

(Readings are subject to change)

Rot and Ruin: History and the Downside of Material Culture
Dept. of History, Winter 2018

“I went on looking at the filthy window above his head, and I thought, I must have *things*. I know a dirty window is an ancient and well-worn trope for intellectual dissatisfaction and scholarly blindness. The thing is, that the thing was also there. A real, very dirty, window, shutting out the sun. A *thing*.”

-A.S. Byatt, *The Biographer's Tale*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.

Description

This is a course about things – rotten and ruined things. More importantly, it is about how history has been shaped by loss and decay, and how we understand the past in terms of what it leaves behind as fragments and remnants of objects and collections, decomposing matter and ruined spaces and places. Finally, we will question how we structure the past by managing what it leaves behind.

Grading Structure

Seminar Participation:	25%
Conference Paper and Presentation:	15%
Final Paper Proposal	10%
Final Paper:	50%

Note that attendance is mandatory at all sessions, unless excused by express consent of the instructor. Failure to attend will adversely affect your participation grade

Readings and Weekly Topics

*All journal articles are available online. Unless otherwise noted, all book chapters will be scanned and made available through the course OWL website.

1. January 8

Introduction

2. January 15. Broken and Missing Things

Brown, B. ‘Thing theory’ *Critical Inquiry* 28 (1) 2001: 1–22.

DeSilvey C. ‘Observed decay: Telling stories with mutable things’. *Journal of Material Culture* 11 (3) 2006: 318–338.

Andersson, Dag T. ‘Trusted vagueness: the language of things and the order of incompleteness’ in *Ruin Memories: materialities, aesthetics and the archaeology of the recent past*. Edited by Bjornar Olsen. Routledge, 2014.

Meyer, Morgan. 'Placing and tracing absence: A material culture of the immaterial' *Journal of Material Culture* 17 (1) 2012: 103-110.

3. January 22. Decomposing Material

Ingold, T. 'Materials against materiality'. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1) 2007: 1–16.

Tilley, Christopher. 'Materials in Materiality; *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1) 2007: 16 – 20.

Knappett, Carl. 'Materials with Materiality' *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1) 2007: 20 – 23.

Edensor, T. 'Waste matter – the debris of industrial ruins and the disordering of the material world. *Journal of Material Culture* 10, 2005: 311–332.

4. January 29. Crumbling Heritage

Pétursdóttir, Þóra. 'Concrete matters: Ruins of modernity and the things called heritage'. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 13 (1) 2013: 31-53.

Lee, Haiyan. "The Ruins Of Yuanmingyuan: Or, How To Enjoy A National Wound." *Modern China* 35 (2) 2009: 155-90.

Stille, Alexander. *The Future of the Past*. New York: Picador, 2002. (Chapter 1, 'The Sphinx, Virtual and Real').

Website, Ruin Memories: <http://ruinmemories.org/about/project-description/>

Frederiksen, Martin Demant. 'Material Dys-Appearance : Decaying Futures and Contested Temporal Passage', in *Materialities of Passing: Transformation, Transition and Transcience*. Edited by Peter Bjerregaard; Anders Emil Rasmussen; Tim Flohr Sørensen. Routledge, 2016.

5. February 5. Dead Bodies

please note that material covered this week is viscerally disturbing and may force you to confront your mortality. Participation, therefore, will be optional and an alternate assignment will be made available upon request

Domanska, Ewa. 'Toward the Archaeontology of the dead body'. *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 9 (4) 2005: 389-413.

Violi, Patrizi. 'Trauma Site Museums and Politics of Memory: Tuol Sleng, Villa Grimaldi and the Bologna Ustica Museum. *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, 2012: 36-75.

Harries, John. 'Of bleeding skulls and the postcolonial uncanny: bones and the presence of Nonosabasut and Demasduit' *Journal of Material Culture* 15 (4) 2010: 403-421.

Verdery, Katherine. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1999. 1-53.

Websites:

<http://www.yale.edu/cgp/>

<http://sallymann.com/selected-works/body-farm>

6. February 12. Ruins and Lost Spaces

Hudson, Joanne. 'The affordances and potentialities of derelict urban spaces' in *Ruin Memories: materialities, aesthetics and the archaeology of the recent past*. Edited by Bjornar Olsen. Routledge, 2014.

Anderson, Dag. 'No Man's Land: the ontology of a space left over' in *Ruin Memories: materialities, aesthetics and the archaeology of the recent past*. Edited by Bjornar Olsen, Routledge, 2014.

Lucas, Gavin. 'Conduits of dispersal: dematerializing an early 20th century village in Iceland' in *Ruin Memories: materialities, aesthetics and the archaeology of the recent past*. Edited by Bjornar Olsen. Routledge, 2014.

