

HIS 295 CRAFT HISTORIES

GRINNELL COLLEGE FALL 2021

T/R 1:00-2:20 • T 8/31/21 – T 10/12/21 • HSSC S3311

KELLY MAYNARD

office hours T/R 10-11:00 a.m. and by appt • ARH3244



top L to R:

William Morris chair, 1865 (collection of V&A Museum); Gandhi spinning, 1925 (photographer unknown, Getty images)

bottom L to R:

Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party* 1974/1979 (Brooklyn Museum); Ehren Tool, "I just make cups" 2001-present (thedirtycanteen.wordpress.com)

DESCRIPTION

This course explores an array of questions about how we make meaning through craft. How have craftspeople grappled with the social and political problems of their time? In what ways has crafting functioned as resistance, community, ritual, privilege, or appropriation? How has craft articulated queer identities and challenged normative paradigms? Finally, how have makers spoken through their craft in response to oppression, environmental degradation, or the digital world? Together we will consider case studies across the globe and works in clay, textiles, and wood.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this two-credit short course are:

- to understand a basic trajectory of the development of the idea of “craft” from the mid-nineteenth century to the present
- to familiarize ourselves with some of the ways that historians have grappled with material culture and non-traditional sources
- to consider how working with wood, textiles, and ceramics has interacted with political, social, and economic forces in several moments and contexts
- to cultivate speaking and listening skills and the clear presentation of our ideas through weekly class discussions
- to develop research and writing skills through a craft-related project of your choosing
- to present case studies at the end of the course clearly, thoughtfully, and engagingly

PRINCIPLES

As we navigate together the weirdnesses of higher education during a global pandemic, please bear in mind the THRIVE principles codified at the College in the spring of 2020. These are:

Talk to improve transparency,
Health and safety must remain a top priority for our entire campus community,
Re-imagine and reconsider what is possible and necessary,
Inclusion requires flexibility,
Value all experiences of vulnerability,
Empathy requires all of us to be aware, sensitive, and responsive.

This means that above all, we are working TOGETHER as a community to learn, to push each other, to respect each other, to empathize with each other, and to be humans together. So I am doubling down here on the necessity for us to embrace mutual support and grace as we move through this first half of the semester. Requirement number one, then, is that we all do our best as humans.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Class Meetings

As for the nuts and bolts, please arrive on time to our class meetings and be prepared to stay through the scheduled end of class. **Please come having 1) done the work listed on the syllabus for that day to the best of your ability and 2) collected in advance your thoughts, questions, and comments for discussion.** A fruitful conversation stems from prepared participants who come ready to engage, both by speaking AND by listening and responding to others' ideas.

Attendance

Because of the nature of the C19 pandemic and its effects, I am not implementing a hard and fast penalty for absences from class. However, pandemic or no, I DO value communication with you above all things. If you must miss class for whatever reason, please alert me via email as soon as possible. We can discuss ways to get materials that you missed to you. Similarly,

because participation in discussions and discussion boards is such an integral part of the class (see below), your learning will suffer from extended absences from class and boards. Please do your best to keep up at all times.

Deadlines

There will be a number of different, small assignments as the course progresses, and I will schedule reasonable and appropriate deadlines for completion for each of these. As with attendance, however, I recognize that there are many things happening in your lives of which this course is but one piece. I am much more interested in you doing your best on an assignment than in you handing it in “on time” per se, as long as we can strike a balance and avoid debilitating procrastination or the triumph of crippling perfectionism. Please try to meet deadlines, communicate with me if you are unable for any reason. We can work together to make arrangements from there.

Resources

Finally, I want every person in this class to succeed and am deeply committed to creating an environment that helps make that possible. I encourage students with documented disabilities in any form to discuss reasonable accommodations with me. If you have not already done so, please start a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to Jae Hirschman, Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, at hirschma@grinnell.edu.

Grading

Your grade for this course will be calculated according to the following formula:

class meeting participation 50%
 research project scaffolding assignments 25%
 research project presentation 25%

In addition to the expectations for participation outlined above, details will be forthcoming about scaffolding assignments and the research presentation.

Class Materials

There are no books required for this course. All materials listed below will be available on PWeb, though the Grinnell College Libraries, or on the internet.

SCHEDULE

Week I Introduction and key readings in craft history, theory, concepts

T Aug 31 Course introduction, syllabus, outline of research projects

- R Sept 2
- Alexander Langlands, Forward and Preface to *Craeft: An Inquiry into the Origins and True Meaning of Traditional Crafts* (2019), pp. 1-13
 - T'ai Smith, “The Problem with Craft” in *CAA Art Journal* 25, no. 1 (2016)
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43967655>
 - Tanya Harrod, “Introduction: Craft Over & Over Again” in *Craft* (2018), pp. 12-21

Week II Arts and Crafts and its Discontents

- T Sept 7
- William Morris, “The Revival of Handicraft.” *Fortnightly Review* (Nov 1888) <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/handcraft.htm>
 - Zoë Thomas, “Introduction: The Arts and Crafts Movement, Work Cultures, and the Politics of Gender” in *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement* (2020), pp. 1-32
- R Sept 9
- Patrick Brantlinger, “A Postindustrial Prelude to Postcolonialism: John Ruskin, William Morris, & Gandhism” in *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 466-485
Project scaffolding: interests and ideas

