This course answers the question, “Why do we have so much stuff?” Anthropological theories and concepts are introduced to investigate the close relationships that link people and the made things they live with—their “material culture”— especially relationships that drive consumption beyond basic needs. Categories of material culture given special focus are costume, household furnishings, and techno-gear. We examine how these goods circulate in our modern society through studies of gifting, shopping, advertising, the “rituals” of product use, heirlooming, and the ecology and politics of recycling and trashing. Specific topics include how things are drawn into our identities, how we extend our bodies and our selves through the things (real and virtual) we manipulate, how we create relationships to other people via things, how things come to have meanings and “social lives,” the sensuality and authenticity of things, and the practices and consequences of object discard and reuse. This course focuses on theories and methods to understand the “sociality” of goods (not economics or sustainability).

Student Learning Outcomes and Enduring Knowledge Statements:

- Identify the major concepts and theorists relevant to material culture studies and apply those concepts to familiar or researched real-world examples.
- Utilize these concepts and developing skills in fundamental social science methods to observe and analyze cultural patterns in contemporary Euro-American society and individual consumptive practices.
- Apply them in active learning scenarios and reflective essays and blog posts to demonstrate how ideas about oneself and social others as well as everyday practices are shaped by larger cultural forces, to thereby demonstrate greater self-awareness and senses of personal agency.
- Recognize anthropological perspectives on the sustainability of current lifestyles and the possibilities of making better informed choices of object acquisition and disposition.
- Assess in different contexts three enduring knowledge statements for this course: 1) the things we acquire, use, and discard are active social agents; 2) the things we make, make us as social beings; and 3) living with things has social, political, material, and historical consequences.

Career Readiness Competencies: communication, critical thinking, sense of self, social responsibility (sense of others), and teamwork/collaboration (https://www.crc.ufl.edu/students/).

E-learning
This course is managed by elearning.ufl.edu (Canvas). You will use the Modules tool the most. It has assignments and most required readings organized by week; e-journal articles can be downloaded from the library website). The Assignments tool manages short homework “blog posts” and other writing assignments. Check the Announcements tool regularly to keep up-to-date with course announcements.
Required Textbook and Other Required Readings:

NOTE: We read only some chapters of this book. Save money by renting the book, reading the copy on reserve in Library West, or share the purchase price among a group.

Most required readings are drawn from book chapters and journal articles dealing with material culture and anthropological consumer studies, as well as blogs, newspaper items, and magazine articles.

Important: Readings should be completed before the class period for which they are assigned (this is the “flipped classroom”). We use class meeting times to discuss the readings and apply the concepts they introduce, so you must be prepared to participate. Extra credit might be earned for students who discuss the readings in an informed way. For Thursday’s double period, readings are listed separately for each period, but obviously they all must be completed before the first period.

Strategies for Success - Or, How to Avoid Failure
Attend every class—be on time and be prepared. Many activities begin at the start of class. Take careful notes in class. Keep up with all the readings each week. Create a glossary of the major concepts that are discussed (a list is provided for each exam). Ask questions in class or by email if you have any difficulty understanding the material. Meet with the instructor. You are asked to think, be imaginative, look for patterns, apply concepts, analyze in a critical way, and make interpretations—not just memorize material.

Acceptance of Course Requirements
By remaining registered in this class, you agree to accept the course requirements and expectations as stated in this syllabus. These are in addition to other general University requirements and codes of conduct as stated in official documents and listed at the end of this syllabus.

Grade Evaluation and Methods
3 exams 45% of grade (135 points)
The exams are administered in class and consist of 45 multiple-choice questions to assess comprehension of the major concepts and leading theorists (a list is provided for each exam). Each exam is worth 15% of the grade; the third exam is non-comprehensive. Scantrons are provided.

12 short written homework assignments 20% of grade (60 points)
To evaluate how you are applying knowledge and engaging in self-reflection, and to facilitate class discussion exercises, for certain lectures you are asked to write brief essays within a limited time frame. Suggested length is 400-500 words; specific instructions are given with each assignment. Each assignment is worth ~1.5% of the grade. The first homework essay is required of everyone as a hard-copy, but for the numbered “blog post” assignments, choose 11 to do out of the 18 total possible (see schedule), uploaded to e-learning. Students may earn extra credit by turning in a 12th blog post.
participation in in-class activities 20% of grade (60 points)
Virtually every lecture period will include a class discussion, small group discussion, or a class activity. Everyone is expected to be prepared for and to participate in these activities. They account for approximately 1.3% of the grade (4 points) for each regular class week. Students seated in the “observer” rows in the classroom do not participate and do not receive this credit.