Steinmetz, George. 'Colonial Melancholy and Fordist Nostalgia: The Ruinscapes of Namibia and Detroit'. In *Ruins of Modernity*. Edited by Julia Hell and Andreas Schonle, Duke UP, 2010.

7. February 26. Broken Collections and Collecting the Broken

Bjerk, Hein. 'My Father's Things' in *Ruin Memories: materialities, aesthetics and the archaeology of the recent past*. Edited by Bjornar Olsen. Routledge, 2014.

Burstrom, Mats. 'Treasured memories: an anecdotal mapping of wartime caches in Estonia' in *Ruin Memories: materialities, aesthetics and the archaeology of the recent past*. Edited by Bjornar Olsen. Routledge, 2014.

Susan Hauser. 'Waste into Heritage: Remarks on Materials in the Arts, On Memories and the Museum', in Brian Neville and Johanne Villeneuve (eds) *Waste Site Stories*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. 39-54.

8. March 5. Natural Disasters and Catastrophes in General

De Meyer, Dirk. 'Catastrophe and its Fallout --- Notes on Cataclysms, Art and Aesthetics, 1755-1945' in *Tickle Your Catastrophe!: Imagining Catastrophe in Art, Architecture and Philosophy*. Gent: Academia Press, 2011.

Gray, Peter. 'Memory and the Commemoration of the Great Irish Famine', in Peter Gray, Oliver Kendrick eds. *The Memory of Catastrophe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. 46-64.

Kirschenbaum, Lisa A. 'Commemorations of the siege of Leningrad: a catastrophe in memory and myth' in Peter Gray, Oliver Kendrick eds. *The Memory of Catastrophe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. 106-117.

Flath, James. 'Crack: Beichuan in Ruins', *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 2 (2) 2017: 239-262.

9. March 13. Catastrophe in Film and Fiction

Schuppli, Susan. 'The Most Dangerous Film in the World' in Frederik Roy (ed). *Tickle Your Catastrophe!: Imagining Catastrophe in Art, Architecture and Philosophy*. Gent: Academia Press, 2011.

Noe, Eli. 'Mapping the Present Through Catastrophe --- On Philip K. Dick, Science Fiction and the Critique of Ideology' in Frederik Roy (ed). *Tickle Your Catastrophe!: Imagining Catastrophe in Art, Architecture and Philosophy*. Gent: Academia Press, 2011.

Von Moltke, Johannes. 'Ruin Cinema'. In *Ruins of Modernity*. Edited by Julia Hell and Andreas Schonle, Duke UP, 2010.

We'll probably watch a film too.

10. March 19. Ruins in Art

Smithson, Robert. 'Entropy Made Visible' (Interview with Alison Sky), 1973. In *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. Edited by Jack Flam. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. 301-309.

Bois, Yve and Rosalind E. Krauss. *Formless: A User's Guide*. New York: Zone Books, 1997. 13-40.

Wu, Hung. *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. 11-91.

Méchoulan, Éric, 'Parthenon, Nashville: From the Site of History to the Site of Memory' in *Waste Site Stories*. Edited by Brian Neville and Johanne Villeneuve. Albany: State University of New York Press, 143-152.

11. March 26. Urban Exploring

Rot and Ruin Photography Festival and Extravaganza!

High S, Lewis D W. *Corporate Wasteland*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 2007. Chapter 2.

Garrett B.L, 'Urban explorers: quests for myth, mystery and meaning' *Geography Compass*, 4, 2010: 1448-1467; AND <https://vimeo.com/BradleyL.Garrett> › Videos

Dobraszczyk, Paul. 'Traversing the fantasies of urban destruction: ruin gazing in Varosha', *CITY* 18 (6) 2014: 642-58.

Sang, Tze-lan Deborah, "Art and Activism in the Ruins: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Nangang Bottle Cap Factory," *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 11 (2) 2017: 298–328

12. April 2. Conference Day

Each student will have 20 minutes to present a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor, presumably the same topic that has been chosen for the final paper. Papers will be organized into sessions, with assigned chairs and commentators.

Statement on Academic Ethics and Academic Dishonesty:

Students are reminded that they should read and comply with the university's position on academic ethics and academic dishonesty. Plagiarism and submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained are examples of academic dishonesty. Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar.)

Health and Wellness

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html

To help you learn more about mental health, Western has developed an interactive mental health learning module, found here: http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/module.html. This module is 30 minutes in length and provides participants with a basic understanding of mental health issues and of available campus and community resources. Topics include stress, anxiety, depression, suicide and eating disorders. After successful completion of the module, participants receive a certificate confirming their participation