**Garbology Discussion Questions**

1. What is the difference between garbage, trash, junk, stuff, and clutter?
2. What does it mean to waste? Why are we wasting thinks that we have paid for?
3. Does waste in one area lead to waste in other areas? We waste food, resources, time, money, etc.
4. How soon do things we buy today become “garbage”?
5. “We are best understood by what we throw away.”

“trash is the lens on our lives, our priorities, our failings, our secrets and our hubris.”

1. How readily do we attach the label of trash to perfectly good, even beautiful things?
2. “Disposophobia” – fear of throwing things away. May become a category on the DSM. Do we all have this to some extent?
3. Shows on TV – Hoarders – it’s a source of entertainment, but also a “feel good” program. We tell ourselves, we’re not so bad.
4. J. Gordon Lippincott set out to eradicate thrift, and succeeded. Today we see “thrift” as being cheap, as not being cool. Yet at the same time people talk about Warren Buffet’s small house and ordinary lifestyle admiringly. We don’t understand how it is that he has all this money and yet doesn’t live extravagantly.
5. Why do people watch shows that go into rich people’s houses and show their 500 pairs of jeans, or two rooms of sunglasses?
6. Go over p. 105, “Waste Q & A”: fun facts about trash and waste.
7. Throughout the book Humes stresses the problem with plastic. Can you imagine a world without plastic? What would things be made out of?
8. Trash analysis reveals that the majority of Valentine’s Day candy gets thrown out, while Halloween candy is almost all eaten. How do you explain this?
9. Themalis says that the simplest solution to the trash problem is to waste less and demand products that last longer. It used to be that everything lasted forever: refrigerators, washers, toasters, cars. But today everything is made to fall apart. Can we go back to having quality products?
10. Is it possible to stop the race for newer and fancier stuff considering that any electronic device has a life of about two years before the new model comes out?
11. Bea Johnson tells people to refuse – say ‘no’ to stuff. But do we really want to say no? We like our stuff. We live in a “retail therapy” society.
12. It used to be that everything was reused and repurposed. People unraveled sweaters and reused the yarn to knit new ones. Have we lost the ability to think this way?
13. What about the waste in our own industry? Do we really need new textbooks every 2-3 years? What happens to all the old textbooks? Are they recycled or do they end up in a landfill?

**Topics and Issues to Think and Talk About**

1. Hoarders shows on TV
2. Consumerism
3. Packaging – why is everything packaged like this?
4. Why do we accumulate things? What purpose does it serve in our lives? In the modern world trash may be the replacement – for what?
5. What happens when old people have to move into much smaller living spaces?
Waste as a theme – why do we waste food, resources, time, money, energy? Does one lead to another?
6. Trash and crime – “why the mafia loves garbage” – *online article*. A business that’s easy to enter and lucrative to control.
7. Reusable sandwich bags/market bags – are they bad for us? Accumulate bacteria
8. Plants and trash – orchids at Trader Joe’s
9. Water fountain apps – where to find a water fountain anywhere in the world, started by a professor at UCLA
10. PPM – divide campus to various spaces and assign groups to research waste situation.
11. Interview someone from PPM – they are there around 3:00 am.
12. Interview a grandparent – how did things work when they were young.
13. Yarn – reusing. Unraveling sweaters and straightening the yarn over steam.
14. Fabric – using left-over pieces for quilting. Now we shop for the exact color, shape…
15. Go through your room/house and pick 10 new things you don’t need and could easily live without.
16. How can you save up for something you want? Today there are online programs that help you do that. One program is smartypig: <https://www.smartypig.com/>
17. The democratic process does not always work. Residents of LA opposed the trash-for-energy plan, and ended up with the biggest landfill in their back yard. Perhaps some decisions should be left to scientists? Worth discussing. People are short sighted and afraid of change.
18. Look around you – how many plastic items can you see in your room, your immediate environment? Can we live without plastic? We have before, but can we go back?
19. The Trash Trackers – can be a movie, song, home video?
20. Researchers found that most Valentine’s candy ends up in the trash, while hardly any Halloween candy ends up in the trash. Why is that?
21. Most people do not know what’s in their trash, underestimate the amount they throw out. Ask students to estimate what’s in their refrigerator, what’s in their closet.
22. Find out if there are any programs that students can get involved in at CSUN or other educational institutions. Can students join these expeditions as volunteers?