

Once upon a time it was taken for granted that garbage, or at least much of it, biodegraded. Archaeology of modern, anaerobic landfills has disproven this fact, and provides interesting data on our consumer culture. While ancient sites can be dated by the types of pottery found, modern sites can be dated by the type and shape of the opening in soft drink cans. What does environmental science say about your choice of paper or plastic bags, cloth or disposable diapers, packaging and recycling? Are the accepted answers the same in all countries? We will also go beyond the study of garbage, the environment, and human behavior to investigate where stuff comes from, and whether that ultimate fate of materials should be considered as part of their design.

This course will have three main themes

1. Archaeology of modern garbage  
What can this record of human consumption tell us?
2. Materials associated with use of everyday items  
How can we possibly consume our own body weight in materials every day?
3. A sustainable materials economy  
What alternatives are available to our throw-away society?

As in most courses, absences will affect both your class participation and overall grade. This course is cumulative. Lack of preparation before class or lack of serious participation in class means you will need to do extra hours of work on your own after class. Late work will not be accepted. See me ahead of time in case of special circumstances.

If you have a disability and would like to speak to someone about possible accommodations, please visit the LSSC (Learning Support Services Center) located on the first floor of 635 College St. You will need to provide appropriate documentation of your disability to Diane Arnzen, Director of the LSSC. If you wish to receive accommodations in my class please provide me the LSSC Accommodation Verification Letter dated for this semester as soon as possible so your learning needs may be appropriately met.

Some assignments (more details will be provided for each of these later.)

- Sign up as a pairs to lead the discussion on one of the *Stuff* readings (Thursdays).
- Report on an issue from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Tuesdays).
- Reaction papers or questions based on assigned readings or events.
- What variety of packages are used to contain a particular product category?
- Comparison of US with other another country.
- Report from Beloit International Symposium (November 13).
- Near the end of the semester, prepare a written action plan for change.

Fall 2002

# Garbage Reading Assignments

Lisensky

New Student Days

*The Social Life of Paper*, 2002, Malcom Gladwell  
 Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout Would Not Take The  
 Garbage Out, 1974, Shel Silverstein  
 Waste Not, Want Not (Composting in Nova Scotia),  
 2002, Living on Earth

Garbage Crisis, 1990 and 2002, library assignment  
*Municipal Solid Waste*, 2002, EPA  
<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/msw99.htm>  
 Stuff: 120 Pounds, Coffee  
*Consumers Guide*, Chapt 2, Garbage as a Case Study

## Tuesday

## Thursday

Aug 27	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 1, Wonderful Things <i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 2, Garbage as History	Aug 29	<i>Consumers Guide</i> , Chapt 1, Simple Things
Sept 3	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 3, What We Say What We Do	Sept 5	<i>Consumers Guide</i> , Chapt 3, Household Consumption Stuff: Newspaper
Sept 10	<i>The Total Package</i> , Chapt 1	Sept 12	<i>The Total Package</i> , Chapt 8
Sept 17	Marketer's Guide, Chapt 1	Sept 19	<i>Consumers Guide</i> , Epilogue, Consumers SATURDAY: Too Soon To Tell, Calvin Trillin
Sept 24	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 4, Into the Unknown (landfills)	Sept 26	<i>Invention By Design</i> , Chapt 5, Aluminum Can Stuff: T-Shirt
Oct 1	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 5, Myth of Biodegradation	Oct 3	<i>Consumers Guide</i> , Chapt 4, Personal Priorities Stuff: Shoes
Oct 8	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 6, Garbage Census	Oct 10	<i>Consumers Guide</i> , Chapt 5, High Impact Activities Stuff: Bike

## MIDTERM BREAK

Oct 22	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 7, The Diaper Dilemma	Oct 24	<i>Smaller</i> , 2001, Malcolm Gladwell Stuff: Computer
Oct 29	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 8, Technological Fix	Oct 31	<i>Consumers Guide</i> , Appendix A, Methods Stuff: Hamburger
Nov 5	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 9, Closing the Loop	Nov 7	<i>Consumers Guide</i> , Chapt 6, Responsible Consumption Stuff: French Fries
Nov 12	<i>Deep Design</i> , Chapt 1	Nov 14	Reports from International Symposium EVENING PLAY
Nov 19	Materials Economy		Thanksgiving
Nov 26	Materials Economy	Nov 28	<i>The Phone Guy</i> , 2001, Michael Specter Stuff: Cola
Dec 3	<i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 10, Life Style Override <i>Rubbish</i> , Chapt 11, Ten Commandments	Dec 5	<i>Consumers Guide</i> , Chapt 7, Government Stuff: Watch Your Wake
Dec 10	<i>Rubbish</i> , Preface <i>Deep Design</i> , Chapt 6, Wheel		Classes over

## Texts (Required)

William Rathje and Cullen Murphy, *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 2001.  
 John C. Ryan and Alan Thein Durning, *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things*, Northwest Environment Watch, Seattle, 1997  
 Michael Brower and Warren Leon, *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices: Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists*, Three Rivers Press, New York, 1999.

## Other Readings

Thomas Hine, *The Total Package: The Secret History and Hidden Meanings of Boxes, Bottles, Cans, and Other Persuasive Containers*, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1995.  
 Herbert Meyers and Murray Lubliner, *The Marketer's Guide to Successful Package Design*, NTC Business, Chicago, 1998.  
 Henry Petroski, *Invention By Design: How Engineers Get from Thought to Thing*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1996.  
 David Wann, *Deep Design*, Island Press, Washington DC, 1996