

**Comparative Studies 677.03
Cultures of Waste and Recycling**

Autumn 2010
Prof. Dorothy Noyes
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#25688
UH 0024
MW 1:30-3:18

This course explores the notion of the residual: what is left over, useless, unclassifiable. We will explore the customary management of communal resources, both human and material, in scarce-resource societies. We'll consider processes of symbolic classification through which phenomena can be labelled as out of place or out of phase. We'll examine the creation of waste (and its converse, deprivation) with the codification of custom in modernity, and look at strategies by which waste is recuperated as a matter of necessity, aesthetics, or ideology. We'll look at how different kinds of leftover move in and out of systems of value: for example, the labelling of things as "junk" or "antiques," people as "trash," or ideas as "folklore." Finally, we'll think about the status of residues in social and cultural theory.

REQUIRED READINGS

Please bring the readings with you to class, except of course in the case of websites.

Books at SBX:

Strasser, Susan. 1999. *Waste and Want : A Social History of Trash*. New York: Metropolitan.

Veblen, Thorstein. "Conspicuous Consumption." Harmondsworth: Penguin Great Ideas. (A chapter from *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899.)

Online readings:

Most readings will be on Carmen. Readings marked LIBRARY will be found online through the journal title in the OSU library catalogue. (Note that journals are sometimes in multiple repositories depending on the years of publication.) The readings come from a wide range of sources and some are forbidding. Don't panic. We will talk them through.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All assignments must be completed as described below for a passing grade.

1. General participation. 40%

- being present and on time and awake in class
- having relevant contributions to make in discussion. This entails having read the assigned texts and considered the discussion questions. I will put you on the spot to answer!

- adding to the post-class Carmen discussion. You must post *at least once a week* with a substantive comment.
- responding to other students' projects on Carmen. You must comment with ideas or suggestions to *three* students after each of the *three* draft postings, responding to different students each time. (You're welcome to do more, of course.) Due the Monday after the Friday posting of the topic or draft.

2. One day as class scribe. 10%

You'll post your notes on the class discussion of the day, singling out those points of disagreement or interest where we left questions open. Post by 6 AM the day after the class in question!

3. Final project. 50% [10+20+30%]

Report on the social life of a cultural object. See pp. 8-9 for details.

- Friday, Oct 1. Post topic on Carmen.
- Friday, Oct 29. Draft 1—ca. 5 double-spaced pages. Post on Carmen.
- Friday Nov 19. Draft 2—ca. 10 double-spaced pages. Post on Carmen.
- Wednesday Dec 8. Final report—ca. 10-12 double-spaced pages of well-shaped and stylish prose plus appendix and bibliography. In Carmen dropbox.

COURSE POLICIES

Office hours T 1:30-3:30, W 10-12 at the **Mershon Center**, 104A, 1501 Neil Ave. (corner of 8th and Neil), 292-8683. Or by appointment or by telephone. Because I run around between offices and have a manic meeting schedule, it is always best to try me first by email, and even during regular office hours it's helpful if you let me know when you're coming.

Attendance is up to you, but affects your grade both directly (via your participation grade) and indirectly (via your ability to do the written work effectively). We need you here in the spirit as well as in the flesh. Please come to class with the readings done. Announcements made at the beginning of class will not be repeated for latecomers, so it is also in your interest to arrive on time.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Especially when doing research on the Internet, be extremely careful to credit your sources

appropriately (come to me if you are not certain how to do this). And bear in mind that it is much less work to do your own thinking than to plagiarize convincingly.

Disability resources. The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307. If you require accommodation to do the work of the course, please let me know immediately.

Class Cancellation. In the unlikely event of class cancellation due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note on department letterhead be placed on the door. In addition, I will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

SCHEDULE

Unit one. Approaching the residual

9/22	Introduction
9/27	<p>Experience, valuation, labelling, exchange</p> <p>Leiris, Michel 1988 (1938). "The Sacred in Everyday Life." In <i>The College of Sociology 1937-39</i>, 24-31, 399-400. Denis Hollier, ed. Betsy Wing, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.</p> <p>Geary, Patrick. 1986. "Sacred Commodities: The Circulation of Medieval Relics." In <i>The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective</i>, 169-191. Arjun Appadurai, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.</p>
9/29	<p>Classification systems and social symbols</p> <p>Douglas, Mary. 1966. "The Abominations of Leviticus." <i>Purity and Danger</i>, ch. 3. 51-72. London: Routledge.</p> <p>Leach, Edmund 1979 (1964). "Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse." In <i>Reader in Comparative Religion</i>, 153-166. W. Lessa and E. Vogt, eds. New York: Harper and Row.</p>
10/1	Topic due
10/4	The question of modernity

	<p>Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1962. "The Science of the Concrete." <i>The Savage Mind</i>, 1-33. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>Comments on topics due</p>
10/6	<p>Category movements and the history of value</p> <p>Thompson, Michael 1979. <i>Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value</i>, ch. 1 (1-12). Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p>

