

The World in 12 Objects

Pre-requisites: Nil No of AUs: 3 Contact Hours: 39 (weekly seminars of 3 hours)

Seminar: Thursday, 10:30-13:20

Course Instructors

| Instructor | Office Location | Phone | Email |
|---------------|-----------------|----------|------------------|
| Goh Geok Yian | SHHK-05-09 | 65138163 | gygoh@ntu.edu.sg |

Course Aims

The World in 12 Objects appropriates an approach through a set of objects to describe and discuss human perception of the past and how divergent perceptions have shaped the histories we write of humans' place in the world. This course also examines past societies and their practices, traditions, and products. The course focuses on 12 objects over 12 weeks. By examining a single object each week, the course uses different objects as points of entry to discuss different topics examined in archaeology and history such as religion, trade and exchange, communications, migration, urbanization, industry, and production, etc. By centering on an object, its properties, form, production, context, and history, the course provides students with the tools to explore history by focusing on the life history (biography) of material items, such as a dinosaur fossil, stone tool, crozier, bronze sword, glass bead, a mummy, Kraak porcelain, or a piece of water pipe etc.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Describe the major aims of studying a history of objects.
2. Provide a general chronological account of objects in the history of the world beyond that of human history.
3. Discuss major themes covered in a history of objects.
4. Examine how the study of objects (ecofact and artifact) contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the history of the world and specifically to human beings' place in this history.
5. Formulate an argument on the complementary relationship between history and archaeology and our role in the construction of knowledge and meaning about objects and their significance in history and our society.

Course Content

This course provides a general introduction to the history of objects through discussing the significance of 12 examples: examining their place in the history of the world, in terms of human perceptions of them, and the significance human beings assign to them. The course begins with an introduction to object-centric history, and proceeds to focus on a different object each week over a period of 12 weeks. Each object is selected based on its chronological context in the history of the world and human society. By examining the history of these objects, students learn to engage with the study of material culture and nonverbal communication through examining the context of their production or origin, their symbolism, their functions (original/primary and secondary and invented usage), and their perceived significance in the long durée of human history and society.

The following represent themes covered in this course:

1. Science and its effect on people's perception of time and the age of the world
2. Evolution

3. Religion
4. Technology and energy capture
5. Culture and interaction
6. Trade and Exchange
7. Urbanization
8. Art and communication
9. Environment

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

| Component | ILO Tested | Weighting | Team/Individual |
|---|---------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Group presentations and discussions | 1, 2, 3, 4 | 30% | Team |
| Mid-term essay | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | 20% | Individual |
| Individual research project - presentation and research essay | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | 40% | Individual |
| Participation in class discussions | 1, 2, 3, 4 | 10% | Individual |
| Total | | 100% | |

Group Presentations and Discussions - 30%

Students are expected to take turns to present readings to the class in a pair. Students will present and lead discussions during these presentations; each student is expected to complete a total of two(2) presentations. These presentations will be group presentations. Each pair presentation should last approximately 15 minutes including a discussion led by the presenters.

Each pair should prepare a powerpoint presentation of approximately 5-6 slides. Each presenter should present for up to 5 minutes each followed by a 5-minute discussion.

Each pair of presenters will receive a group score (15%) and an individual score (15%). The group score is determined by the following criteria: a) coherence, content and structure of the presentation, and b) equitable distribution of the workload (peer feedback about individual contributions to the project is taken into account). The individual score will be assessed based on the individual performance in producing the presentation, delivering it, and in responding to questions from the class.

Each student pair is also expected to take part in two group discussion activities. They will work together to present their findings/analyses.

Mid-term Essay - 20%

Students are required to complete one mid-term essay. The student will write an essay in response to a question which the instructor will pose a week before the mid-semester recess week.

