## *Student Assignment:*

# Garbage Archaeology 1

Curriculum by Gem Baldwin, Edmonds Community College

### Material Culture: “The Story of Stuff”

**Anthropology 110**

This is the first of two segments to the Garbage Archaeology Research Lab assignment. The idea is to get you started thinking about human material culture, or \*STUFF\*. Your stuff, my stuff, our stuff. What is it, where does it come from, who pays for it, with what currency, and where does it go? Why do we want it or need it, and is it really worth the cost?

Students will receive an introduction to the global materials economy in the 20 minute video, “The Story of Stuff.” After watching the video, students will discuss key concepts on the course discussion board.

**Assignment Guidelines**

Watch the entire video, “The Story of Stuff.” Taking notes is recommended, and it may also be helpful to read through the discussion questions before watching the video.

<http://www.storyofstuff.com>

Choose one of the following questions, and post a response under the appropriate heading on the course discussion board. Then, post a response on a different thread to one of your peers’ postings. Each students will post at least twice, in response to two different questions (on original, and in response to another student’s post). All posts should be at least eight sentences, and thoughtfully engage the material. Please be specific, and use examples whenever possible.

**Discussion Questions**

* Ecology is the way that species interact with their environment. How does our materials economy relate to human ecology, and what are some of the consequences of these systems?
* Why can’t a linear system work indefinitely in a finite world? What are the alternatives? Use specific examples in your answer.
* Which people, or which populations, are most negatively affected by the materials economy described in the video? What does this tell you about global social hierarchies, or human social stratification? Is there justice in this system? What can be done to change it?