Unit two. Imaginaries of scarcity and abundance

10/11	<p>Buried treasure, limited good and reciprocity</p> <p>Grimm, Jakob and Wilhelm. 1987 (1857). "Godfather Death." <i>The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm</i>, 160-163. Jack Zipes, trans. New York: Bantam.</p> <p>Foster, George W. 1964. "Treasure Tales and the Image of the Static Economy in a Mexican Peasant Community." <i>Journal of American Folklore</i> 77: 39-44. LIBRARY</p> <p>Agonito, Rosemary. 1967. "The Snake." From "Il Paisano: Italian Immigrant Folktakes of Central New York." <i>New York Folklore Quarterly</i>, 54-55. DISTRIB IN CLASS</p>
10/13	<p>Gleaning</p> <p>Film: <i>Les glaneurs et la glaneuse</i> (The Gleaners and I), dir. Agnès Varda. France, 2000.</p>
10/18	<p>Hunger and the land of Cockayne</p> <p>Grimm, Jakob and Wilhelm. 1987 (1857). "Hansel and Gretel" and "Clever Gretel." <i>The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm</i>, 58-64, 286-288. Jack Zipes, trans. New York: Bantam.</p> <p>Del Giudice, Luisa. 2001. "Mountains of Cheese and Rivers of Wine: Paesi di Cuccagna and Other Gastronomic Utopias." <i>Imagined States: Nationalism, Utopia, and Longing in Oral Cultures</i>, 11-63. Luisa Del Giudice and Gerald Porter, eds. Logan: Utah State University Press.</p> <p>Pellegrini, Angelo. 1984 (1948). "The Discovery of Abundance." From <i>The Unprejudiced Palate</i>, 18-36. San Francisco: North Point Press.</p>

	<p>Hill, Joe. 1911. "Pie in the Sky." DISTRIB IN CLASS</p> <p>McClintock, Harry. 1921. "The Big Rock Candy Mountain." DISTRIB IN CLASS</p>
10/20	<p>Fertility, foreigners, and immigrants</p> <p>The Book of Ruth http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/k/kjv/kjv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=1120102</p>

Unit three. Capitalism and waste

10/25	<p>From thrift to efficiency</p> <p>Franklin, Benjamin. 1758. "The Way to Wealth." http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/bdorse1/41docs/52-fra.html</p> <p>Weber, Max. 1976 (1920-21). "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism." <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>, 155-183. Talcott Parsons, trans. New York: Scribners.</p> <p>Frederick W. Taylor. 1947 (1912) <i>The Principles of Scientific Management</i> (selections). http://principles-of-scientific-management.blogspot.com/2007/03/introduction.html</p>
10/27	<p>Managing trash</p> <p>Strasser, chs. 1-4</p>
10/29	<p>Draft 1 due</p>
11/1	<p>The throwaway society</p> <p>Strasser, chs. 5-7</p> <p>Comments on draft 1 due</p>
11/3	<p>Excess and display</p> <p>Veblen, Thorstein. 1899. "Conspicuous Consumption." From <i>The Theory of the Leisure Class</i>.</p>

	Bataille, Georges. 1985 (1933) "The Notion of Expenditure." <i>Visions of Excess</i> , 116-129. Allan Stoekl, ed./trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
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Unit four. From modern to postmodern imaginaries

11/8	<p>Bourgeois cleanliness</p> <p>Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White. 1986. <i>The Politics and Poetics of Transgression</i>, chs. 1. 1-26. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.</p> <p>Aretxaga, Begoña. 1995. "Dirty Protest: Symbolic Overdetermination and Gender in Northern Ireland Ethnic Violence." <i>Ethos</i> 23:123-148. LIBRARY.</p>
11/10	<p>Moral geographies</p> <p>Modan, Gabriella. 2002. "'Public Toilets for a Diverse Neighborhood': Spatial Purification Practices in Community Development Discourse." <i>Journal of Sociolinguistics</i> 6: 487-513. LIBRARY.</p> <p>Lindahl, Carl. 2007. "Katrina Stories, the David Effect, and the Right to Be Wrong." Unpublished ms. DISTRIB IN CLASS.</p>
11/15	<p>Margins, centers, and vehicles</p> <p>Film: <i>The Perfumed Nightmare</i>, dir. Kidlat Tahimik. Philippines, 1977.</p>
11/17	<p>The remix society</p> <p>Bolter, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. 1999. <i>Remediation: Understanding New Media</i>, 2-15, 231-240. Cambridge: MIT Press.</p> <p><i>Recycled, Re-Seen: Folk Art from the Global Scrap Heap</i>. 1996. Exhibition website, Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe. http://www.internationalfolkart.org/exhibitions/past/recycledresee/r/index.html</p>
11/19	Draft 2 due.