Individual Research Project – presentation and research essay - 40%

Each student is expected to complete an individual research project at the end of the semester. For this assignment, students will complete a written research paper on 2-3 objects they have chosen to focus on in their history of objects. The project comprises two parts: i. presentation (5-10 minutes), and ii. Individual essay (2,000 words each). The topic of the final project must be related to one or more themes examined in this course.

Students will submit their list of objects in week 10 to the instructor for approval.

Participation in class discussions - 10%

Students are expected to participate in class discussions and any activities conducted within the classroom.

Formative feedback

You will receive formative feedback through written responses to your papers and verbal feedback through in-class comments on students' group presentations and discussion. Generic summative feedback will be given to seminar group presentations and personal specific feedback (to individual written assignments) will be given to individual student.

I will consider the following points when giving comments to students:

1. Provide constructive and positive feedback whenever possible.
2. Return my feedback to students as soon as I can.
3. I will be specific in making suggestions regarding how each student can improve on her/his work.
4. Focus on the students' advancement toward their goal.
5. With respect to presentations and in-class discussions, I will encourage students to express their views freely.

Learning and Teaching approach

| Approach | How does this approach support you in achieving the learning outcomes? |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Brief introduction | The instructor will give a brief introduction at the beginning of each seminar introducing and providing the context for understanding each week's theme. The presentation will include the use of slides and other multi-media files. |
| Team-based presentations | Students in the class will select topics they want to present. The presentations provide opportunities for the students to practice public speaking and allow them to hone their presentation skills in a supportive environment. The presenters will respond to questions and comments from the instructor and the class; they would have to think quickly and respond to the questions posed to them. The students will learn teamwork. |
| In-class free-style discussions | The students will be encouraged to comment on, critique, and query the group presentations. This approach allows students to develop confidence in public speaking and also alert them to the importance of peer feedback. |

Reading and References

Texts subject to changes.

Goldhill, Simon. *The Buried Life of Things: How Objects Made History in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Miller, Peter. *History and Its Objects: Antiquarianism and Material Culture Since 1500*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017.

Ulrich, Laurel T, Gaskell, Ivan, et al. *Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) General

You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all seminar classes punctually and take all scheduled assignments and tests by due dates. You are expected to take responsibility to follow up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements for seminar sessions you have missed. You are expected to participate in all seminar discussions and activities.

(2) Absenteeism

Group presentations and in-class discussions require students to attend classes in order for them to contribute to the course discussions. Absence from class without a valid reason can affect your overall course grade. Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies.

If you miss a class, you must inform the course instructor via email (gygoh@ntu.edu.sg) prior to the start of the class.

(3) Penalties for late submission

Penalties will be levied for late submissions unless there are approved medical or other certificated reasons explaining the delay. Students must ensure that they inform the instructor regarding any delay as soon as possible. Students failing to submit an assignment will be denied credit points for this course. In exceptional circumstances extensions may be granted for individual students, but only for students who ask BEFORE the assignments' submission dates.

(4) Plagiarism in writing research papers

It is important that all unacknowledged materials in students' essays are their own work. The University has strict rules pertaining to plagiarism that may result in disciplinary procedures. Students are reminded that copying or using any part of any essay (published and unpublished) and any other written work including another student's essay or written work without citing the author(s) is considered plagiarism. Verbatim citations from other writings must be placed within quotation marks. Students are encouraged to paraphrase sources. Whether quotations and/or paraphrases are used, students are required to cite their sources.

Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the [academic integrity website](#) for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

