Assignment #2

Material History

Due: November 8th, 2019,10:00am

There is a material trace of the eighteenth-century Caribbean in trade goods, maps, irons, tea tables, etc. In our digital age, it is becoming increasingly easier to gain access to these material objects. This access grants us the conversation as to what a museum “is” and how we, as readers, collect information about housed materials and reflect on them in relation to a moment in both time and space.

For this assignment, select an object from any one of the digital archives that can be found on your syllabus. If you come across another digital collection and would like to work with an object there, please send me a link for approval. Once the object is selected, you will write a conceptual “material history” paper. Related questions are: What is the material made of? What purpose does it serve? How did it impact those who interacted with it? How does it fit into a larger historical and/or social narrative of slavery?

This paper, unlike the midterm and first assignment, is not argument driven. This is predominantly a reflective/descriptive paper. The research conducted will help inform your understanding of the “daily life” of your object in abstract terms. It’ll be your task to infuse that object with a kind of life as you reflect on how it shaped the people who interacted with it. To continue the process of reflection, please indicate (either in the conclusion or the introduction) your attraction to the object. Why did you choose it? How did your attitudes toward it change with research?

We will follow up the material history paper with a conversation about public history. How does the digital archives of Jamaica compare with that of the British Museum? What does that illustrate about how different publics access history?

Paper Logistics:

3-4 pages, double spaced

Times New Roman

MLA format with Works Cited page (not included in page count)

1” margins

Visual images attached as appendices (not included in page count)

Submissions on Moodle

**Outside research will be required** (two sources minimum, including archive website)