

*Ancient Technologies: Their Matter, Materiality, and Materializations*

Center for Ancient Studies, University of Pennsylvania

February 26-27, 2016

Abstracts Due November 1, 2015

The term *technology* often invokes images of the information-based e-ephemera of Silicon Valley, technologies frequently described as immaterial or as transcending their own materiality. Nonetheless, these technologies are very much material. In this conference, we seek to explore ancient technologies whose materiality is similarly overlooked. Acutely attuned to discussions of materiality occurring in Science, Technology, and Society Studies including New Materialisms, Actor-Network Theory, and Posthuman theories, among others, we aim to rethink the role and nature of technology in ancient societies. Beyond material innovations in transportation, writing, or warfare, we can see material technologies at work in the formation and construction of the self, ethnicity, the Gods, cultural memory, and the body, to name only a few examples. We hope to question entrenched assumptions surrounding the disembodied nature of power, intention, and agency by identifying, embracing, and reinterpreting their materiality and their dependency upon the technological. This is a call to explore the surprising presences and effects of past material technologies, to think broadly about the technological aspects of the material, and to consider the material aspects of overlooked technologies.

We invite papers from any discipline that engages with antiquity and welcome papers with insights into the ways that the materiality of the ancient past has been mobilized through time, even into the present. We also encourage submissions that pertain specifically to the historiography of and theoretical and methodological approaches to materials and materiality.

Possible topics and approaches include the materiality of technologies of:

- Knowledge, Communication, Translation: writing, speech, public history
- Politics and Empire: military, law, transportation, material goods (e.g., food, silver), public memory, violence
- The Body: imaginary anatomies, sex, self, perception, health
- Identity: race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender
- Space: movements, migrations, hybrid spaces, city-planning
- Everyday Life: objects, assemblages, material agency, narratives of making

The conference will span two days, Friday and Saturday, February 26-27, 2016, featuring a keynote address by Denise Kimber Buell. Paper proposals for the graduate student conference should be 500 words, and include a title, description of the specific materials studied and general method, and a statement of the thesis. Submissions should be submitted to Tiffany Cain (tcain@sas.upenn.edu). Consideration of proposals will begin on Nov. 1, 2015.