

SOC351H1S – MATERIAL CULTURE
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
Winter 2022

Class Location: CR 103

Class Time: Wednesday 3pm-6pm

Instructor Lance Stewart

Office Location: TBA

Office Hours: 3-5pm on Mondays, by appointment, via Zoom

E-mail Address: lance.stewart@mail.utoronto.ca

E-mail Response Hours: Monday-Friday 9am-6pm, within 36 hours

Course Web Site: q.utoronto.ca

Course Description:

Objects surround us. They fill in our environments and are integrated into our everyday lives. But just as objects hold an important place in social life, we commonly take for granted their power to shape and influence our thoughts and behaviours. In sociology, we tend to concentrate on the lives of people, and the importance of meanings, connections, thoughts and beliefs. Many areas in sociology treat objects as by-products of social relationships, under-theorizing their importance in understanding social life. This course asks instead, what can objects do? How do they shape the way we think and act? How do we take objects seriously as subject in sociology?

This course explores a variety of different theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of Material Culture. This course will specifically concentrate on the major approaches to studying cultural objects, prominent theories applied in understanding objects, and how these approaches and theories have been applied in research. In service of this goal, we will read widely across disciplines to take from the best of what is written from anthropology, cultural sociology, material culture studies, materiality, and its applications on a variety of objects and empirical settings. The diversity of these approaches is intended to demonstrate the complex ways objects can be studied and understood, to strengthen your sociological imagination about *things*. Throughout the class we'll address how to incorporate object-based approaches and theories into the development of your theorizing paper, and then into your final research proposal paper.

Prerequisites: SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1 plus two of the following (1.0 FCE): SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. This is a program-only course, restricted to sociology majors and specialists. Students without these requirements will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

Course Goals:

In this course, students will develop a sociological understanding of a range of disciplinary approaches, theories, and analysis of material culture. Students will leave the course with an understanding of how to approach analyzing objects, providing an analytical toolkit on which to further your critical thinking about things we take for granted around us. As a program-only seminar, students will develop their sociological skills by providing a presentation on supplemental course materials, engaging in conversations around the readings for each week, and developing critical reading and writing skills in learning how to use academic materials. This will be accomplished through a **scaffolded paper structure**, where you will develop a theoretical and methodological approach to studying an object. It will begin with a theorizing paper, where you will apply two of the approaches learned in class to theorize about an object. You will then integrate your theorizing into a methodological proposal on how to possibly study your object sociologically. It is designed to carry your progress throughout the seminar, though you may decide to change your object between papers. If you decide to change your object, you are advised to book an office hour appointment to discuss this with Professor Stewart in detail.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Examine the relationship between objects and individuals or groups
- Recognize how one's social position may shape our understandings and interpretations of objects
- Understand the range of approaches and theories in the field of material culture
- Critically assess and identify the complexity of objects and their impact on social life
- Identify, explain, and evaluate some of the central concepts and theories used in the study of objects and materiality
- Apply terminology used in the course correctly, and compare how approaches use terminology differently
- Apply central concepts and theories to case studies and other empirical examples
- Critique perspectives and theories used in researching objects
- Formulate and assess recommendations on how to study objects from different perspectives
- Exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in the class setting
- Draw on academic sources to research objects and to write critically and creatively
- Engage in constructive and collegial academic discussions

Required Texts:

All readings are provided on the University of Toronto library website and the course's Quercus page. It is vital that you come to the seminar having fully read the two required readings for the week in advance of the class. You will be required to sign-up in the first week to read one of the supplemental readings and provide a 10 minute presentation on the

reading, along with coming prepared with two questions to guide discussion about your reading in relation to the other readings of the lecture.

Course Structure/Seminar Format:

This course is organized as a discussion-based reading seminar, relying on open discussion of the weekly materials between the instructor and students. Each class will begin with Professor Stewart providing some lecture materials covering an overview of the topic, and reviewing through the two required readings for that class. During the week where you read an additional supplemental reading, you will be required to provide a 10 minute presentation on your chosen reading, and contribute what you learned in your reading by bring two discussion questions to help guide class discussion. It will be crucial that students not presenting are familiar with the required readings for each class in order to engage with academic discussion. As everyone has a different style of participating in class discussion, frequency of engaging in discussion is not as important as contributing something important to every class; reach outside your comfort-zone and try to push the limits of your discussion on academic materials. Do your best to support your fellow classmates in being prepared to contribute to discussions after presentations.

