FIRST YEAR SEMINAR – FALL 2018

HOARDING BEFORE HOARDERS
Prof. Rebecca Falkoff, Ph.D.
W 2:00 – 4:30 | 25 West 4th, C-12

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION
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Office hours: Monday 2-3

OVERVIEW
Recent years have seen an overwhelming interest in people who accumulate things. Hoarding is the subject of medical research, as well as documentary and narrative films, novels and memoirs, works of fine art and television episodes and series, including A&E’s 2009 megahit Hoarders. In this seminar we will ask “Why hoarding?” and “Why now?” What material conditions and cultural anxieties contribute to the emergence of hoarding discourse? Does the cultural preoccupation with those who have too many material possessions relate to the permeation of digital technologies into all areas of life? Does the concern with people who have too much junk deflect the increasingly skewed distribution of wealth? Is hoarding, at root, an avoidance of wasting; if so, how does it relate to ecological crisis?

We will address these questions by studying hoarding within a broader literary and cultural context that encompasses fetishists, collectors, misers, rag pickers, gleaners, and other figures defined (and pathologized) by their attachments to things. Texts will include American documentary films, installation art, photography, short stories, novels, memoirs, and poems from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. We will also read secondary sources from a range of disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, and cultural studies.

TEXTS
Articles and short excerpts will be available on Classes. The following texts will be available at the NYU Bookstore:

- Scott Herring, The Hoarders
- R. Frost and G. Steketee, Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things
- Nikolai Gogol, Dead Souls
- Andre Bréton, Nadja
- E. L. Docotorw, Homer and Langley

Please be sure to always bring copy of the text to class with you, since we will look at specific passages. On the days when assigned texts are available through Classes, please print out the readings before class.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES
The use of cell phones in the classroom is prohibited; the use of other electronic devices—i.e. tablets or laptops—is strongly discouraged. All electronics should be switched to airplane mode and silenced before class.
ASSessment
1. First paper, 3-4 pages................................................................. 15%
2. Three response papers, 1-2 pages each................................. 10%
3. In-class presentation, five minutes........................................ 10%
4. Midterm paper, 4-5 pages.......................................................... 20%
5. Presentation of final research paper, five minutes..................... 5%
6. Final research paper, 6-8 pages................................................. 30%
7. Participation.................................................................................. 10%

First Paper & Midterm Paper
The first paper and the midterm paper should be polished pieces of writing that develop an original argument in response to the prompt. The argument should be supported with specific textual examples.

Response Papers
These are informal pieces of writing, intended to make sure that you engage closely with the readings and formulate some questions and/or ideas about what you have read. You needn’t attempt a comprehensive summary of all the reading. The response papers will be collected at the beginning of class.

In-Class Presentations
You will be asked to give one in-class presentation of five minutes. This assignment is intended to help you practice speaking in a formal academic register.

Final Research Paper
The final paper includes a research component: you will be asked to locate, read, and discuss appropriate secondary sources. Like the first paper and the midterm essay, your final research paper should develop an original argument, supported with close readings and specific, relevant, textual examples. Students should meet with me before Thanksgiving break to discuss their final papers.

Participation
You are expected to attend class regularly, complete all required readings, and participate actively in class discussions. In order to effectively prepare for class, it may be helpful to underline passages you find particularly interesting or important and to jot down any observations and questions you might have.

Absences
You are allowed one absence—including classes missed due to faulty alarm clocks, illness, transportation delays, and other unforeseeable circumstances. The Seminar follows the University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays, which is online here: https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html.

Handing in Assignments
I do not accept late papers and assignments except in truly exceptional circumstances. The first, mid-term and final papers should be uploaded to Classes and run through the Turnitin software. The response papers should be handed in at the beginning of class.
**Writing Support**
The NYU Writing Center is a great resource. It is located at 411 Lafayette on the 4th Floor and is open M-Th 10-8 and F 11-4. You can find more information here: [http://ewp.cas.nyu.edu/object/writing.center](http://ewp.cas.nyu.edu/object/writing.center).

**Academic Integrity**
All plagiarized work will receive a 0% and will be reported to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The CAS Statement on Academic Integrity is online here: [https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html](https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html).

