Course Description

Buried beneath you as you walk the streets of Middletown is the residue of former residents. Mostly consisting of fragments of ceramics, glass and other objects, these hold the potential to begin to unlock the day to day history of their past owners and users. In this course, we will use collections from excavations in Middletown, with sites dating from the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, to begin to unearth these narratives.

We shall do this in two ways; a practical side will address artifact identification and classification. In half of classes, all students will participate in learning to catalogue and identify artifacts from the Middletown historical archaeological collections, building an ongoing database. Previous research notes from the original site excavators will also be consulted to help this recording process.

To help form interpretations, the theoretical side this course addresses artifact studies within archaeology, particularly historical archaeology in North America. We will address specific issues about the social role of artifacts, paying particular attention to the manner in which we can interpret their relation to ethnic, racialized, class and gendered identities. The question of increasing mass production of goods and their relation to modern consumer society will also be examined. The combination of data and theory will then form the basis of original student interpretation papers and presentations.

A website has already been set up for the class, and the main content of this website will be for the class to blog about their lab experiences and interpretive work, enabling students to share this with the Wesleyan and Middletown communities, as well as those interested in historical archaeology beyond Middletown:
http://middletownmaterials.research.wesleyan.edu/
Course Aims

› To introduce the concepts of artifact classification in historical archaeology.
› To gain a working knowledge, through practical experience, of artifacts relating to the late 18th century and early 19th century from Middletown.
› To gain an understanding of how varying pieces of archaeological and historical evidence can come together in historical archaeology, and to utilize this knowledge in a research project.
› To explore ways of representing archaeological findings to a wide audience, including the utilization of archaeological blogs.

Key Texts:
The majority of readings are book chapters and articles, and can all be found as PDF documents on Blackboard.

We will also be using a large number of artifact specific handbooks, articles, and websites for the purposes of artifact recognition.

Course Expectations
This is a small, partly practical based, seminar class. For lab work you will be working in pairs, assisting one another in learning about archaeological materials. I expect you to make every effort to work together as a team, particularly since this is also part of the normal archaeological research process. You will also be responsible for producing regular informal updates to the class on your findings to ensure that we work as a research community in the class. A major part of your lab assessment will be the regular completion of a journal of your research and work progress in the class, including at least one blog entry (this entry can be done as a collaborative piece with your lab partner). Since practical participation is such a vital part of your grade, if you miss more than two classes, your overall grade for the class will be lowered.

As we will always meet in the archaeology lab, it is also important that you always follow guidelines on proper lab etiquette and appropriate handling of archaeological materials. Further guidance will be provided in class. But there is to be no eating and drinking in class – partly this is for your own safety. Some of the artifacts we will be handling may be dirty. Make sure to always wash your hands thoroughly before you eat or drink after working in the lab. Care should always be taken to handle artifacts over appropriate surfaces and to ensure that artifacts are not separated from their appropriate labels.

I expect you all to complete assigned readings ahead of class, and to come to class prepared to engage with the content of these readings. All assignments should be completed by dates indicated on the syllabus. Any problems with meeting deadlines must be discussed at least 24 hours before deadlines, as extensions will not be granted in retrospect.
I am always happy to discuss any questions you have about the class, readings or assignments. I find that conversations are more productive in person than via email. My office hours are on Tuesday afternoons, but I am happy to arrange to meet with you at other times if you cannot meet me during this time. If you do have any questions, even if they seem trivial, please do come and see me to chat about these. When preparing your research paper, you should all meet with me at least once individually to go over your research outline.

**Assessment**

- Ongoing journal of lab work and readings, including at least one blog entry. Final submission, Wednesday May 5, plus regular submission deadlines through the semester. **35% of final grade**
- Research project prospectus. Due Friday April 2. **15% of final grade**
- Class presentation of research project. Presentations May 3 and 5. **10% of final grade**
- Research Project. Due Thursday May 13. **40% of final grade**