Course Assessments and Grading:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Important Dates</u>
Theorizing Objects Paper	20%	Lecture 6 (February 16 th)
Supplemental Reading Presentation	10%	Due by Scheduled Lecture
Academic Skills Exercises	20%	Due by Friday of Each Week
Research Proposal Paper	30%	Lecture 11 (March 30 th)
In-Class Final test	20%	Lecture 12 (April 6 th)
Total	100%	

Course Schedule:

Lecture 1: January 12th
Introduction to Material Culture
OBJECT SHOW-AND-TELL

Miller, Daniel. 2008. "Prologue," "Empty," and "Full." Pp. 1-31 in *The Comfort of Things*. Polity Press.

Lecture 2: January 19th
Anthropology

Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value. Pp. 3-16 in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Kopytoff, Igor. 1986. The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. Pp. 64-94 in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge University Press.

Supplemental Readings:

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. Here and Now. Pp. 1-23 in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.

Douglas, Mary, and Baron Isherwood. 1996 (1979). The Uses of Goods. Pp. 36-47 in *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, rev'd ed. New York: Basic Books.

Myers, Fred R. 2001. Introduction. Pp. 3- 61 in *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*. Fred R. Myers, Editor. School of American Research Press.

Lecture 3: January 26th
Sociology of Culture and Art

Becker, Howard S. 1982. "Conventions" pp. 40-67 in *Art Worlds*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Griswold, Wendy. 1987. The Fabrication of Meaning: Literary Interpretation in the United States, Great Britain, and the West Indies. *American Journal of Sociology*. 92: 1077–1117.

Supplemental Readings:

Benjamin, Walter. 1968. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Pp. 217-252 in *Illuminations*. Hannah Arendt, editor. Schocken Books.

Mitchell, W. J. Thomas. 1996. "What Do Pictures Really Want?" *October*. 77: 71-82.

Wagner-Pacifici, Robin and Barry Schwartz. 1991. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past." *American Journal of Sociology*. 97: 376-420.

Lecture 4: February 2nd Material Culture

Hebdige, Dick. 1983. "Traveling Light: One Route Into Material Culture." *RAIN*. 59: 11-13.

Woodward, Ian. 2007. Locating Material Culture. Pp. 1-32 in *Understanding Material Culture*. Sage.

Supplemental Readings:

Crane, Diana, and Laura Bovone. 2006. Approaches to material culture: the sociology of fashion and clothing. *Poetics* 34.6: 319–333.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton. 1981. "What Things are For" and "Object Relations and the Development of the Self." PP. 20-54 and 90-120 in *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*. Cambridge University Press.

Molotch, Harvey. 2005. Lash-ups: Goods and bads. Pp. 1-23 in *Where Stuff Comes From: How Toasters, Toilets, Cars, Computers, and Many Other Things Come to Be As They Are*. Routledge.

Lecture 5: February 9th Materiality

Ingold, Tim. 2007. "Materials against materiality." *Archeological Dialogues*. 14: 1-16.

Miller, Daniel. 2005. "Materiality: An Introduction." Pp. 1-41 in *Materiality*. Daniel Miller, editor. Duke University Press.

Supplemental Reading:

Bartmanski, D. and Woodward, I., 2015. The vinyl: The analogue medium in the age of digital reproduction. *Journal of consumer culture*, 15(1), pp.3-27.

Keane, W. 2005. "Signs are not the Garb of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things." Pp. 182-205 in *Materiality*. Daniel Miller, editor. Duke University Press.

McDonnell, Terence E. 2010. Cultural objects as objects: Materiality, urban space, and the interpretation of AIDS campaigns in Accra, Ghana. *American Journal of Sociology* 115.6: 1800–1852.

Lecture 6: February 16th
Material Agency – Actor-Network-Theory
THEORIZING OBJECTS PAPER DUE

Gell, Alfred. 1998. "The Problem Defined" and "The Theory of the Art Nexus." Pp. 1-27 in *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. New York: Clarendon Press.