Planned Weekly Schedule

| Week | Topic | Readings/ Activities |
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| Week 1 | Introduction to the course: background, concepts, methods | <p>Allard, Francis, Yan Sun and Katheryn Linduff. "Introduction: Memory and Agency in Ancient China: Shaping the Life Histories of Objects," in Francis Allard, Yan Sun and Katheryn Linduff (eds.) <i>Memory and Agency in Ancient China: Shaping the Life History of Objects</i>. Cambridge University Press, 2018.</p> <p>Ulrich, Laurel T, Gaskell, Ivan, et al. <i>Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. "Introduction", pp. 1-20.</p> |
| Week 2 | Dinosaur fossil | <p>Rieppel, Lukas. "Prospecting for dinosaurs on the mining frontier: The value of information in America's Gilded Age." <i>Social Studies of Science</i> 45, 2 (2015): 161-186.</p> <p>Schoberlein, Stefan. "Dinosaurs in Iowa. Or: On Reading Fossils." <i>South Central Review</i> 34, 1 (2017): 68-92.</p> <p>Tamborini, Marco. "'If the Americans can do it, so can we?': How dinosaur bones shaped German Paleontology." <i>History of Science</i> 54, 3 (2016): 225-256.</p> <p>Tattersdill, Will. "Work on the Victorian dinosaur: Histories and prehistories of 19th-century palaeontology." <i>Literature Compass</i> (2017).</p> |
| Week 3 | Kimberley Point | <p>Harrison, Rodney. "An Artefact of Colonial Desire? Kimberley Points and the Technologies of Enchantment." <i>Current Anthropology</i> 47, 1 (2006).</p> <p>Akerman, Kim. "'Missing the Point' or 'What to Believe – the Theory or the Data': Rationales for the Production of Kimberley Points." <i>Australian aboriginal studies</i> 2008, 2 (2008): 70-79.</p> <p>Torrence, Robin. "Finding the right question: Learning from stone tools on the Willaumez Peninsula, Papua New Guinea." <i>Archaeology of Oceania</i> 46 (2011): 29-41.</p> |
| Week 4 | Crozier | <p>Bourke, Cormac. "A Crozier and Bell from Inishmurray and Their Place in Ninth-Century Irish Archaeology."</p> |

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| | | <p><i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature</i> 85C (1985): 145-168.</p> <p>Frazer, W. "On an Irish Crozier, with Early Metal Crook, Probably the Missing "Crozier of St. Ciaran," of Clonmacnoise." <i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy (1889-1901)</i> 1 (1889-1891): 206-214.</p> <p>Immonen, Visa. "Heritageisation as a material process: the bishop's crosier of Turku Cathedral, Finland." <i>International Journal of Heritage Studies</i> 18, 2 (2012): 144-159.</p> <p>Murray, Griffin. "The 'Hidden Power' of the Irish Crozier." <i>Archaeology Ireland</i> 18, 1 (2004): 24-27.</p> |
| Week 5 | The Goujian sword | <p>Cohen, Paul. <i>Speaking to History: The story of King Goujian in Twentieth-century China</i>. University of California Press, 2019. Chapter 1.</p> <p>Cutter, Robert. "'Well, how'd you become king, then?' Swords in Early Medieval China." <i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> 132, 4 (2012): 523-538.</p> <p>Milburn, Olivia. "The Weapons of Kings: A New Perspective on Southern Sword Legends in Early China." <i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> 128, 3 (2008): 423-437.</p> |
| Week 6 | Glass bead | <p>Carter, Alison. "Glass artifacts at Angkor: evidence for exchange". <i>Archaeological and anthropological sciences</i> 11, 3 (2017): 1-15.</p> <p>Chen, Hwei-Fe'n. "'Made in China'? A Case Study of Nonya Beadwork." <i>Textile History</i> 38, 1 (2007): 59-91.</p> <p>Miksic, John et al. "Archaeology and Early Chinese Glass Trade in Southeast Asia." <i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i> 25, 1 (1994): 31-46.</p> |
| Week 7 | Arab Dhow ("The Jewel of Muscat") | <p>Guy, John. "Shipwrecks in Late First Millennium Southeast Asia: Southern China's Maritime Trade and the Emerging Role of Arab Merchants in Indian Ocean Exchanges," in Angela Schottenhammer (ed.) <i>Early Global Interconnectivity across the Indian Ocean World</i> 1 (2019): 121-163.</p> <p>Rodley, Edward. "The Ethics of Exhibiting Salvaged Shipwrecks." <i>Curator</i> 55, 4 (2012): 383-391.</p> <p>Vosmer, Tom, et al. "The "Jewel of Muscat" Project: reconstructing an early ninth-century CE shipwreck."</p> |

