

Object Lessons ANT 394 M  
M 9-12 5.118 SAC

Marina Peterson [marina.peterson@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:marina.peterson@austin.utexas.edu) SAC 5.128 Office hours: M 1-3  
Katie Stewart [kstewart@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:kstewart@mail.utexas.edu) 4.408 CLA office hours: M 2-3, Th 2-3

This course will be an experiment in long-form writing. Each participant in the seminar will plan, draft and/or write a short (25,000 word) book-length manuscript modeled on Bloomsbury's *Object Lessons* series: <http://objectsobjectsobjects.com/>

Pick an ordinary object that will help you develop your dissertation project. We'll do a series of experiments to imagine and write angles and trajectories and pools of writing that work to develop your project. We'll read in new materialisms, subjects-and-objects, object oriented studies, thing theory, nonrepresentational theory, and discard studies.

Some concerns of the class are: What is an anthropological object, and how does it come into focus or existence? What does an object *do*, and how can we write it? Can we approach the thing itself through writing? What happens when something fails, is destroyed, or has not yet come to be? Is caught up in circulation? What of encounters, whether human/nonhuman or "dynamic assemblages" of forms of matter? What is an object's composition, lifespan? If culture or life is now conceived as an assemblage of forms and forces of all kinds that are complexly interrelated, what are the new objects of this "whole" (think of atmospheres, stickiness, rhythms, frictions, inter-species lines of influence, etc). What is a concept, what does a concept do, in a world of assemblages and emergences? Is there a collective (sense, sensibility, identity, route of travel, etc)?

Each week everyone will pick one of the *Object Lessons* books to peruse over the week, then switch to another the following week. The topics of these books include Remote Control, Phone Booth, Golf Ball, Drone, Drivers License, Hotel, Refrigerator, Silence, Glass, Waste, Shipping Container, Book Shelf, Hood, Bread, Cigarette Lighter, Dust, Hair, Tree... You may also write a 1500-word essay for publication in The Atlantic online. Go to the *Object Lessons* website to pitch your idea.

You will need to write 300-400 words/day, even if only a rough draft, a series of questions, etc. Use the readings as a prompt for your writing for the week – whether launching off a passage that sparks your interest or adopting the project of the author. Some weeks we'll workshop our writing, each of us reading 500 carefully edited words. Other weeks we'll break into small groups in which we read everything we've written and then discuss possible architectures of the manuscript.

Books:

John Law, *Aircraft Stories*  
Hugh Raffles, *Insectopedia*

The articles are all on canvas.

Week 1.

Your topic, and the architecture of your work

Ben Anderson. Affective Atmospheres. *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, 2009.

Marina Peterson. Sensory Attunements

Katie Stewart. Atmospheric Attunements

\*Attunements workshop

Week 2.

Heidegger. The Thing

Grosz. The “Thing”

Brown. Thing Theory

Week 3.

Isabelle Stengers. History from the Middle: Between Macro and Mesopolitics. *Inflexions*.

Alphonso Lingis. Irrevocable Loss. *Non-Representational Methodologies*, Phillip Vannini, ed., Routledge, 2015.

Manuel deLanda. Emergence, Causality and Realism. In *Speculative Realism*.

Week 4.

Isabelle Stengers. Diderot’s Egg.

Perec, An Attempt at Exhausting a Place

\*Aleatory Devices workshop

Week 5.

Diana Coole. *New Materialisms*

Introducing the New Materialisms, Coole and Frost

The Inertia of Matter and the Generativity of Flesh, Coole

Impersonal Matter, Orlie

Jane Bennett. The Force of Things & The Agency of Assemblages. In *Vibrant Matter*

Week 6.

Baudrillard Subjective Discourse or the Non-functional System of Objects (in Object Reader)

Mary Douglas, The Genuine Article

Barthes, Plastic

Malabou, *Ontology of the Accident*

Week 7.

Deleuze. What is a Concept & Percept, Affect, Concept. In *What is Philosophy?*

–. Having an Idea in Cinema

\*Scenes workshop

Week 8.

Christine Hume, *Ventrifacts*

Craig Martin. "Some Speculative Approaches to Writing through Fog" in *Who is this Who is Coming*

–. Fog-bound

Week 9.

Karen Barad. On Touching.

Anna Tsing. 2012. Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species *Environmental Humanities*, 1 141-154

Song. *Pigeon Trouble* Chapter 7

Week 10.

Nick Shapiro, Attuning to the Chemosphere, *Cultural Anthropology*

Elizabeth F. S. Roberts, What Gets Inside, *Cultural Anthropology*

\*Sensory ethnography workshop

Week 11.

Bruno Latour. Attempt at a Compositionist Manifesto. *New Literary History* 41, 2010.

Jason Pine. Last Chance Incorporated. *Cultural Anthropology*.

Week 12.

John Law. *Aircraft Stories*

Week 13.

Raffles. *Insectopedia*

Week 14.

Wrapping up