Morphy, Howard. 2009. "Art as a Mode of Action." *Journal of Material Culture*. 14: 5-27.

Supplemental Readings:

Callon, Michel. 1986. Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St. Briec Bay. In *Power, action and belief: a new sociology of knowledge?* Edited by J. Law, 196–223. London: Routledge.

Gomart, Emilie and Antoine Hennion. 1999. "A Sociology of Attachment: amateurs, drug users." *The Sociological Review*. 220-247.

Latour, Bruno. 1992. Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts. In W. Bijker and J. Law, eds., *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

READING BREAK: FEBRUARY 21st – 25th -----

Lecture 7: March 2nd
Affordance Theory

Faraj, S., & Azad, B. (2012). The materiality of technology: An affordance perspective. *Materiality and organizing: Social interaction in a technological world*, 237-258.

Gibson, J.J. 1979. "The Theory of Affordances." Pp. 119-135 in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Supplemental Readings:

Davis, J. L., & Chouinard, J. B. (2017). Theorizing Affordances: From Request to Refuse. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 02704676177

Evans, S. K., Pearce, K. E., Vitak, J., & Treem, J. W. (2016). Explicating affordances: A conceptual framework for understanding affordances in communication research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22(1), 35-52.

Nagy, P., & Neff, G. (2015). Imagined affordance: Reconstructing a keyword for communication theory. *Social Media+ Society*, 1(2), 2056305115603385.

Lecture 8: March 9th Objects, Technology, and Knowledge

Cetina, K.K., 2007. Culture in global knowledge societies: Knowledge cultures and epistemic cultures. *Interdisciplinary science reviews*, 32(4), pp.361-375.

Pickering, Andrew. 1995. "The Mangle of Practice" and "Machines: Building the Bubble Chamber." Pp. 1-27 and 37-67 in *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency and Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Supplemental Readings:

Clark, Andy. 2004. Cyborgs Unplugged. Pp. 13-34 in *Natural-born cyborgs*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Frickel, Scott. 1996. Engineering heterogeneous accounts: The case of Submarine Thermal Reactor Mark-I. *Science, Technology & Human Values* 21.1: 28–53.

Hutchins, Edwin. 1995. Navigation as Computation. Pp. 49-65, 112-116 *Cognition in the wild*. Cambridge, MA: MIT.

Lecture 9: March 16th Digital Materialities

Leonardi, P. M. 2010. Digital materiality? How artifacts without matter, matter. *First monday*, 15(6).

Magaudda, P. (2011). When materiality 'bites back': Digital music consumption practices in the age of dematerialization. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11(1), 15-36.

Supplemental Readings:

Bratteteig, T. (2010). A Matter of Digital Materiality. In *Exploring Digital Design*(pp. 147-169). Springer London.

Dourish, P., & Mazmanian, M. (2011). *Media as material: Information representations as material foundations for organizational practice*. June.

Lehdonvirta, V. (2012). A History of the Digitalization of Consumer Culture: From Amazon through Pirate Bay to FarmVille. *Pre-print version of a chapter in Digital Virtual Consumption*.

Lecture 10: March 23rd
Encounters, Settings, and Places:

Babon, Kim M. 2006. Composition, coherence, and attachment: The critical role of context in reception. *Poetics* 34.3: 151–179.

Gieryn, Thomas F. 2002. “What do Buildings Do?” *Theory and Society*. 31: 35-74.

Supplemental Readings:

Fuss, Diana. 2004. “Keller’s Hand: Arcan Ridge Easton Connecticut” Pp. 47-64 in *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them*. Routledge.

Griswold, Wendy, Gemma Mangione, and Terence E. McDonnell. 2013. “Objects, Words, and Bodies in Space: Bringing Materiality in to Cultural Analysis.” *Qualitative Sociology*. 36: 343-364.

Klett, Joseph. 2014. "Sound on Sound: Situating Interaction in Sonic Object-Settings." *Sociological Theory*. 32(2): 147-161.

Lecture 11: March 30th
Thing Theory and Final Test Review
RESEARCH PROPOSAL PAPER DUE

Brown, Bill. 2001. “Thing Theory.” *Critical Inquiry*. 28: 1-22.