photo essay project 15% of grade (45 points)
In week 4 you will be introduced to a research project, to “follow a thing” through its social life, biography, or itinerary. This project will result in a photo essay to be uploaded on e-learning. Detailed instructions will be provided to complete the project. There are specific deadlines for the photo essay topic, a brief description with starter bibliography, and the final paper. This project is your opportunity to apply the various concepts and methods learned throughout the semester. Total: 100% (300 points)
Critical dates for exams and due dates for major assignments

Exam 1: Tuesday, September 27
Exam 2: Tuesday, November 1
Exam 3: Tuesday, December 6
Photo Essay Project: topic deadline: Thursday, October 13 (5 points)
    project description with starter bibliography: Tuesday, November 8 (10 points)
    final photo essay due Saturday, December 10 (30 points)

Policy Related to Class Attendance, Late Assignments, and Missed Exams

Attendance Policy: See https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx for types of excused absences and university attendance policy. Although daily attendance per se is not recorded, participation in in-class activities is recorded and is worth 20% of the final grade; an activity may be worth more than 1 point. Only students with excused absences may be allowed to make up an activity. Missing lectures will prove detrimental to your understanding of the course material and to your final grade. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain the lecture notes from a classmate.

Make-up Exam Policy: Students may take an exam within one week after the due date with no penalty by asking the professor for permission ahead of time to take a make-up. The make-up exam is different from the original exam and administered at the instructor’s convenience. Please make every effort to take the exam with the class.

Late homework policy: Because you have a choice of “blog post” assignments, there is no allowance for a missed due date. If you miss the due date for a post, choose a later one to take its place.

Late submission of other assignments: Except for university-allowed excused absences, all other assignments should be turned in by the due date. They lose 25% of their value for every day late.

UF Grading policy and Course Grading Requirements

For information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points see https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Every graded activity in this course earns points. Only the listed components are used to determine your grade; grades are not negotiated. Letter grades are based on a total of 300 points; see grading scale below. Ignore the percentage calculations in e-learning–they are meaningless! Look at point totals. If a minimum grade of C is required to fulfill certain graduation requirements, C- does not fulfill those requirements. GPA points for each letter grade are provided in the bottom line of the chart.

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The gradebook is “closed” on the date of the university-scheduled final exam. Any excused overdue assignments must be received by that date and time. All grade adjustments must be made by then.

Class Demeanor Expected by the Professor and Reserved Seating

Students are expected to be in their seats at the start of class (1:55). Cell phones should be silenced and out of sight, except when used in class activities. Laptop computers and tablets are allowed ONLY to access electronic readings, for note-taking, and on certain days to facilitate class activities. Newspapers and other reading materials not relevant to the class should be put away when class begins.

The back row(s) of the classrooms are reserved for “observers” and used for exam periods. Active class participants are expected to sit towards the front of the classroom. Students who cannot avoid using their electronic devices for other than class purposes are asked to sit in the observer rows.
Contacting the Instructor
The best method is by email; use the email address on page 1. Put the course name or number in the subject line. Voicemail messages may be left on the office phone (on page 1). Make an appointment (best) or drop by B338 (Turlington basement) during office hours.

Tentative Topics, Readings, and Assignments – see e-learning Modules for current information

McCracken = textbook; other readings available directly as pdf files or can be downloaded from library (see urls)
Required readings are to be completed by the class meeting date; note the required pages of a chapter or article.
Double-lectures on Thursday are listed separately and have their own reading assignments.
Any changes will be announced well in advance on e-learning; watch for emailed announcements of changes

Week 1 Part I: Why Do We Have So Much Stuff?

Tues Aug 23 Attitudes towards Modern Consumption

Thurs Aug 25-1 Consumption, Capitalism, and Modernity

Thurs Aug 25-2 Hyper-Modernity and Hyper-Consumption

Week 2

Tues Aug 30 The Anthropology of Consumption

Homework: (required) Essay on a “focal object” (see Woodward reading for Thursday), due Thursday

Thurs Sep 1-1 Material Culture and Materiality


Thurs Sep 1-2 Individual and Society; Singular and Common
no reading assignment; class discussion of focal objects (essay)

Week 3 Part II: How Does the Stuff I Have Impact Me Personally?

Tues Sep 6 My Stuff and Me: Person and Authenticity


Homework: Blog Post #1 : Counting My Stuff, due Thursday before class

Thurs Sep 8-1  Who Am I? Who Decides?  Ego- and Socio-Centered Self and Persona


Thurs Sep 8-2  The Extended Person and the Megaphone Effect


Homework: Post# 2: The Extended Person and Cultural Capital, due Tuesday before class

Week 4  Part III: How Do We Create Social Relationships with Things?

