

History 866
Seminar in Social History of Europe: Things, Commodities, and Politics
R. J. Koshar
W 1:20-3:20, Semester I, 2002-03
5245 Humanities
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This course explores recent scholarship on the "social life of things," with emphasis on processes of commodification and cultural appropriation of consumer objects. In addition, it features research on the history of the automobile, a particularly evocative "thing" in Euro-American culture. Although the automobile has a rich and varied scholarship, its status as a cultural artifact has only recently gained sustained interest among European social historians. The course consists of required readings and discussion, student oral presentations (during the last five weeks of the semester), and a final research paper of 18-20 pages on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. Each week a group of 2-3 students will be responsible for circulating discussion questions via e-mail to the rest of the class and presenting a short critique (15 minutes maximum) of the reading in seminar.

Seminar participation and the oral presentation account for about half of the total grade; the final paper accounts for the rest. The research paper is due on Monday, December 16, in my office.

Required reading consists of excerpts from a course pack (indicated with an asterisk below) and three collections of essays by Victoria de Grazia, Susan Strasser et al, and Rudy Koshar. The course pack is available for purchase at the Mosse Humanities Building Copy Center; the three books may be found at the Underground Textbook Exchange on State St. All required reading will be placed on reserve at Helen C. White.

Required Reading:

*Roland Barthes, "The New Citroën," in *Mythologies* (Hill and Wang, 1972), 88-90

Victoria de Grazia (with Ellen Furlough), ed., *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (University of California Press, 1996)

*Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-91

Rudy Koshar, ed., *Histories of Leisure* (Berg, 2002)

*Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, edited by Thomas Levin (Harvard University Press, 1995), 75-86

*Catherine Berto Lavenir, "How the Motor Car Conquered the Road," in *Cultures of Control*, edited by Miriam R. Levin (Harwood, 2000), 113-134.

*Thomas Levin, "Introduction," in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, edited by Thomas Levin (Harvard University Press, 1995), 1-30

*Daniel Miller, "Driven Societies," in *Car Cultures*, edited by Daniel Miller (Berg, 2001), 1-33.

*H.F. Moorhouse, *Driving Ambitions: A Social Analysis of the American Hot Rod Enthusiasm* (Manchester University Press, 1991), 170-99

*Sean O'Connell, *The Car in British Society: Class, Gender, and Motoring 1896-1939* (Manchester University Press, 1998), 43-76

*Sean O'Connell, "Taste, Status, and Middle Class Motoring in Interwar Britain," in *The Motor Car and Popular Culture in the 20th Century*, edited by David Thoms et al (Ashgate, 1998), 177-191

*Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (MIT Press, 1998), 15-70

*Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (University of California Press, 1998), 1-12

*Raymond Stokes, "In Search of the Socialist Artifact: Technology and Ideology in East Germany, 1945-1962," *German History* 15, 2 (1997): 221-39.

Susan Strasser, et al, eds., *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (German Historical Institute/Cambridge University Press, 1998)

*Jonathan R. Zatlín, "The Vehicle of Desire: The Trabant, The Wartburg, and the End of the GDR," *German History* 15, 3 (1997): 358-80.

*Thomas Zeller, "'The Landscape's Crown': Landscape, Perceptions, and Modernizing Effects of the German Autobahn System, 1934 to 1941," in David E. Nye, ed., *Technologies of Landscape: From Reaping to Recycling* (Massachusetts, 1999), 218-238.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

September 4: Outline of the Course

September 11: Conceptual Perspectives on Things and Commodities

Required Reading:

Kopytoff, 64-91*; Levin/Kracauer, 1-30*, 75-86*; Miller, 1-33*

Supplementary Reading:

Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (1951)

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1972)

Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (1986), 61-94.

Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Krell (1977), 343-63

Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1: *A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* (1967 [1867]), Chapter 1: "Commodities."

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958 [1904-5]), Chap. 5: "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism"

Daniel Miller, ed., *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies* (1995)

Jerrold Siegel, "Problematizing the Self," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, edited by Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (1999), 281-314.

Don Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (1997), Chap. 5: "The Meaning of Things" & Chap. 6: "The Uses of Things."

PART 2: THE SEX OF THINGS

September 18: Consumption Regimes

Required Reading:

de Grazia, 1-150; Barthes, 88-90*

Supplementary Reading:

Alon Confino and Rudy Koshar, "Regimes of Consumer Culture: New Narratives in Twentieth-Century German History," in *German History* 19, 2 (2001): 135-61.

Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Society: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (2000)

James J. Flink, *The Automobile Age* (1988)

Peter Jackson, et al, eds., *Commercial Cultures: Economies, Practices, Spaces* (2000)

Harold James, *A German Identity 1770-1990* (1989)

Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J.H. Plumb, *Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* (1982)

Susan Reid and David Crowley, eds., *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Postwar Eastern Europe* (2000)

Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800* (2000)

September 25: Modern Consumer Households

Required Reading:

de Grazia, 151-274, O'Connell, 177-91*

Supplementary Reading:

Michael Berger, *The Devil Wagon in God's Country: The Automobile and Social Change in Rural America, 1893-1929* (1979)

Erica Carter, *How German is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (1997)

Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Society: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (2000)

Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (1992)

David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, eds., *The Automobile and American Culture* (1980)
Wolfgang Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile: Looking Back into the History of our Desires* (1992), 136-49

October 2: Women as Citizen-Consumers

Required Reading:

de Grazia, 275-387; O'Connell, 43-76*

Supplementary Reading:

Erica Carter, *How German is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman* (1997)
Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (1992)
Elinor Nauen, ed., *Ladies, Start your Engines: Women Writers on Cars and the Road* (1996)
Katherine Pence, "You as a Woman Will Understand": Consumption, Gender and the Relationship between State and Citizenry in the GDR's Crisis of 17 June 1953," *German History* 19, 2 (2001): 218-52
Nancy R. Reagin, "Marktordnung and Autarkic Housekeeping: Housewives and Private Consumption under the Four-Year Plan, 1936-1939," *German History* 19, 2 (2001): 162-84.
Mary Louise Roberts, "Gender, Consumption, and Commodity Culture," *American Historical Review* 103, 3 (June 1998): 817-44.
Victoria Scharff, *Women at the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (1991)

PART 3: EUROPE AND AMERICA AS CONSUMER SOCIETIES

October 9: Politics, Markets, and the State

Required Reading:

Strasser, 1-185; Stokes, 221-39*; Zatlín, 358-80*

Supplementary Reading:

Martin Daunt and Matthew Hilton, eds., *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America* (2001)
Peter Fritzsche, "Machine Dreams: Airmindedness and the Reinvention of Germany," *American Historical Review* 98, 3 (June 1993): 685-709.
Victoria de Grazia, "Mass Culture and Sovereignty: The American Challenge to European Cinemas, 1920-1960," *Journal of Modern History* 61 (March 1989): 53-87.
David Head, *Made in Germany: The Corporate Identity of a Nation* (1992)
Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (1994)
Don Slater and Fran Tonkiss, *Market Society: Markets and Modern Social Theory* (2001), Chapter 5: "States and Markets"

October 16: Everyday Life

Required Reading:

Strasser, 187-405; Moorhouse, 170-199*

Supplementary Reading:

Dick Hebdige, "Towards a Cartography of Taste, 1935-1962," in **Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things** (1988), 45-76
Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (1997)
Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (1993)
Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France From Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (1998)
Uta Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (2000)
Ralph Willett, *Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949* (1989)

PART 4: THINGS AT/IN LEISURE

October 23: Seeing as Leisure

Required Reading:

Kosher, 1-101; Schwarz, 1-12*; Zeller, 218-38*

Supplementary Reading:

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (1969 [1955]), 217-51
Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (1989)
Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1973)
David Gartman, *Auto Opium: A Social History of American Automobile Design* (1994)
David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (1998)
R.J. Overy, "Cars, Roads, and Economic Recovery in Germany, 1932-1938," in Overy, ed., *War and Economy in the Third*

Reich (Oxford), pp. 68-89

Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (2001)

David Wrobel and Patrick Long, eds., *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism and the American West* (2001)

October 30: Leisure Traveling

Required Reading:

Koshar, 105-230; Lavenir, 113-34*

Supplementary Reading:

Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough, eds., *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America* (2001)

Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (1979)

James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997)

Steven Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (2001)

Rudy Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (2000)

Harvey Levenstein, *Seductive Journey: American Tourists in France From Jefferson to the Jazz Age* (1998)

Orvar Löfgren, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing* (1999)

Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1976)

November 6: Consuming (as) Leisure

Required Reading:

Koshar, 233-359; Ross, 15-70*

Supplementary Reading:

Lynn Abrams, *Workers' Culture in Imperial Germany: Leisure and Recreation in the Rhineland and Westphalia* (1992)

Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (1996)

Paul Betts, "The Nierentisch Nemesis: Organic Design as West German Pop Culture," *German History* 19, 2 (2001): 185-217.

W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class 1789-1914* (1996)

Steven Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (2001)

Dick Hebdige, "Object as Image: The Italian Scooter Cycle," in *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (1988), 77-115

Daniel Miller, *A Theory of Shopping* (1998)

Mary Louise Roberts, "Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women's Fashion in 1920s France," *American Historical Review* 98, 3 (June 1993): 657-84.

Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (2001)

PART 5: SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS (NOV. 13, 20, 27; DEC. 4, 11)

RESEARCH PAPER DUE MONDAY, DECEMBER 16