Folk Architecture: The South</p>	<p>READ:</p> <p>Complete Glassie, <i>Pattern in the Material Folk Culture</i>, pp. 154-241.</p> <p>N.B. NO CLASS ON MAY 30—MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY</p>
<p>5 Wednesday, June 1</p>	<p>Special Problems of a Pluralistic Society: Pennsylvania</p>	<p>Falk, "Assimilation or Acculturation"</p> <p>Weaver, "Pennsylvania German House"</p> <p>Zelinsky, "The Pennsylvania Town"</p> <p>Confer with Professor on topic for interpretation project (by appointment, phone, email, skype, or AIM)</p>

<p>6 Monday, June 6</p>	<p>Visit to Star Barn and Tools for Research (Computer Lab/Art Studio)</p>	<p>REVIEW:</p> <p>Star Barn Website (see links list in Links folder under Lessons tab) or http://www.thestarbarn.com/AboutTheStarBarn.aspx</p> <p>Location: Meet at Star Barn 6 p.m. Nissley Drive, Middletown, PA</p> <p>Return to lab in W138, second half of class.</p> <p>Review Interpretation Questionnaire in Class Information folder under Lessons tab</p> <p>Artifact Report Due (Worksheets available in Class Information folder under Lessons tab)</p>
<p>7 Wednesday, June 8</p>	<p>Development and Diffusion of Folk Architecture: The West and Mormon Culture Region, with case studies of Stone, Adobe, and Sod Houses, and related regional material on the landscape (fences, derricks, gravestones)</p>	<p>READ:</p> <p>Allen, "Ranch House"</p> <p>Blake and Smith, "Pueblo Missions"</p> <p>Eliason, "Mormon Culture Region"</p> <p>Faragher, "Bungalow and Ranch"</p> <p>Fife, <i>Exploring Western Americana</i> (Fences, Houses, and Gravestones)</p> <p>Fife and Fife, "Hay Derricks"</p> <p>Meinig, "Mormon Culture Region"</p> <p>Pitman, "Tank Houses"</p> <p>Turner, "Sod Houses"</p>

<p>8 Monday, June 13</p>	<p>CONTEXTUAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL MATERIAL: Urban and Community Issues in Folk Architecture and Craft</p> <p>Other Material Culture Genres: Food and Dress</p>	<p>READ: Bronner, <i>Grasping Things</i></p> <p>REVIEW: Food Timeline link Online Archive of American Folk Medicine link Traditional Dress link</p> <p>Annotated Project Bibliography Due</p>
<p>9 Wednesday, June 15</p>	<p>Folk Art and Craft: Behavioral and Psychological Perspectives</p>	<p>Bronner, <i>Carver's Art</i></p> <p>Give description orally and informally of your project to class</p>
<p>10 Monday, June 20</p>	<p>Folk Craft and Art: Historical and Social Perspectives</p>	<p>Meet at St. Peter's Kierch, Spring and North Union Streets, Middletown, 6 p.m.</p> <p>READ: Bronner, "Elaborating Tradition" Milspaw, "Plain Walls and Little Angels"</p> <p>REVIEW: Index of American Design link: http://www.nga.gov/collection/iad/tour_index/index.shtm</p>

<p>11 Wednesday, June 22</p>	<p>Folk Craft and Art Today</p> <p>The Future of Material Culture Scholarship</p>	<p>LAST CLASS! (No exam period)</p> <p>READ:</p> <p>Bronner, ed., "Material Culture Studies: A Symposium" Sylvia Grider, "Public Grief and the Politics of Memorial." Michael Owen Jones, "'Tradition' in Identity Discourses." Sarah Newton, "The Jell-O Syndrome: Investigating Popular Culture/Foodways." Sally Peterson, "Translating Experience and the Reading of a Story Cloth." Jack Santino, "Yellow Ribbons and Seasonal Flags: The Folk Assemblage of War" Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Anatomy of a Quilt"</p> <p>INTERPRETATION PROJECT DUE JUNE 24, before noon</p>
<p>Friday, June 24</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>	<p>Interpretation PROJECT Due June 24, before noon (see Class Information folder under Lessons tab for questionnaire and drop box)</p>

N.B. Schedule Subject to Change

Descriptions of Lessons

1. Monday, May 16

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 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, annotated bibliography, and interpretation project will be explained. In the second part of the class, we will meet in the computer lab in W138 to have a hands-on workshop on electronic resources in material culture studies.

2. Wednesday, May 18

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.

READING:

Bronner, "Folk Objects" in Oring, *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres*
Bronner, "Material Culture" and "Folklife Movement" in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*
Bronner, "Folkloristic" in *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*
Deetz and Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow"
Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model"
Jones, Why Make (Folk) Art?
Jones, Applying Event Analysis to Material Behavior
Price, "Central Courthouse Square"
Roberts, "Fieldwork: Recording Material Culture"
Sciorra, "Yard Shrines and Sidewalk Altars of New York's Italian Americans"
Yoder, "Folklife Studies in American Scholarship"

3. Monday, May 23

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. **Students will bring in “traditional” artifacts for the class to analyze orally** in terms of context, symbol, and function.

READ: Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture*, p. 1-153

Zelinsky, “The New England Connecting Barn.”

4. Wednesday, May 25

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 expression) will be discussed.

READ:

Complete Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture*

N.B. NO CLASS ON MEMORIAL DAY, MONDAY, MAY 30

5. Wednesday, June 1

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.

Falk, Cynthia G. 1998. “Symbols of Assimilation or Status?”