Tues Sep 13  The Gift: Inalienable Possessions


Homework: Post #3: Inalienable Gifts Given and Received, due Thursday before class

Thurs Sep 15-1  Social Lives of Things: Object Biographies


Thurs Sep 15-2  Object Itineraries: Following Things and Their Traces [method for your photo essay!]


PHOTO ESSAY PROJECT IS INTRODUCED IN THIS LECTURE - DON’T MISS IT!

Homework: Post #4: The Gift Revisited, due Tuesday before class
Week 5
Tues Sep 20  Shopping as Love: Creating a Desiring Subject


Homework: Post #5: Shopping for Others, due Thursday

Thurs Sep 22-1 Things Gather: Human-Thing Entanglements


Homework: Post #6: Gathering Objects, due next Thursday
   (This is a practice for your photo essay project and is highly recommended.)

Thurs Sep 22-2 Things are Social Agents, too


Tues Sep 27 EXAM I

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Week 6

Part IV: How Do Things and People Intersect?

Thurs Sep 29-1 My Body as Me?

Lucas, Gavin (2002) “Disposability and Dispossession in the Twentieth Century.” Journal of Material Culture 7(1):5-22. Read pages 5-12 only on “the moral system of hygiene” and the rise of “disposability” http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/7/1/5

Thurs Sep 29-2 The Extended Body-The Extended Self


Homework: Post #7: Hybrid Actors: Learning to Ride a Bike, due Tuesday
Week 7
Tues Oct 4  Ergonomics and Body Techniques


Homework: Post #8: Riding a Bike, Revisited, due Tuesday

Thurs Oct 6-1  Bodily Skill and Praxeology


Thurs Oct 6-2  Meditations on Skill activity.  please bring a pair of scissors if you have one

Week 8
Tues Oct 11  Hexis: The Encultured Body


Homework: Post #9:  Body Hexis (3 options), due Thursday

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Part V: How Can Things Have Meaning?

Thurs Oct 13-1  How do Objects Mean?


Thurs Oct 13-2  Semiotic Networks activity (bring devices for internet research)

PHOTO ESSAY PROJECT TOPIC DUE TODAY

Homework: Post #10: The Iconicity of Cell Phone Apps; due Tuesday
Read: “Phone Polaroids: A Semiotics Primer”  http://hyperallergic.com/7175/iphone-polaroids/

Week 9
Tues Oct 18  Meaning Movement (or, How Advertising Works)

McCracken (textbook) Ch. 5 “Meaning Manufacture and Movement in the World of Goods”
Homework: Research TV commercials on YouTube or web-video advertisements for consumer products
pick 3-4 and record the urls for an activity on Thursday

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Thurs Oct 20-1  Buying Authenticity


Thurs Oct 20-2 Metaphors and Metonyms in Advertising –bring laptop or tablet for group internet activity
Read instructions (on e-learning) and watch videos of old commercials for this activity

Homework: Post #11: Knock-offs, Piracy, and Inauthenticity, due Tuesday

Week 10

Tues Oct 25   Making Things - Making Meaning


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Thurs Oct 27 (both hours)  Ensembles: Diderot Unities and Effects


Recommended to go with the McCracken chapter:

Read and bring to class: Diderot Unities Game (handout on e-learning); bring laptop computers

Tues Nov 1   Exam II

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Week 11  Part VI: Creating a Desiring Subject

Thurs Nov 3-1  Sensuality and Emotions: the Effects of Things on People


Homework: Post #12 The Soda Wars: Who’s Right?, due Tuesday

Thurs Nov 3-2  The Technology of Enchantment and Enchantment of Technology


Week 12
**Tues Nov 8**  
**Consuming Experience: Tourism as a Rite of Passage**

Assignment: watch youtube videos and be prepared to discuss them; see list of urls posted on e-learning

**PHOTO ESSAY PROJECT BRIEF DESCRIPTION/BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Homework: Post #13: Reflections on a Consumed Experience, due Thursday

**Thurs Nov 10-1**  
**Modes of Touristic Experiences**

[http://soc.sagepub.com/content/13/2/179.full.pdf+html](http://soc.sagepub.com/content/13/2/179.full.pdf+html)

**Thurs Nov 10-2**  
**Consuming Authenticity**


[http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0160738399000109/1-s2.0-S0160738399000109-main.pdf?_tid=19225310-a7e0-11e3-8107-0000abf26&acdnat=1394393104_19a0233b184eba774f767d8e05f7317](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0160738399000109/1-s2.0-S0160738399000109-main.pdf?_tid=19225310-a7e0-11e3-8107-0000abf26&acdnat=1394393104_19a0233b184eba774f767d8e05f7317)

Homework: Post #14: “Virtual Reality” Tourism, due Tuesday

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**Week 13**  
**Part VII: Where Does the Stuff Go?**

