NEW OBJECTIVITY:

from historical materialism
to object-oriented ontology

Serguei Oushakine
oushakin@princeton.edu

Following the recent explosion of interest in “thing-power,” “thing-systems,” and “thing-theory,” this course explores promises and limits of new versions of materialism. Current debates about the “agentive capacity” of the non-human and the “vitality” of matter are placed against the backdrop of anthropology’s long-standing interest in the social life of things.

REQUIREMENTS:

Class participation:
- weekly position paper;
- leading one class discussion
- contribution to the discussion: 50%
Final project: 50%

Please, have copies of assigned texts with you. To encourage active exchanges in class, I ask you not to bring your laptops; they tend to distract and alienate.

Books on order:

PART I: MATERIALISMS

1. HISTORY, MATERIALIZED


Optional:


### 2. MATERIALS, CULTURED

**Jules David Prown**, The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction? (pp.1-19);

**Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**, Why We Need Things (pp.20-29);

**Peirce Lewis**, Common Landscapes as Historic Documents (pp.115-139);

**Michael Owen Jones**, Why Take a Behavioral Approach to Folk Objects? (pp.182-196)

(From: *History from Things: Essays in Material Culture*. Ed. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery. Wash.: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993)


Optional:


### 3. MATTER


PART II: THINGS

4. BIOGRAPHIES OF THINGS


Boris Arvatov, Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing (Toward the Formulation of the Question), *October*, Vol. 81 (Summer, 1997), pp. 119-128.


Optional:

5. THING THEORIES

Ian Hodder, Ch.1. Thinking about Things Differently; Ch.3. Things Depend on Other Things (From: Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationship between Humans and Things*. Chichester: Willey-Blackwell, 2012, pp.1-14; 40-63)


ANT 541/FALL 2016


Optional:

6. THING-POWER


Optional:

PART III: OBJECT-RELATIONS

7. OBJECTS OF AFFECTION


Optional:

8. SUBSTITUTE OBJECTS

Eduardo Kohn, Ch.3. Soul Blindness; Ch.4.Trans-Species Pidgin (From: Eduardo Kohn, How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013, pp.103-153)

Optional:

9. INTEROBJECTIVITY


Optional:

10. OBJECTIFICATION

Karl Marx, Estranged Labor (From: Karl Marx, Economic & Philosphic Manuscripts of 1844. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959, pp. 70-81)

Optional:
Sven Lütticken,
- Art and Thingness, Part I: Breton’s Ball and Duchamp’s Carrot (e-flux, 2010 Vol.13)
- Art and Thingness, Part II: Thingification (e-flux, 2010 Vol.15)
- Art and Thingness, Part III: The Heart of the Thing is the Thing We Don’t Know (e-flux, 2010 Vol.15)
11. NETWORKS AND ASSEMBLAGES


Optional:


12. OBJECT ORIENTATIONS


Optional: