This syllabus is a work in progress. Some weeks will have more readings assigned to them, some may have less. It is my intent to have 4-5 articles/book chapters assigned each week. These may be supplemented by websites and films on some occasions.

**Rot and Ruin: History and the Downside of Material Culture**

“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.”


**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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Paper and Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Readings and Weekly Topics**

**January 8**

Introduction

**January 15. Broken Things**


**January 22. Decomposing Material**


Tilley, Christopher. ‘Materials in Materiality; *Archaeological Dialogues* / Volume 14 / Issue 01 / June 2007, pp 16 - 20

Knappett, Carl. ‘Materials with Materiality’ *Archaeological Dialogues* / Volume 14 / Issue 01 / June 2007, pp 20 - 23


**January 29. Crumbling Heritage**


Pétursdóttir, Þóra ‘Concrete matters: Ruins of modernity and the things called heritage’. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2013 13: 31


Website, Ruin Memories: [http://ruinmemories.org/about/project-description/](http://ruinmemories.org/about/project-description/)

**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*


Websites:
http://www.yale.edu/cgp/
http://sallymann.com/selected-works/body-farm

**February 12. Ruins and Lost Spaces**


**February 26. Purged Collections**


**March 5. Natural Disasters and Catastrophes in General**


March 13. Catastrophe in Film and Fiction


We’ll probably watch a movie too.

March 19. Ruins in Art


March 26. Field Trip – to somewhere rotten. TBA

April 2. Conference Day

Depending on how many people enrol in the course, we will have 10 – 15 minute individual presentations on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor, presumably the same topic that has been chosen for the final paper.