In this exercise, you will work with an assemblage of tools from our own culture, spoons, to create a classifications using the same objects. You will create three classifications based on function, style, and manufacturing technology.

Although we rarely think of spoons as tools, in many ways they are comparable to the tools in the archaeological record that are classified by archaeologists. All tools have functional, stylistic, and manufacturing characteristics. Functional characteristics reflect tool use (both actual and intended). We use spoons to perform different tasks such as stirring and serving. Spoons also have stylistic, i.e. decorative, characteristics that have nothing to do with function (e.g., carved or colored handles). Finally, as manufactured objects, spoons have visible characteristics related to how they were made (e.g., carved from wood, cast in metal). In this exercise we will focus on the functional aspects of the spoons.

The Assignment

1) First, do a morphological or descriptive classification (grouping) just as you did with the swimsuit classification.

2) For your functional classification, make a list of all the variables and attributes that you think are related to tool function. A variable is a measurable characteristic that may assume many forms. An attribute is the form that a variable takes in a particular object. For example, the variable "color" has the attributes of "red" and "blue;" the variable "material" has the attributes "wood" and "steel."

3) From your list above, choose three or four of the variables to create a paradigmatic classification of the spoons. Create your classes and list the numbers of each spoon that fall into those classes.

4) Use the following suggestions and questions to structure your individual reports.

Introduction
What is the goal of this exercise on classification? Why are we playing with these spoons? How does this assignment relate to your reading and your understanding of the Ford/Spaulding debate on typology and classification? The introduction is where you describe the problem in a larger context.

Procedure
Describe the research question(s) that you used to guide your classification of spoons by style, function, or technology. List and explain why you chose the variables and attributes of your classification scheme.
Results
Present the results of your classifications in a data table that lists the variables, attributes, and a tally of the members in each class.

Discussion
Use the following questions to structure your discussion:

a) Did your morphological classification differ from your functional classification? How? Did it help to do the morphological classification first? Why or why not?

b) What makes a good research question?

c) Why is it important to have a rationale for classification in mind when you analyze an assemblage of artifacts?

d) Is there information missing about the spoons that would have helped in the classification? If so, what is it, and why would this information be critical to archaeological classification and interpretation?

e) Were there spoons that were did not fit your expectations for the classification?

f) Is it possible that a variable might be used in more than one of the three classification schemes? Use examples. How would you account for such an overlap?

g) When would you want to use grouping versus paradigmatic classification?

Conclusion
What did you learn in this exercise about artifact classification?