Weaver, William Woys. 1986. “The Pennsylvania German House: European Antecedents and New World Forms.”

Wilbur Zelinsky. 1977. “The Pennsylvania Town: An Overdue Geographical Account.”

6. Monday, June 6

--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: <http://www.thestarbarn.com/AboutTheStarBarn.aspx>

WEATHER PERMITTING, MEET AT 6 P.M. AT STAR BARN, NISSLEY DRIVE, MIDDLETOWN, PA.
AFTER FIELD PRACTICE, RETURN TO COMPUTER LAB in W138.

ARTIFACT REPORT DUE.

N.B. CONFER WITH YOUR PROFESSOR ON TOPIC FOR INTERPRETATION PROJECT

7. Wednesday, June 8

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,” “the Great Plains,” and “California Ranch Culture” as examples, and discuss the importance of “context” and “landscape” in analyzing material culture.

READ:

Allen, Barbara L. 1996. “The Ranch-Style House in America: A Cultural and Environmental Discourse.”

Blake, Kevin S., and Jeffrey S. Smith. 2000. “Pueblo Mission Churches as Symbols of Permanence and Identity.”

Eliason, Eric. 2006. “Mormon Culture Region.”

Faragher, John Mack. 2001. “Bungalow and Ranch House: The Architectural Backwash of California.”

Fife, Austin. 1988. *Exploring Western Americana*. (chapters on fences, houses, gravestones)

Fife, Austin, and James M. Fife. 1948. “Hay Derricks of the Great Basin and Upper Snake River Valley.”

Meinig, D.W. 1965. *The Mormon Culture Region*

Pitman, 1992. “Tank Houses”

Turner, “Sod Houses in Nebraska”

8. Monday, June 13

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

ANNOTATED PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE (use drop box in ANGEL)

9. Wednesday, June 15

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.

Students will give short informal descriptions of 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.

READING:

Bronner, *Carver's Art*

10. Monday, June 20

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.

The class will begin with an on-site consideration of folk art (gravestones) in historical and social perspective by examining the graveyard of St. Peter's Church, established 1769.

READ:

Bronner, "Elaborating Tradition"

Milspaw, Yvonne. 1980. "Plain Walls and Little Angels: Pioneer Churches in Central Pennsylvania."

Meet at St. Peter's Kierch, Spring and North Union streets, Middletown, 6 p.m.

REVIEW:

Index of American Design: http://www.nga.gov/collection/iad/tour_index/index.shtm

11. Wednesday, June 22

FOLK CRAFT AND ART IN MODERN CONTEXTS AND THE FUTURE OF MATERIAL CULTURE SCHOLARSHIP

In this concluding session, we discuss the interrelation of modernity, marketplace, and public culture with folk artistic production. We examine several examples such as transnational refugee arts (Hmong), yard art and public assemblages, religious expression, and commercial food art as markers of individual and group identity in response to modern contexts. Based upon themes and theses we locate from those examples, we will discuss needs in material culture research and forecast its future, especially in American Studies.

READING:

Bronner, ed., "Material Culture Studies: A Symposium"

Sylvia Grider, "Public Grief and the Politics of Memorial."

Michael Owen Jones, "'Tradition' in Identity Discourses."

Sarah Newton, "The Jell-O Syndrome: Investigating Popular Culture/Foodways."

Sally Peterson, "Translating Experience and the Reading of a Story Cloth."

Jack Santino, "Yellow Ribbons and Seasonal Flags: The Folk Assemblage of War"

Scheper-Hughes, "Anatomy of a Quilt"

N.B. INTERPRETATION PROJECT DUE by Noon, Friday, June 24 (Use Interpretation Questionnaire template in Assignments folder, under Lessons tab; place completed project in drop box in Angel)

POLICY STATEMENTS: (1) Academic Freedom; (2) Academic Integrity; (3) Attendance; (4) Cancellations due to Weather, Emergencies, and Campus Closing; (5) Confidentiality; (6) Disability Services; (7) Personal Digital Devices

- 1. 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>.
- 2. 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.
- 3. Attendance:** 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>.

4. Cancellations Due to Weather, Emergencies, 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:

- a. The college's web page at www.hbg.psu.edu will carry a message regarding the status of classes.
- b. The university's email system will also be used to notify email subscribers about the weather emergency. Additionally, students, faculty, staff, parents, and the general community are invited to register for PSUTXT, a free service designed to alert the Penn State community via text messages to cell phones when situations arise on campus that affect the ability of the campus, i.e. students, faculty and staff, to function normally and/or conduct business as usual. In addition, subscribers can elect to have alerts sent to an e-mail address.

For information about PSUTXT or to subscribe, visit <http://live.psu.edu/psutxt>.

- c. An announcement will be placed on the college's AUDIX telephone system at the 948-6000 and 948-6029 numbers.
- d. For information on the campus's weather emergency policy, including media outlets carrying cancellation notices, see <http://www.hbg.psu.edu/hbg/weather.html>

5. 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>.

- 6. 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>

- 7. Personal Digital Devices:** Personal digital devices such as cell phones, smartphones and personal digital assistants (e.g., itouch, droids), laptop and netbook computers, ipads and tablet computers can help students in academic settings but can also distract from learning. As a matter of policy, I insist that cell phones be turned off or silenced; texting and other communication on the cell phone are strictly prohibited in class. Laptops, netbooks, and tablet computers enabling notetaking and viewing of course materials are permitted but students must not engage in non-classroom tasks such as emailing, web browsing, e-shopping, and social networking in class. If they do not abide by this guideline, use of their devices in class will be prohibited.