



**ANT 380:**  
**The Anthropology of Material Culture**  
 Dr. Heather Van Wormer  
 Fall 2010  
 TR 2:30-3:45pm

The study of material culture has long been at the center of anthropological research. Some theorists even argue that humans' relationship with the material world is the defining characteristic of 'humanness.' In the past few decades this interest in materiality and the ambiguous category of 'things' has intensified combining the work of anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnographers, art historians, architects, literary critics, philosophers, and others. This new field of material culture studies focuses on not only how people make things but also on how objects mediate social relationships—how material culture at once reflects and reinforces ideology and society. This course will survey the many approaches to material culture studies and explore the increasingly blurred boundaries between such 'things' as object, subject, and memory, gift and commodity, art and artifact, alienability and inalienability, the rise of mass consumerism, as well as the social and biographical life of objects.