**Seminar Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key: ♣ Readings available on Classes</th>
<th>✈ Writing assignment due</th>
<th>🔔 Prompt distributed in class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Book available for purchase at NYU Bookstore</td>
<td>☏ Full text available online through Bobst</td>
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</tbody>
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**Week 1:**
**Introduction – Hoarding before Hoarders**
W 9/5
Martin Hampton, *Possessed* (In-class viewing)
Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* VII, verses 1-97 ♣
Introduction to the Resources at Elmer Homer Bobst Library

**Week 2:**
**Fetishists, Collectors, and Hoarders**
W 9/12
Susan Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 132-139 and 151-166 ♣

 Equality First Response Paper: Describe one thing that you *keep* but don’t *use*. How do you think Freud, Benjamin, Stewart, and/or Baudrillard would describe this possession?

迮 First Paper Topics Distributed

**Week 3:**
**Hoarding Today**
W 9/19
American Psychological Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*. “Hoarding Disorder” (three-page pdf) ♣
Ian Hacking, *Mad Travelers: Reflections on The Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses*, pp. 1-30; 50-102 ♣

迮 Sign-Up for Presentations

**Week 4:**
**New York’s Greatest Hoarders: The Collyer Brothers, I**
W 9/26
Frost and Steketee, *Stuff*, pp. 1-11 □
Helen Worden, *Out of This World*, pp.1-51 ♣
Russell Owen, “Something for O. Henry: Story of the Collyer Brothers” (three-page pdf) ♣

Equality First Papers Due
**SEMINAR SCHEDULE**

**Week 5:** New York’s Greatest Hoarders: The Collyer Brothers, II  
Scott Herring, “Collyer Curiosa: A Brief History of Hoarding,” pp. 19-50  
魔法师和 Midterm Paper Topics Distributed

**Week 6:** Exchange Value  
Lauren Berlant, “The Promise of Exchange Value,” *Cruel Optimism*, pp. 36-43

**Week 7:** Capitalism and Its Discontents  
W 10/17  Karl Marx, *Capital, Part I*, Ch. 1 Sec. 1 pp. 27-30; Ch. 1 Sec. 4, pp. 47-59; Ch. 3 Sec. 3, pp. 85-7  
Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. Donald Rayfield, Chapters I, VI, and the beginning of VII, pp. 5-17 & 116-143

**Week 8:** Writer, Collector, Hoarder  
W 10/24  Virginia Woolf, “Solid Objects” (five-page pdf)  
Preface to the 1908 edition of *The Spoils of Poynton*, (five-page pdf)  
Bill Brown, *Other Things*, pp. 49-77

**Week 9:** Writer, Artist, Trash Collector  
Italo Calvino, “La Poubelle Agréée” *The Road to San Giovanni*, trans. Tim Parks, pp. 91-126  
魔法师和 Midterm Papers Due  
魔法师和 Final Paper Assignment Distributed

**Week 10:** Waste Not!  
W 11/7  Bernard London, “Ending the Depression Through Planned Obsolescence” (1932), pp. 1-10  
Song Dong, *Waste Not*, pp. 1-43  
魔法师和 Second Response Papers: Garbage, Waste, Rubbish

**Week 11:** Surrealist Objects  
W 11/14  Selections from André Breton, *Nadja* 11-71 and 139-160  
Breton, “Surrealist Situation of the Object,” pp. 255-278  
Carlo Emilio Gadda, “Junk at Porta Ludovica,” pp. 1-5
**Seminar Schedule**

**Week 12:** Visit to “Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again” at the Whitney  
W 11/21  
Scott Herring, “Pathological Collectibles,” *The Hoarders*, pp. 51-84 ♣  
≡ One-Paragraph Prospectus of Final Paper Due

**Nota bene:** If you are planning to leave town early for Thanksgiving, you should visit the exhibit on your own before class 11/28. The museum offers free admission to NYU students.

**Week 13:** Text, Memory, Detail  
W 11/28  
Roland Barthes, “The Reality Effect” ♣  
≡ Third Response Paper Due (Warhol Museum and Readings)

**Week 14:** The Detail, the Detective, and the Hoarder  
W 12/5  
Francesco Orlando, *Useless Objects in the Literary Imagination*, pp. 1-16 ♣

**Week 15:** Conclusions and Presentation of Final Papers in Class  
W 12/12

*Final papers due on December 19*