

# Religion and Material Culture

Anth 4800, Fall 2017, Tues & Thurs 7:30-8:45 am (Old Main 304)



Instructor: Dr. Anna Cohen ([anna.cohen@usu.edu](mailto:anna.cohen@usu.edu))

Office Hours: Tues & Thurs, 10-11 am or by appointment, Old Main 215

## Course Description

This course explores the role of material culture in ritual practices. Material culture, which may refer to monuments, places of worship, clothing, ancient art, and many other objects, has long been a part of religious activities. In this class, we will draw broadly from contemporary works in Sociocultural Anthropology, Archaeology, and Religious Studies to identify how material culture has been used to create, perpetuate, transform, and erase religious identity in the past and today. The goal of the course is to juxtapose the experience, perception, and imagination of material cultures to better understand instances of religious cooperation and conflict. Drawing on cross-cultural and local case studies, students will examine histories of interfaith cooperation and diverse religious traditions, and they will be required to participate in community engagement. Prior experience in Anthropology or a Material Culture-related discipline (e.g. Art History) will be helpful but is not required.

## Course Organization

Class meetings will be a combination of lectures, discussions, and presentations by your fellow students. Readings will be posted on Canvas and it is expected that you complete them prior to our class period. For the first few weeks of the semester, we will explore the concept of material culture and why objects are so important to our identity. We will then investigate several global case studies (e.g. Ayodhya; Bamiyan Buddhas; Aboriginal ritual/place) and identify how materials were

used in religious practice. We will conclude the course with discussion of the intersection of objects and faith in our own communities in Utah.

### **Course Requirements (additional details posted on Canvas)**

1) Discussions (20% of grade): In groups of 2-3 that I will assign on Canvas, you will be required to lead class discussion based on the assigned readings for 3-4 class meetings. On your assigned discussion days, you should briefly summarize the readings, come up with leading questions for the class, and incorporate some kind of media (e.g. images; video; news article; object, etc.). You will also be evaluated for participation and attendance - note that while I do not take attendance, your presence or absence in class will be taken into consideration for your final grade.

2) Abstracts (15%): By 7 am before each class meeting, you must upload to Canvas a 100-word abstract about at least two of the assigned readings for that day. Within the word limit, you should address the questions: What is the main thesis or argument of the reading? What methods and evidence does the author use (e.g. observation of modern humans; historical texts; artifact counts, etc.)? What are the main conclusions?

3) Reflection Posts & Field Trips (20%): To better understand the relationship between local faiths and materials such as historical landscapes, we will go on two field trips this semester to religious spaces in the Cache Valley. You must attend both field trips and write a 500-1,000 word reflection post on Canvas by the following week. Within these posts, you are required to reference at least two of the course readings using Chicago Style. When appropriate, I encourage you to take notes, and audio or video recordings while on these field trips.

4) Final Project (25%) & Final Paper (20%): Students will visit at least two local religious spaces (e.g. church, mosque, ritual landscape) and compare the use of material culture in religious practice. You will then discuss the results of your project in a virtual poster or mixed media format (e.g. video; blog; audio recordings, etc.) to the class. For the project, you can work with a partner, but each student must write a 2,000 word (5-6 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman font) paper that provides a brief history and description of your selected religious spaces, and a reflection of your experiences engaging with the material culture. You must reference at least three of the course readings using Chicago Style. All papers must be submitted via Canvas.

### **Course Policies**

\*Attendance/Late Work: Attendance is essential to your success in this class. I do not accept late work unless you have a documented reason (e.g. medical or family emergence). Students are responsible for keeping up with the missed material.

\*Classroom Conduct: While in class and online, your opinions, questions, and commentary are always welcome as long as your opinions respect other students in the course and your instructor. Please do not use your phones in class. I will call you out and have you show your snapchat/tweets/fb messages/etc. to the rest of the class.

\*Emails: Do not write me “text message” emails. Please include an email topic, a salutation (Dear/Hi/Hello Anna), and sign your name.

\*Academic Misconduct: As a USU student, you must adhere to the University's Student Code. I will take appropriate actions in response to Academic Dishonesty, which include, but are not limited to cheating, falsification, and plagiarism. If you are unclear about what these activities constitute, see this course Canvas page for details.

### **Course Schedule** (subject to change)

#### **8/29 First meeting: Introductions**

#### PART I: Material Culture, Anthropology, and Religion

#### **8/31 Anthropology and Material Culture: Why do we like things?**

Malinowski, Bronislaw (1922/1984) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, pp. 1-11, 49-70, 81-104.

Gladwell, Malcolm (1997) *The Coolhunt*. *The New Yorker*: <http://gladwell.com/the-coolhunt/>

#### **9/5 Anthropology (Archaeology) and Materials: How do we study things?**

Holtorf, Cornelius (2002) Notes on the Life History of a Pot Sherd. *Journal of Material Culture* 7(1): 49-71.

