Course Description:
This seminar examines the material culture of New England from the earliest colonial settlements to the Victorian era. It introduces students to the growing body of material culture studies and the ways in which historic landscapes, architecture, archaeology, furniture, textiles, art, metals, ceramics, foodways and domestic environments can be interpreted as cultural documents and as historical evidence. We will explore with Historic Deerfield staff objects not only as finished products but also the processes by which they were made and the makers who produced them. Utilizing the disciplines of history, art and architectural history, anthropology, archaeology, and cultural geography we will explore the relationship between objects to ideas and the ways in which objects both individually and as a group convey patterns of everyday life.

NOTE: The class will meet in the Bartels Seminar Room in the Flynt Center of Early New England Life at Historic Deerfield unless otherwise noted.

Grading and Course Requirements:
There will be no written examinations. Each student is expected to attend and participate at each class meeting. This means keeping up with the reading and arriving prepared to contribute to class discussion.

Seminar attendance, participation and class presentation: 20%

Probate Inventory Analysis (5-7 pages) 25% Due February 24
Each student is required to select and analyze a probate inventory from a group of Deerfield, MA, probates taken before 1820.

Object Study (5-7 pages) 25% Due March 31
Each student is required to complete a 5-7 page material culture study of an object selected from the collections of Historic Deerfield.

Final Essay (10-12 pages) 30% Due May 5
Each student is required to investigate and interpret the broader historical and cultural significance of a group of objects (minimum of three, maximum of four items) in a 10-12 page essay, and to summarize their findings in a brief (5-8 minute) oral presentation on the last class meeting day (April 28.)
Readings:

The following required reading is available for purchase at Grecourt Bookshop, and copies of each title are also on reserve at Neilson Library:


All other listed readings are available on E-Reserve, with two exceptions: James Garvin, *A Building History of Northern New England* and J. Ritchie Garrison, *Landscape and Material Life in Franklin County, Massachusetts, 1770-1860,* which are on reserve at Neilson Library.

**January 27:**

Introduction: Historic Deerfield, Inc., its Collections, and Deerfield History.

*Visit Wells-Thorn House with Barbara Mathews; Flynt Center tour with Ned Lazaro, Collections Manager and Associate Curator of Textiles*

**Reading:**


Jane Nylander, *Our Own Snug Fireside,* Preface and chap. 1


**February 3:** The Material World of New England: Architecture

*Introduction to Historical Architecture with Bill Flynt, Architectural Conservator*

**Reading:**


**February 10:** Windows on the Material World of New England: Probate Inventories

*work with probate inventories with Anne Lanning, Vice President for Museum Affairs*

**Reading:**


**February 17:** Studying Material Culture: Methods and Means

“Just because you have looked at something doesn’t mean that you have seen it.”—Jennifer Roberts, Art Historian

*Artifact Study with Amanda Lange, Curator of Historic Interiors and Curatorial Chair*

**Reading:**


**February 24:** The Material World of New England: Learning to Look in Context

*Probate Inventory exercise due at the beginning of class*

* Object study selection*
Reading:


*Meet with your object*

Reading:


*Visit the Williams House with Anne Lanning, Vice President for Museum Affairs *

Reading:
Richard Bushman, The Refinement of America, Intro. & chap. 3


Nylander, “Going to housekeeping” and “Clean, bright and Comfortable: Dimensions of Housework,” chaps. 3 & 5, Our Own Snug Fireside.


March 17: No Class—Spring Break

March 24: The Material World of New England: Furniture

* Furniture study with Phil Zea, President of Historic Deerfield*

Reading:

David Jaffee, chapter 3 pp. 103-130, A New Nation of Goods.

Katherine Grier, “Bodily Comfort and Spring-Seat Upholstery,” chap. 4, Culture and Comfort, chap. 4 (pp. 103-128.)


March 31: The Material World of New England: Dress

*Object study due at beginning of class*

*Textile study with Ned Lazaro, Collections Manager and Associate Curator of Textiles*

Reading:

Marla Miller, “Clothing and Consumers in Rural New England,

Jane Nylander, “Clean and Decent: A Family’s Clothing” chap. 6, Our Own Snug Fireside.


April 7:

*Object Study time in Museum’s Attic, Flynt Center; time at Memorial Libraries with David Bosse, Librarian*

April 14:

The Material World of New England: Portraiture

*Due at Beginning of Class: Research Topic Statement for Interpretive essay*

Reading:


April 21:

Early New England Landscapes

*Walk of The Street and Common*

Reading:


Joseph Wood, Intro. and “The Village as Vernacular Form” chap. 3, The New
*Student presentations of Final Essay topic*

*Final Essay due by end of day*