Unit five. Managing pasts and peripheries: development, heritage, displacement

11/22	<p>People in the way</p> <p>Shoup, Daniel. 2006. "Can Archaeology Build a Dam? Sites and Politics in Turkey's Southeast Anatolia Project." <i>Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology</i> 19: 231-258. LIBRARY</p> <p>Morvaridi, Behrooz. 2004. "Resettlement, Rights to Development, and the Ilisu Dam, Turkey." <i>Development and Change</i> 35: 719-741. LIBRARY</p> <p>Comments on draft 2 due.</p>
11/24	<p>Preservation and erasure</p> <p>Hufford, Mary. 2003. "Reclaiming the Commons: Narratives of Progress, Preservation, and Ginseng." In <i>Culture, Environment, and Conservation in the Appalachian South</i>, 100-120. Benita J. Howell, ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.</p> <p>Noyes, Dorothy. Under review. "Heritage, Legacy, Zombie: Burying the Undead Past." <i>Intangible Rights: Cultural Heritage and Human Rights</i>. Deborah Kapchan, ed.</p>
11/29	<p>From scavengers to white trash</p> <p>Stewart, Kathleen. 1996. "Mimetic Excess in an Occupied Place." <i>A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics and Politics in an "Other" America</i>, 41-66. Princeton: Princeton University Press</p> <p>Hartigan, John Jr. 1997. "Name Calling: Objectifying 'Poor Whites' and 'White Trash' in Detroit." <i>White Trash: Race and Class in America</i>, 41-56. Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz, eds. New York and London: Routledge.</p> <p>Penley, Constance. "Crackers and Whackers: The White Trashing of Porn." <i>White Trash: Race and Class in America</i>, 89-112. Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz, eds. New York and London: Routledge.</p>

12/1	<p>Outsiders and outsider art</p> <p>Ward, Daniel Franklin and I. Sheldon Posen. 1985. "Watts Towers and the Giglio Tradition." <i>Folklife Annual</i>, 142-157.</p> <p>http://www.artjunction.org/watts.php</p> <p>http://www.victoriansecrets.net/watts.htm</p> <p>http://www.wattstowers.us/simon_rodia.htm</p> <p>and see also Joe Sciorra's blog on Italian-American constructed landscapes: http://www.i-italy.org/3627/folk-art-vernacular-architecture-cultural-landscapes</p>
12/8	Final report due

Final project

1. Friday, Oct 1. Post topic on Carmen.
2. Friday, Oct 22. Draft 1—ca. 5 double-spaced pages. Post on Carmen.
3. Friday Nov 19. Draft 2—ca. 10 double-spaced pages. Post on Carmen.
4. Wednesday December 8. Final report—ca. 10-12 double-spaced pages of well-shaped and stylish prose plus appendix and bibliography. Email to me as attached file. [carmen?]

Pick an object—an artifact, a performance, a genre, an idea, a person, a place, a group—that is differentially evaluated by different actors. (If the object is big and complex, e.g. “heavy metal music,” you will have to treat it within a narrow milieu, but that milieu must encompass differential social positions and evaluations.) Your goal is to examine the social life of this object, and more specifically how social value is assigned to it, transformed, lost, or recuperated. Does it have inherent properties that constrain its fortunes? How does its point of emergence and its subsequent history constrain it? How malleable are cultural objects? How consensible across social positions is social value?

You're going to turn in successive drafts of a report on this object, gradually sketching it out and filling it in. You'll begin by laying out questions and plans in the parts where you don't yet have any information. Your grade depends on how completely, how energetically, and how insightfully you carry out the assignment. I will respond at each stage and grade the three drafts.

Your report should cover the following, in roughly this order:

Identify the object. (This may get more precise over time, as you see what is really being evaluated, or it may diversify as the object is transformed in different situations.

Locate the milieu of the object—when, where, among whom, etc.

What do you know of the history of the object in this milieu, how it got there, its diffusion, what it used for, by whom, with whom it's identified?

What are the labels attached to it, by whom?

Where do the labels come from, what are their associations, to what else are they attached to? In what class do they place the object?

Do the labels seem in any way contradictory with the uses and affect associated with the object? How do you account for the relationships between label, labeller, and the labeller's affective and practical involvement with the object?

Are the conflicting labels in dialogue with one another? Is there mutual observation among different labellers, mutual awareness? Does the reaction to other labellings change the self's relationship towards the object?

Do you see the object's general reputation evolving over time as a consequence of these dialogues or of other factors?

What is it about this object that makes it contested and salient?

What's at stake in the evaluation of this object?

Embedded throughout:

How do you know what you're saying? (Footnote or otherwise highlight your sources)

How does our course reading and/or discussion shape your understanding of what is going on here?

At the end:

Appendix on your research process (e.g. I looked at Wikipedia, did a Google search, observed X event, interviewed Y, etc.) Where did you find roadblocks or confusion? What would you like to pursue further if you had time?

Bibliography

