

ADPR 5590
DESIGN HISTORY *special topics class*
Instructor: Kristen Smith

Material Culture Essay

“Material culture is the study through artifacts of the beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions of a particular community or society at a given time.”—Jules David Prown

“When you’re researching, you’re learning. When you’re writing, you’re teaching.”—Susan Orlean

Assignment

Write a 1500-word essay about a designed object from the 20th century that interests you. How you approach the essay is up to you, but write in a conversational way. The audience for your essay is curious people who don’t know much about your object or about design. Tell these people a story about your object and the journey you went on to learn about it.

What to include

Weave into your story:

- ~ a description of your object
- ~ what you wanted to learn about it (how it was made, by whom, where was it made, how was it used, who used it, how did people view it then, how do people view it now, what social or political context influenced its design, etc.)
- ~ how you set about answering your questions
- ~ if your object has been influenced by one of the design categories we have studied, discuss that using evidence from your object
- ~ what you learned

Resources

- ~ librarians (you must meet with a reference librarian at UGA’s main library to discuss resources)
- ~ books
- ~ articles
- ~ trusted on-line sites
- ~ interviews with experts or with regular people who know something about your object

Cite your sources

- ~ MLA? APA? Let’s talk about how to cite your sources based on which style you use most.

Deliverables

- ~ Decide on your object and talk to me about no later than the week of March 4 (week before Spring Break)
- ~ Develop the questions you want to answer about the object (see above) and email them to me by Wednesday, March 20
- ~ Turn in a description of your object by Monday, March 25
- ~ Meet with a reference librarian no later than the week of March 25
- ~ Rough draft of your paper is due on Wednesday, April 10
- ~ Final paper is due Monday, April 29