**Tues Nov 15**  
**Divesting Oneself of Things**


[http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/6/2/213](http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/6/2/213)

Homework: Post #15: Divesting Your Possession, due Thursday

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**Thurs Nov 17-1**  
**Consumer Resistance: Hoarding and Anti-Consumption**


**Thurs Nov 17-2**  
**Rubbish: Order and Process**

Lucas, Gavin (2002) “Disposability and Dispossession in the Twentieth Century.” *Journal of Material Culture* 7(1):5-22.  Read pages 12 (bottom) to 19.  [we read the first part of this article earlier]  
[http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/7/1/5](http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/7/1/5)

Homework: Post #16: My Trash, due Tuesday
Week 14

Tues Nov 22  **Trash or Treasure: Alternative Afterlives of Things**


Homework: Post #17: comment on “afterlives” of trash (2 options), due Tuesday after Thanksgiving

Week 15

Tues Nov 29  **The Politics of Waste and the Taphonomy of Disaster**


Thurs Dec 1-1  **Ruins: Modernity and Decay**


Homework: Post #18: Ruins in modernity, due next Wednesday at noon [this is the last blog assignment]

Thurs Dec 3-1  **Consumption and Modernity?** The Semester in Review

Week 16

Tues Dec 6  **Exam III in class** (not a cumulative exam)

Wed Dec 7 blog post #18 due by noon

**Saturday Dec. 10 Photo Essay Due** (11:59 pm)

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The following information is provided in conformance with University Policy: *Please read!*

1. **Policy related to class attendance, make-up exams, and other work**

Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course (e.g., excused absences) are consistent with university policies at [https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx). University policy states that absences count from the first class meeting. “In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate.
Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. The university recognizes the right of the individual professor to make attendance mandatory. After due warning, professors can prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences.” The UF Twelve-Day Rule (https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences) states that students who participate in athletic or scholastic teams are permitted to be absent 12 scholastic (regular class) days per semester without penalty. Students seeking this exemption must provide documentation to the instructor. It is the student’s responsibility to maintain satisfactory academic performance and attendance.

2. Religious Observances
Students seeking modification of due dates for class participation, assignments, and exams for religious reasons (e.g., holiday observances) should contact the instructor in advance and request this modification; it will then be granted. Please make these requests early in the semester.

3. Accommodations for students with disabilities
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodations. This requires a face-to-face meeting. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

4. Academic Honesty
UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Instances of dishonesty include conducting unauthorized research on the internet and failing to cite sources of information on any work submitted, as well as unauthorized collaborating with students or others to determine the answers on assignments and exams. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. All suspected instances of violations of the Honor Code (plagiarism, copying, cheating) will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. Students who have not committed any prior violations will be sanctioned by the instructor; the usual penalty is a loss of all credit for the plagiarized assignment, or a grade of 0 on an exam. Students with prior violations will be sanctioned according to the Honor Code Resolution Process (http://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/4042.pdf). If you are accused of academic dishonesty, you are not allowed to drop the course until the matter is resolved. DO NOT CHEAT–the penalties are too severe. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, or concerns about completing an assignment on time, please consult with the instructor.

5. Counseling and Emergency Services
U Matter, We Care serves as the umbrella program for UF’s caring culture and provides students in distress with support and coordination of a wide variety of appropriate resources. Contact umatter@ufl.edu seven days a week for assistance if you are in distress. Call 352-392-1575 for a crisis counselor in the nighttime and weekends.

– the University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575; http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx
– Student Health Care Center, 392-1171
– Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601
– Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
– University Police Department 392-1111 (non-emergency); call 9-1-1 for emergencies

6. Online course evaluation process
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results.
7. Electronic Course Reserves

The electronic course reserve service is offered by the George A. Smathers Libraries. Under the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with disabilities have the right to equal access, use and benefit of the course materials that have been placed on reserve in the Libraries.

Students who have registered with the Disability Resource Center should initiate their request for assistance and accommodation in accessing these materials. The Center will work with the Libraries Course Reserve Unit to provide accessible course materials. All information submitted by the student to the Libraries in fulfilling the request for accommodation will be kept confidential. For more information on services for students with disabilities, contact the DRC at 352-392-8565 or at accessuf@dso.ufl.edu. For general information on course reserves, please contact the Course Reserves Unit at 352-273-2520, or email at eres@uflib.ufl.edu.

If you are not using a UF computer, it is best to use the UF VPN client when accessing electronic materials course reserve materials as well as e-books, on-line journals, databases, etc. offered by the library. The VPN client is easily installed and configured, and provides easy access to electronic materials using off-campus computers. For more information on using the VPN client, go to http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html

8. Software Regulations

All faculty, staff and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

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