

## **H 161. Selected Topics in History – Topic: Global Things, 1400-2000**

Course description: Global Things, 1400-2000. In the rich parts of the world in the early twenty-first century, we surround ourselves with a superabundance of material possessions, an accumulation of things sourced, in whole or in part, from every corner of the earth. Our ancestors could only fantasize about the kind of material abundance we enjoy, yet human beings have been moving goods to and fro across the globe for thousands of years. This course explores how things originating in one part of the world became familiar in many others, and the very different ways those same things were used and understood in localities in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas. The chronological focus is the period from the first opening of sea routes between Europe, Asia and the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries, to the final decline of maritime empires in the 20th century. The geographical focus extends from the global to the local. The course is built around a series of object biographies, an approach widely employed by historians and anthropologists in recent years. A different category of material object will be studied each week. They will include coffee, cotton, sugar, dyestuffs, and silk.