Lecture 12: April 6th
In-Class Final Test

Course Policies

Attendance and Preparation

The organizing principle of this course is that learning is a **social process** that takes place not only by reading and attending lectures, but also by students interacting with each other. To foster a cooperative learning environment, this course is organized around maximizing engagement through active participation in academic discussions. Attendance is therefore mandatory. Though this is a small seminar, it will require your presence and participation for the seminar to function successfully. You are responsible for all material presented in class. If you are unable to attend class on a given day, you are responsible for obtaining notes on all material covered, including discussion material and course announcements.

Participation

This class is an advanced discussion-based seminar that depends on everyone's participation in the discussion of course material. In order to succeed in contributing to discussion, you must complete the readings before each lecture, and come with notes and questions on the material. This will help you contribute to the discussions after presentations, and you will take away much more from the course as a result. Your presentation mark on the supplemental readings will be based on: A) presentation of supplemental reading (signed-up in the first week of the seminar), B) leading the discussion of the course materials after supplemental reading presentation, and C) meeting with Professor Stewart in advance of the presentation to discuss the points you plan on covering.

Course Website

The course website on Quercus is available at <https://q.utoronto.ca/>. The site will contain the course syllabus, lecture slides, course readings, copies of the paper guidelines, reading and writing resources, links of interest, and course announcements. You are responsible for the content of all course materials available in Quercus.

Email

For any questions about the course materials, format of the course, assignment and test details, Quercus submissions, or Accessibility Services resources, please **first post your question on the General Questions discussion thread on Quercus**. This helps everyone benefit from the answer in case others have the same questions. If you have any questions about how your assessments were graded, you can email the TA and request a clarification (**please see instructions below in the "Re-Grading Assignments" section**). When emailing, please use your utoronto.ca address. Please also include "SOC351" and a brief description in the subject line, so your email can be easily prioritized. Emails will typically be answered within 36 hours, during the workweek (i.e. Monday through Friday, between 9am-5pm), which does not include evenings and weekends. Keep in mind that for simple questions, email is the preferred method of communication. However, for longer questions, students should attend office hours.

Office Hours

Professor Stewart's online office hours are by appointment. This is to ensure students registered for this seminar get one-on-one consultation with him. However, arrangements for "group" office hours can be made if requested. Office hours are useful in discussing ideas for paper topics, and mandatory when discussing ideas for in-class presentations. You may use office hours as an opportunity to explore ideas and experiences related to the course material, how to approach the readings, ideas for writing the papers, discuss plans for a career in Sociology, or other course and career related matters. If you wish to schedule an appointment with Professor Stewart, please email him directly at lance.stewart@mail.utoronto.ca. In your email, include details about the nature of your meeting request and a proposal of times when you are available during the office hours window (Mondays, 3-5pm). You will typically receive a response within 36 hours, so **please email requesting time in office hours by Monday morning of that week at the latest**.

Late Assignments (please read carefully!)

Note that the late penalty is 5% per day for written assignments, including weekend days. **Late assignments will not be accepted via email.** In case of illness for the assessment

deadlines, you should (1) declare your absence on ACORN **the day the assignment is due**, and (2) get in touch with Professor Stewart **within three business days** in order to let them know of the delay and make plans for when to submit your assignment. Failure to complete both of these steps before submitting a late assignment will result in late penalties. If a personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting the assignment deadline or causes you to miss the final test, you should contact your college registrar as soon as possible, and we will comply with their recommended accommodations. In cases with short turn-around, please reach out to Professor Stewart and we can work together on accommodations until your registrar can be reached.

Missed Test (please read carefully!!)

Students who miss a test will be assigned a grade of 0. In case of illness for either test, you should (1) declare your absence on ACORN **on the day of the test**, and (2) get in touch with Professor Stewart **within three business days** of the date of the test in order to let them know you will be unable to take the test. Failure to complete both of these steps before submitting a late assignment will result in late penalties. If a personal or family crisis prevents you from taking the tests, you should contact your college registrar as soon as possible, and we will comply with their recommended accommodations. Students who miss the test for a valid reason and wish to take a make-up test must give the instructor or TA a written request for special consideration which explains why the test was missed, accompanied by proper documentation (see above). A student who misses a test and the subsequent make-up test for a valid reason will not have a third chance to take the test, and the mark assigned for the test will be a zero.

