

## Making Cultures: new ways of reading things.

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### School of Education launches exciting new module

**What do things mean to us? Why do we collect objects? How do we understand and interpret objects? Where do objects come from and why is their journey important?**

Second-year students on a new module launched this term in the School of Education are searching for answers to these and other important questions. The 20 credit module, Making Cultures: New Ways of Reading Things, was developed by [Professor Ian Grosvenor](/staff/profiles/education/grosvenor-ian.aspx) (Education and Social Justice Department, School of Education) and [Clare Mullett](/research/activity/africa-hub/researching-africa/clare-mullett.aspx) (Deputy University Curator, Research and Cultural Collections). The module has been carefully designed so that students can draw on the expertise and experience of tutors from all Colleges in the University and have privileged access to artefacts in the University's extensive range of museums, collections and archives. Through object-based learning, students will be able to engage critically with the material world and are encouraged to ask questions about things: what objects mean to people and why. Through participation on the module and by completing a reflective learning journal, participants on the module will explore how the value of objects can change and focus on issues around the collection; interpretation and display of material culture; current debates about ownership; ethics and public engagement; and the impact of new digital technologies.

Central to the success of the module is the 'hands on' experience students gain through participation in weekly workshops. Whilst in one week, students will be debating the repatriation of human remains to a Native American Tribe in California, another week the students will be making their own models in sculptors wax and in another week, the students will be handling heritage medical equipment, guided by a historian and retired general practitioner.

The rich and diverse cultural heritage of the University of Birmingham makes it possible to deliver a module of this kind, and it is a pleasure to bring together the expertise from colleagues across the University. The module is offered as a Module Outside the Main Discipline (MOMD), and will be offered to second year students again in 2013/14.

Clare Mullett, module leader, writes:

*This truly interdisciplinary course is a fantastic opportunity for students to work with curators, archivists and academics from a diverse range of unique museum collections and experts in many subject areas. Through engaging with objects in different ways, the students will be able to approach a topic from multifarious angles, thinking critically in their approach and learning skills that will be relevant to whichever career path they choose.*

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