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**
### Week II  
**Arts and Crafts and its Discontents**

**T Sept 7**  
https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/handcrft.htm  

**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

### Week III  
**Craft Colonialism, Nationbuilding, and Resistance**

**T Sept 14**  
https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh1dpz7.26

**R Sept 16**  
https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177867

### Week IV  
**Transnational Bauhaus and the Work of Textiles**

**T Sept 21**  
- 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**  

### Week V  
**Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party, and Womanhouse**

**T Sept 28**  
R Sept 30


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 Alfoldy, “Crafting Kindness” in Journal of Canadian Art History (2018/19)
- 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)

Environmental Concerns

- Potters for Peace/Ceramistas por la Paz, Ceramic Water Filter Program https://www.pottersforpeace.org/ceramic-water-filter-project

The Digital Turn

- craftandthedigitalturn.com
R Oct 7  **Wrapping Up**

Project scaffolding: presentation shape

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week VII</th>
<th>Research Presentations</th>
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