Week III Craft Colonialism, Nationbuilding, and Resistance

- T Sept 14
- Susan Bean, (excerpt) “Gandhi and Khadi, the Fabric of Indian Independence” in Hemmings, ed., *The Textile Reader* (2012, originally 1989), pp. 234-246
 - Aarti Kawlra, “Sari and the Narrative of Nation in 20thC India” in *Global Textile Encounters* (2014), pp. 213-226 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh1dpz7.26>
- R Sept 16
- Eliana Moya-Raggio, “”Arpilleras”: Chilean Culture of Resistance” *Feminist Studies* 10, no. 2 (summer 1984): 277-290 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177867>
Project scaffolding: topics

Week IV Transnational Bauhaus and the Work of Textiles

- T Sept 21
- Anni Albers, “Constructing Textiles” (1946) in Hemmings, ed., *The Textile Reader*, pp. 387-390
 - Anni Albers, “The Fundament Constructions” from *On Weaving* (1965) in Adamson, ed., *The Craft Reader* (2010), pp. 29-33
 - Anni Albers, “Tactile Sensibility” (1965), in Tanya Harrod, ed., *Craft: Documents of Contemporary Art* (2018), pp. 27-30
 - Oral history interview with Anni Albers on teaching method, 1968 (3:09) <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-anni-albers-12134>
- R Sept 23
- Alice Walker, “Everyday Use” from *In Love and Trouble* (1967), in Hemmings, ed., *Textile Reader* (2012), pp. 436-441
 - bell hooks, (excerpts) “Aesthetic Inheritances: History Worked by Hand” in *belonging: a culture of place* (2007), in Harrod, ed., *Craft* (2018), pp. 210-214
Project scaffolding: initial research

Week V Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party, and Womanhouse

- T Sept 28
- Jane Gerhard, “Toward a Cultural History of the *Dinner Party*” and “Epilogue: A Prehistory of Postfeminism” in *The Dinner Party: Judy Chicago and the Power of Popular Feminism, 1970-2007* (2013), pp. 1-20, 283-290

- R Sept 30
- Myriam Schapiro, “Recalling Womanhouse” in *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 15, nos. 1/2 (Spring-Summer 1987): 25-30
 - Judy Chicago on Womanhouse, interview at National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2017 (36’) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9muNnozFGY>
- Project scaffolding: further research progress

Week VI Craft and the Contemporary World

T Oct 5

Social Concerns

- “Gestures of Resistance” at Center for Contemporary Art & Culture, PNW College of Art (2010), <http://mocc.pnca.edu/exhibitions/1278/>
- Sandra Alföldy, “Crafting Kindness” in *Journal of Canadian Art History* (2018/19)
- Black and Burisch, “From Craftivism to Craftwashing” in *The New Politics of the Handmade* (2021), pp. 13-32
- <https://decoratingdissidence.com/category/queer-craft/>
- thedirtycanteen.wordpress.com
- Betsy Greer, *Craftivism: The Art of Craft and Activism* (2014)
- Joe McBrinn, *Queering the Subversive Stitch: Men&Culture of Needlework* (2021)
- Michael Mechanic, “Wine, Cheese, and Lawyers to Help You Clean Up Your Rap Sheet” (2013) <http://www.motherjones.com/media/2013/12/richard-ross-roberto-lugo-mat-tomezsko-philadelphia-art-exhibit-expungement>
- Ruth Terry, “Black People Were the Original “Craftivists”” (2019) <https://zora.medium.com/icymi-bipoc-are-the-original-diy-craftivists-5ce6ae19742e>
- Moira Vincentelli, “Clashing with Clay Mother: Pueblo potters who subvert the tradition” *Interpreting Ceramics* 15 (2013) <http://www.interpretingceramics.com/issue015/articles/02.htm>

Environmental Concerns

- Potters for Peace/Ceramistas por la Paz, Ceramic Water Filter Program <https://www.pottersforpeace.org/ceramic-water-filter-project>
- Potters without Borders, <http://www.potterswithoutborders.com/>
- Gia Yetikyel, “How Art and Sustainability Come Together in Craft” (2021) <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/three-craft-artists-explain-art-sustainability-come-together-180977434/>
- Judith Leemann, Keynote Address, Craft Ontario Crafting Sustainability Conference, 2015 <https://vimeo.com/133770955>

The Digital Turn

- Lucy Johnston, *Digital Handmade: Craftsmanship and the New Industrial Revolution* (2015)
- Malcolm McCullough, *Abstracting Craft: The Practiced Digital Hand* (1997)
- Alla Myzelev, “Creating Digital Materiality: Third-Wave Feminism, Public Art, and Yarn Bombing” in *Material Culture* 47:1 (Spring 2015): 58-79
- craftandthedigitalturn.com

R Oct 7

Wrapping Up

- Leopold Kowolik, “Sincerity Not Authenticity: Craft’s Political Path out of a Modernist Trap” in Wood, ed., *Craft Is Political* (2021), pp. 225-236
- Leopold Kowolik, “Craft as Property as Liberalism as Problem” in Black and Bursch, eds., *The New Politics of the Handmade* (2021), pp. 97-116

Project scaffolding: presentation shape

Week VII Research Presentations

T Oct 12

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