

Archive @ Ephemera

Anthropology 394 (31545) – Spring 2011

Instructor: Craig Campbell

Class room: 4.120 SAC building

Meeting schedule: Mondays, 3-6pm

Office hours: By appointment

Office location: SAC 4.122

Website: <http://metafactory.ca/arch-eph>

Ephemeral things are marginal things. They have been cast away or ignored; they have been consigned to no archive, fond, collection, treasury or compendium. Ephemera are statements and communications that are not meant to be kept, they were produced with no intention of preservation or consignment. They are of the moment.

This graduate course disentangles ideas of ephemerality through an explicit study of (not) collecting and (not) archiving. Theorizing the ephemeral must be a theory of the everyday. It is a theory of gazes; it is a theory of the mobility of things; it is a theory of passing by: of the world passing us by and of us passing by things. One thinking of the ephemeral is that it is something that is truly a fleeting experience, one that cannot be remembered. This is the ephemeral that is opposed to persistence and permanence. That which passes into oblivion with no enduring record can be said to have been ephemeral-a judgment or valuation that is only proven in hind sight.

As a major project for this course students will curate a collection of images or things from a public archive (or from their own collections or research). We will be actively work-shopping the projects as they move through various stages until a final presentation at the end of the course.

Another important assignment is the Theory Surge project. Theory Surge is an experimental element in the seminar designed to re-construct a typical advanced theory course. The idea behind theory surge is to generate a reading course that is collaboratively developed by the instructor and the students. The principle behind theory surge is collaborative emergent design. The instructor will lay down a number of critical readings in the study of a core topic or theme. Within the first weeks the instructor and the students extend the theme by choosing a series of readings and cultural texts that extend the syllabus.

By the end of the course there will be a collaboratively built conceptual framework from which participants can build further independent studies. This is an active learning approach that seeks to get seminar participants thinking about intellectual and ideational trajectories.

Assignments:

- **Participation 15%**
 - Are you present in class (bodily & socially)? Does it appear as though you've read the articles and come to class prepared to fully participate?
- **Collection 30%**

- Collectively planned public collection. You are expected to make weekly additions to an on-line collection (wordpress blog) and to participate by way of comments.
- **Theory Surge 15%**
 - Phase I: Propose three or four possible readings and cultural texts to the class. The class will vote on one or two of these and it will be added to our weekly reading schedule.
 - Phase II: Lead a close reading of the readings/texts in class.
- **Final Project 40%**
 - This is a self-directed project. A proposal is due by the 22nd of February. It can be a paper, an annotated collection, a scrapbook, a website. It should be roughly equal to the amount of work it takes to produce a 20-30 page paper but must include at least ten pages of well-researched, articulated, and argued critique.

Reading

I am assigning two books (Cvetkovich and Merewether) and a series of articles. Readings will be elaborated in class (and listed on-line) in collaboration with the seminar participants. Readings will also include those selected by your class mates as outlined in the Theory Surge assignment.

Books you need to purchase

* If you don't already have these they can be purchased easily on-line.

- Cvetkovich, Ann. 2003. *An archive of feelings trauma, sexuality, and lesbian public culture*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press.
- Merewether, Charles. 2006. *The Archive*. The MIT Press.