Religious or cultural accommodations

Individuals who have religious or cultural observances that coincide with this class should let the instructor know in writing by email **by February 2nd**. I strongly encourage you to honor your religious and cultural holidays! However, if I do not hear from you by February 2, I will assume that you plan to attend class and to submit your assignments on time.

Classroom Etiquette

Mutual respect is critical for learning and teaching. Please be considerate at all times. This is particularly important for the lectures, but also include the discussion boards on Quercus. If commenting on someone's post or replying to a comment, I expect you to reply with respect and consideration – treat all interactions like a regular classroom interaction. In addition, during lecture or office hours — please do not disturb the meeting and be ready and willing to engage in conversation. If your behavior is distracting or disrespectful, you will be asked to leave the session.

Overview of Community Expectations

I am committed to making our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions as inclusive as possible. I believe that mutual respect, listening carefully and openly, and participating actively and thoughtfully will make our time together productive and engaging. To this end, please give me feedback at any time throughout the course about things that are helping you learn, or things that aren't helping. And in general, please make sure to communicate with me or the TA if there are ways that we can improve the course to better support your learning.

Equity and respect

As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course, and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

Gender-inclusive language

Respectful classroom etiquette includes using gender-inclusive language. Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender, affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Re-Grading Assignments

We do our best with grading, focusing on being thorough and fair. But grading errors can certainly happen. If it is a mathematical error in adding up the points, you can simply alert the TA. *For substantive appeals:* After **waiting a minimum of 2 days after grades are released**, email the TA a written explanation on why you think your mark should be altered. Your explanation should take into account the comments you received on your test/assignment, and if applicable, the assignment's objectives or requirements. You should do this **within one week of receiving your assessment mark**. It is helpful if you include examples from your assignment to illustrate the arguments you make in your appeal. You can also, within one week of having received an appeal response from your TA, ask for a further appeal with Professor Stewart. Your email to me should include all correspondence regarding the initial appeal, and a written explanation responding to your TA's comments on the initial appeal. Of course, it is important to note that we will typically regrade the entire assignment, and your mark could certainly go up, but it can also stay the same or even go down. However, we promise to never be unfair or in any way vindictive: mistakes do happen, and we are honestly happy to correct our own.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to know and adhere to the University's principles of academic integrity. Any act of plagiarism or other unethical behavior will be addressed in accordance with University guidelines. Please see the "Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters" #6 (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) for specific information on academic integrity at the U of T.

You should acquaint yourself with the rules concerning plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, including but not limited to:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Copying material word-for-word from a source without quotation marks.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including (e.g.) working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work
- Letting someone else look at your answers on a test.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University.

Ouriginal

Normally, students will be required to submit their course written assignments for review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in a reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. **Work submitted on Quercus will be automatically scanned by Ouriginal, requiring no additional steps for you to take.**

Assignments not submitted through Ouriginal will receive a grade of zero (0 %) unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative to not submitting via Ouriginal is in place because using Ouriginal is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Mental health and well-being

We know that life is complicated, and university can be stressful. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and in need of support, services are available. For a listing of mental health resources available on and off campus, you can visit:

<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/feeling-distressed>.

Accessibility and Student Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. It is important to recognize that having different learning needs does not make you a lesser student, and we aim to support you as well as we can. If you may require accommodations, please contact professor Stewart to let them know about the resources and accommodations you need. Also, please feel free to contact Professor Stewart to talk about visiting the Accessibility Services Office (<http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>) as soon as possible.

Further resources

I also strongly recommend making use of the many campus resources available for help, especially with coursework, and generally with keeping up with the demands of university life. This includes your **college registrar** in case of any unexpected events or crises, and **Academic Success** (<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc>) for help developing strategies for doing well in your courses. **Office hours**, both my own and the TA's, are also an (underutilized!) resource for doing well in courses.

Writing Support

Students are urged to seek assistance from the University of Toronto writing centre should they anticipate problems in this area. The writing centre can be visited on the web at: <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/centres.html>

Student Contacts

You are responsible for all material presented in class, including announcements. If you are unable to attend class, you should obtain notes from a classmate. Write down the contact information for two of your classmates below in case you need notes.

Name: _____	Name: _____
E-mail: _____	E-mail: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Other: _____	Other: _____