**Class Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday Jan 25</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<tr>
<td>No reading</td>
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<tr>
<th>Wednesday Jan 27</th>
<th>Historical ceramics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Noël Hume, I. 2001. <em>If These Pots Could Talk: Collecting 2,000 Years of British Household Pottery</em>. Chapters 10, 11 and glossary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>Barker, D and Majewski, T. 2006. ‘Ceramic studies in historical archaeology.’ In Hicks &amp; Beaudry (eds.), <em>The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Monday Feb 1</th>
<th>Middletown history and the Magill site</th>
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<tr>
<td>DeArmond, T. 2009. ‘Middletown Site Summaries’ (read Magill site only).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday Feb 3</td>
<td>Analyzing artifacts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Praetzellis, M and A. Praetzellis (eds.). 2004 <em>Putting the “There” There: Historical Archaeologies of West Oakland</em>. Chapter 1.</td>
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<td>Monday Feb 8</td>
<td>Lab</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Required</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Browse through archaeology interpretive and blog websites (see links at end of syllabus) Recommended</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Begin to look through specific identification literature. See additional bibliography for artifact identification literature and websites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday Feb 10</td>
<td>Meaning and material culture</td>
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<td>Monday Feb 15</td>
<td>Lab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday Feb 17</td>
<td>Research themes in historical archaeology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wylie, A. 1999. ‘Why should historical archaeologists study capitalism?’ In Leone, M.P. and P.B. Potter (eds.), <em>Historical Archaeologies of Capitalism</em>.</td>
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<td>Monday Feb 22</td>
<td>Lab</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday Feb 24</td>
<td>18th and 19th century life through artifacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday March 1</td>
<td>Lab</td>
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**Wednesday March 3**

Archive visit


**Meet in Olin Library, Special Collections and Archives, 1st Floor**

**Journal: second submission**

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**Monday March 8 – Sunday March 21**

SPRING BREAK; no classes

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**Monday March 22**

Lab

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**Wednesday March 24**

Writing archaeology

Required


Recommended


**Monday March 29**

Lab

**Journal: third submission**

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**Wednesday March 31**

Consumer culture

Required


Recommended


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**Monday April 5**

Lab
Wednesday April 7  
**Bric a Brac and biography**  
**Required**

Mullins, P.R. ‘Consuming aspirations: Bric-a-brac and the politics of Victorian materialism in West Oakland.’ In Praetzellis, M and A. Praetzellis (eds.). 2004 *Putting the “There” There: Historical Archaeologies of West Oakland.*


**Recommended**


**Project prospectus submission deadline, Fri April 2 (12pm)**

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Monday April 12  
**Lab**

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Wednesday April 14  
**Ethnicity and group identity**


**Journal: fourth submission**

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Monday April 19  
**Lab**

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Wednesday April 21  
**Gender and class**  
**Required**


**Recommended**


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Monday April 26  
**Lab**

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Wednesday April 28  
**Lab**

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Monday May 3  
**Final Presentations**

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Wednesday May 5 (end classes)  
**Final Presentations**

**Journal: final submission deadline (entire journal to be submitted)**
Web Resources

The following are websites where you can find information on ceramic types, maker’s marks, and glassware:
Florida Museum of Natural History, historical ceramic type collection:
http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/histarch/gallery_types/ceramics_intro.asp

Historic Glass Bottle Identification and Information Website:
http://www.sha.org/bottle/

Historical Archaeology online explorer (Journal of the Society for Historical Archaeology):
http://www.sha.org/publications/onlinepubs_html/default.cfm

http://www.nps.gov/history/mwac/bottle_glass/index.html

Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab, Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland:
http://www.jefpat.org/diagnostic/Index.htm

North Staffordshire Pottery Companies and Trade Marks:
http://www.thepotteries.org/pottery.htm

Parks Canada Archaeology Research Publications:
http://www.sha.org/research_resources/parks_canada.cfm

The following sites may provide useful local resources:
Middlesex County Historical Society:
http://www.middlesexhistory.org/

University of Connecticut Map and Geographic Information Center:
http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/
The following sites are about the techniques we may use in the class:
British Archaeological Jobs Resource, Short Guide to Digital Photography:

Michael Shanks, Archaeology and Photography:
http://metamedia.stanford.edu/projects/MichaelShanks/943

These websites are other archaeological blogs or sites about archaeological research. They may provide inspiration or critical starting points for your blog entries and research projects:
Archaeological Data Service (UK based, but interesting for issues of digital archiving and archaeology):
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/

Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery:
http://www.daacs.org/

Levi Jordan Plantation:

Market Street Chinatown Archaeological Project (Stanford University):
http://marketstreet.stanford.edu/

Mount Vernon Estate, archaeological collections:
http://www.mountvernon.org/learn/pres_arch/index.cfm/ss/47/

New Philadelphia archaeological project, Illinois:

Society for Historical Archaeology (links to wider research, information about historical archaeology, ethics and more):
http://www.sha.org/