Tilley, Christopher (2001) *Ethnography and Material Culture*. In *Handbook of Ethnography*, edited by Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. & Lofland, L., pp. 258-272. Sage doi: 10.4135/9781848608337.n18.

Kopytoff, Igor (1987) *Object Biographies*. Ch. 2 from *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: CUP.

#### **9/7 Religion and Materials: What is the relationship?**

Martin, Craig (2012) *A Critical Introduction to the Study of Religion*, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-18) and 4 (pp. 71-91 – you can skim this, but we will discuss the concepts in class). Bristol, CT: Equinox Press.

Eck, Diane (1998) *Darśan*, Ch. 1 (pp. 3-31). Columbia: CUP.

Primiano, Leonard Norman (2016) *Collecting Vernacular Religious Material Culture*. *Material Religion*: 12(3):381-383.

#### **9/12 Religious Spaces and Landscapes**

Basso, Keith (1996) *Wisdom Sits in Places*. In *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*, pp. 53-90. Albuquerque: UNM Press.

Bloch, Maurice (1995) People into Places: Zafimaniry Concepts of Clarity. In *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspectives on Place and Space*, edited by E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon, pp. 63-77. Oxford: Clarendon.

Ferguson, T.J., G. Lennis Berlin, Leigh J. Kuwanwisiwma (2009) Kukhepya: Searching for Hopi Trails. In *Landscapes of Movement: Trails, Paths, and Roads in Anthropological Perspective*, edited by J.E. Snead et al., pp. 20-41. Philadelphia: U Penn Press.

#### 9/14 **Objects in Motion: Gifts and Exchange**

Mauss, Marcel (1950/2000) *The Gift*. Introduction, Chapters 1-2, 4 (pp. 1-46, 65-83).

Carrier, James (1993) The Rituals of Christmas Giving. In *Unwrapping Christmas*, edited by D. Miller, pp. 55-74. Oxford: Clarendon.

#### 9/19 **More on Gifts: Commodifying Religion**

Belk, R. W. (1987) A Child's Christmas in America: Santa Claus as Deity, Consumption as Religion. *Journal of American Culture* 10:87-100.

Starrett, Gregory (1995) The Political Economy of Religious Commodities in Cairo. *American Anthropologist* 97:51-68.

#### 9/21 **No Class**

#### 9/26 **Bodily Adornment**

Schwartz, Maureen Trudelle (2006) Native American Tattoos: Identity and Spirituality in Contemporary America. *Visual Anthropology* 19(3-4):223-254.

Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood (1979/1996) *The World of Goods*, Ch. 3 (pp. 36-47). NY: Taylor & Francis.

#### 9/28 **Clothing**

Turner, Terence (1993) The Social Skin. In *Reading the Social Body*, edited by C. Burroughs and J. Ehrenreich, pp. 15-39. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

Sosis, Richard (2006) Religious Behaviors, Badges, and Bans: Signaling Theory and the Evolution of Religion. In *Where God and Science Meet*, edited by P. McNamara, pp. 61-85. Westport: Praeger.

## PART II: Global Case Studies

### 10/3 “Erasing” Religions through Destruction of Material Culture

Schreiber, Katharina (2005) Imperial Agendas and Local Agency: Wari Colonial Strategies. In *The Archaeology of Colonial Encounters*, edited by G. Stein, pp. 237-262. Santa Fe: SAR Press.

Holtorf, Cornelius (2006) Can Less Be More? Heritage in the Age of Terrorism. *Public Archaeology* 5(2):101-109.

Behzad, Nasir and Daud Qarizadah (2015) The Man Who Helped Blow Up the Bamiyan Buddhas. *BBC*: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-31813681>.

### 10/5 The Power of Material Culture: Ayodhya, India

Bernbeck, Reinhard & Susan Pollock (1996) Ayodhya, Archaeology and Identity. *Current Anthropology* 37(1):138-42.

Pollock, Sheldon (1993) Ramayana and Political Imagination in India. *Journal of Asian Studies* 52(2):261-97.

### 10/10 Destruction of Ancient Religious Materials in the Middle East

Abu El -Haj, Nadia (2001) *Facts on the Ground: Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, Ch. 2 and 7 (pp. 163-200). Chicago: UC Press.

Smith, Claire, Heather Burke, Cherriede Leiu, & Gary Jackson (2015) The Islamic State’s Symbolic War: Da’esh’s Socially Mediated Terrorism as a Threat to Cultural Heritage. *Journal of Social Archaeology*. doi:10.1177/1469605315617048.

Bilefsky, Dan (2017) ISIS Destroys Part of Roman Amphitheater in Syria. *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/20/world/middleeast/palmyra-syria-isis-amphitheater.html>

### 10/12 Cultural Revolutions in China

Lai, Guolong (2015) *Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion*, Ch. 1 (pp. 25-53). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Lim, Louisa (2010) Churches Sprout in Rural China. *NPR*: <http://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2010/07/19/128623467/churches>

**10/17 Eastern Europe: The Iron Curtain and Kosovo**

Galaty, Michael L. (2011) *Blood of Our Ancestors: Cultural Heritage Management in the Balkans*. In *Contested Cultural Heritage*, pp. 109–124. NY: Springer.

