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Popular Knowledge

HSMT 140.703 Fall 2003

The focus of this course is popular knowledge -- both that which is "popularized" and that which is popular in the sense of "of the people". In putting these two meanings together, I am asking questions rather than setting out a tidy body of secondary literature. Historians of science in the past 20 years or so have developed sophisticated ways of thinking about what "knowledge" is; historians of culture have debated and re-debated the meanings and utility of the category "popular culture". Our readings will focus on a variety of ways in which these two fields might intersect in explorations of "popular knowledge". Books marked with an * are available for purchase; the rest of the readings are in a xerox packet.

The secondary focus of the course is writing. Students in the course must commit to writing 500 words a week (ie, 2 double-spaced pages) on anything related to the course -- a comment on a reading, a book review, a reflection on a movie or TV program or item of material culture, or preliminary research findings. The aim of the exercise is to develop writing skills by focusing on small chunks of prose. We will spend class time on analyses of writing, research and writing techniques, etc. Students will write a research paper, which will be developed step by step through the course. I strongly recommend that students buy the third edition of Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, if they don't already own it.

Sept. 9 Introduction

Sept. 16 Popular Culture 1:

Peter Burke, "Popular Culture Reconsidered", in *Mensch und Objekt im Mittelalter und in der fruhen Neuzeit: Leben, Alltag, Kultur*, Vienna: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990, pp. 181-191.

Roger Chartier, "Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France", in Steven L. Kaplan, ed., *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984, pp. 230-253.

Bob Scribner, "Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?", *History of European Ideas* 10 (1989), pp. 175-91.

Discussion: what is popular? examples.

Sept. 23 Popular Knowledges and Boundary Crossings: Plagues

Richelle Munkhoff, "Searchers of the Dead: Authority, Marginality, and the Interpretation of Plague in England, 1574-1665", *Gender & History* 11 (1999) pp. 1-29.

Thomas Dekker, "A Rod for Run-awaies," in F.P. Wilson, ed., *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925, pp. 137-139, 158-165.

Sept. 30 The Functions of Texts

Mary E. Fissell, "Making a Masterpiece: The Aristotle Texts in Vernacular Medical Culture," in *Right Living: An Anglo-American Tradition of Self-Help Medicine* ed. Charles E. Rosenberg, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, pp. 59-87.

William Eamon, "Arcana Disclosed: The Advent of Printing, the Books of Secrets Tradition and the Development of Experimental Science in the Sixteenth Century", *History of Science* 22 (1984), pp. 111-50.

James Secord, "Newton in the Nursery: Tom Telescope and the Philosophy of Tops and Balls", *History of Science* 23 (1985), pp. 127-51.

Oct. 7 Gender and Domestic Technologies 1

*Judith Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England. Women's Work in a Changing World 1300-1600*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Oct. 14 Gender and Domestic Technologies 2

*Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 1-47; 183-272.

Oct. 21 Discussion of Research Topics and Research Strategies

Oct. 28 Popular Knowledge and the Public Sphere

Colin Jones, "The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution", *American Historical Review* 101 (1996), pp. 13-40.

Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article", *New German Critique* 5 (1974), pp. 49-55.

Steve Sturdy, ed., *Medicine, Health, and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1600-2000*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. TBA

Larry Stewart, "The Selling of Newton: Science and Technology in Early Eighteenth-Century England", *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986) pp. 178-92.

Paula Findlen, "Translating the New Science: Women and the Circulation of Knowledge in Renaissance Italy", *Configurations* 3 (1995), pp. 167-206.

Nov. 4 Towards a Social History of Plants and People

Anne Secord, "Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire", *History of Science* 32 (1994), pp. 269-315.

*Ann Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Nov. 11 Us and Them

Luise White, "Tsetse visions: Narratives of blood and bugs in colonial Northern Rhodesia, 1931-9", *Journal of African History* 36 (1995), pp.219-245.

Naomi Rogers, "Germs with Legs: Flies, Disease, and the New Public Health", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 63, 1989, pp. 599-617.

Mary E. Fissell, "Constructing Vermin in Seventeenth-Century England", *History Workshop Journal*, no. 47 (1999), pp. 1-29.

Gabor Klaniczay, "The Decline of Witches and the Rise of Vampires under the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy", *The Uses of Supernatural Power*, transl. Susan Singerman, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 168-188.

Nov. 18 Presentation of Research: Outlines

Nov. 25 Thanksgiving no class

Dec. 2 No class we will meet for an additional session on Tues. Dec. 16 to present papers.