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| | | <i>Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies</i> 41 (2011): 411-424. |
| Week 8 | The mummy | <p>Jones, Jana. "A prehistoric Egyptian mummy: Evidence for an 'embalming recipe' and the evolution of early formative funerary treatments." <i>Journal of Archaeological Science</i> 100 (2018): 191-200.</p> <p>Mair, Victor. "Mummies of the Tarim Basin." <i>Archaeology</i> 48, 2 (1995): 28-35.</p> <p>Riggs, Christina. "The body in the box: archiving the Egyptian mummy." <i>Archival Science</i> 17, 2 (2017): 125-150.</p> <p>Watson, Traci. "Intricate animal and flower tattoos found on Egyptian mummy." <i>Nature</i> 533, 7602 (2016): 155-156.</p> |
| Week 9 | Selden's map | <p>Batchelor, Robert. "The Selden Map Rediscovered: A Chinese Map of East Asian Shipping Routes, c. 1619." <i>Imago Mundi</i> 65, 1 (2013): 37-63.</p> <p>Brook, Timothy. <i>Mr Selden's Map of China</i>. Bloomsbury, 2013. Preface and Chapter 1.</p> <p>Chen Tsung-jen. "A Collage of Many Things: Rethinking the Making of the Selden Map," in Martijn Storms et al (eds.) <i>Mapping Asia: Cartographic Encounters Between East and West</i>. Springer, 2017.</p> |
| Week 10 | Kraak porcelain | <p>Borschberg, P. "Seizure of the Santa Catarina revisited: the Portuguese empire in Asia, VOC politics and the origins of the Dutch-Johor alliance (c. 1602-1616)." <i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i> 33, 1: 31-62.</p> <p>Canepa, Teresa. "The Spanish Trade in Kraak Porcelain to the New World and its Impact on the Local Ceramics Industry." <i>Revista de Arqueologia Americana</i> 32 (2014): 99-127.</p> <p>Rinaldi, Maura. <i>Kraak Porcelain: a moment in the history of trade</i>. Bamboo, 1989.</p> |
| Week 11 | Vajra | <p>Miksic, John. "The Buddhist-Hindu Divide in Premodern Southeast Asia." <i>Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre Working Paper</i> 1 (2010).</p> <p>Onians, Isabelle. "Vajrapani". <i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i> 14 Gale, 2005, 9511-9514.</p> |

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| | | Sharrock, Peter. "Garuda, Vajrapani and religious change in Jayavarman VII's Angkor." <i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i> 40, 1 (2009): 111-151. |
| Week 12 | A piece of water pipe | <p>Mays, Larry. "A Brief History of Roman Water Technology," in Larry Mays (ed.) <i>Ancient Water Technologies</i>. Springer, 2010.</p> <p>Ortloff, C.R. and D.P. Crouch. "The Urban Water Supply and Distribution System of the Ionian City of Ephesos in the Roman Imperial Period." <i>Journal of Archaeological Science</i> 28 (2001): 843-860.</p> <p>Rossi, Cesare and Flavio Russo. "Adduction and Distribution of Water," in <i>Ancient Engineers' Inventions</i>. Springer, 2018.</p> |
| Week 13 | Nutmeg | <p>Brixus, Dorit, et al. "A hard nut to crack: nutmeg cultivation and the application of natural history between the Maluku islands and Isle de France (1750s-1780s)." <i>The British journal for the history of science</i> 51, 4 (2018): 585-606.</p> <p>Milton, Giles. <i>Nathaniel's Nutmeg, or, The true and incredible adventures of the spice trader who changed the course of history</i>. Penguin, 2000. Prologue and Chapter 10.</p> |