Galaty Michael L., Sharon R. Stocker, and Charles Watkinson (1999) Beyond Bunkers: Dominance, Resistance and Change in an Albanian Regional Landscape. *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology* 12(2):197–214.

**10/19 No Class (Friday schedule)**

**10/24 Objects that Perpetuate Religious Traditions: Memory and Re-Use**

Lillios, Katina (1999) Objects of Memory: The Ethnography and Archaeology of Heirlooms. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 6(3):235-262.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara (1989) Objects of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review. In *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: A Reader*, edited by E. Oring. Logan: USU Press.

**10/26 Landscapes of Memory in India and Australia**

Sinopoli, Carla (2003) Echoes of Empire: Vijayanagara and Historical Memory, Vijayanagara as Historical Memory. In *Archaeologies of Memory*, edited by R. Van Dyke and S. Alcock, pp. 17-33. NY: Wiley.

Smith, Claire (1999) Ancestors, Place, and People: Social Landscapes in Aboriginal Australia. In *The Archaeology and Anthropology of Landscapes*, edited by P.J. Ucko and R. Layton, pp. 191-205. London: Routledge.

**10/31 Halloween, Day of the Dead**



Chestnut, R. Andrew (2010) *Devoted to Death: Santa Muerte, the Skeleton Saint*, Introduction (pp. 3-26) and Ch. 2 (pp. 50-95). Oxford University Press.

Isaac, G. & Bojorquez, A. & Nichols, C. (2012). Dying to Be Represented: Museums and Día de los Muertos Collaborations. *Collaborative Anthropologies* 5(1):28-63.

## 11/2 **Relics**

Strong, John S. (2004) Buddhist Relic in Comparative Perspective: Beyond the Parallels. In *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia*, edited by D. Germano and K. Trainer, pp. 27-49. Albany: SUNY Press.

McDannell, Colleen (1995) *Material Christianity*, Ch. 2 (pp. 17-66). New Haven: Yale University Press.

## 11/7 **Ritual Landscapes in the U.S.**

Gilmore, Lee (2006) *Theater in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at Burning Man*, Ch. 1 (pp. 17-44). Berkeley: UC Press.

Nash, Stephen (2017) At Bears Ears in Utah, Heated Politics and Precious Ruins. *New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/travel/bears-ears-utah-politics-trump-national-monument.html>

Wilson, Cynthia (2017) Commentary: There is much this native potato can teach us. *Salt Lake Tribune*: <http://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2017/08/19/commentary-there-is-much-this-native-potato-can-teach-us/>.

Check out The Bears Ears Coalition webpages, including interactive maps:  
<https://bearscoalition.org/the-region-to-the-native-eye/>

## PART III: Intersecting Religions and Material Culture in Cache Valley

### 11/9 **Local Ritual Landscapes**

Gabbert, Lisa (2015) Legend Quests and the Curious Case of St. Ann's Retreat: The Performative Landscape. In *Putting the Supernatural in its Place*, edited by J. Thomas, pp. 146-169. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Fawcett, William B. and Walter Robert Lewelling (2000) Lemuel's Garden: Confronting Issues of Race, Class, and Power through the Differential Preservation of Archaeological Sites in Northern Utah. In *Lines that Divide*, edited by J.A. Delle, S.A. Mrozowski, R. Paynter, pp. 40-57. Knoxville: UT Press.

### 11/14 **Formal and Informal Religious Institutions**

Cann, Candi K. (2014) *Virtual Afterlives*, Ch. 1-2 (pp. 17-79). Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.

**11/16 Local Material Culture: Clothing & Tattoos**

McDannell, Colleen (1995) *Material Christianity*, Ch. 2 (pp. 198-221). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Reina, Hollie (2016) 'Finding My Tribe' Documentary Examines Tattoo Subculture, Acceptance in Utah. *St George News*: <https://www.stgeorgeutah.com/news/archive/2016/09/05/hsr-finding-my-tribe-documentary-examines-tattoo-subculture-acceptance-in-utah>

→ Watch Finding My Tribe: <https://youtu.be/Z3OIXsir-YQ>

Kessler, Mori (2017) Unfriendly Attitudes toward Tattoo Shop Complicating Move Efforts, Owners Claim. *Cedar City News*: <http://www.cedarcityutah.com/news/archive/2017/05/27/mgk-unfriendly-attitudes-toward-tattoo-shop-complicating-moving-efforts-owners-claims>

**11/21 Material Culture contd.**

Readings TBD



Thanksgiving & Conference Break!!



**\*\*Work on your projects\*\***

**12/5 Final project presentations**

**12/7 Last Class; Final project presentations**

**12/12 Final reflection papers due**