



HI 451/WS 451: Fashion as History

College of Arts and Sciences, Boston University
 226 Bay State Road, Rm. 504
 Fall 2018, Mondays 2:30-5:15

Professor: Arianne Chernock
 Office: 226 Bay State Road, rm. 410
 Office Phone: (617) 353-8315
 Email: chernock@bu.edu
 Office Hours: Mondays 5-6pm; Wednesdays 9-11am; and by appointment.

Course Description:

This upper-level colloquium will treat clothing and other products of material culture as historical documents. A three-piece suit, a Georgian silk dress, a Victorian corset, a ready-to-wear skirt, a t-shirt from the Gap – all offer a useful lens into the culture, politics, and economics of particular times and places. Beginning in the 17th century and ranging across the globe (though concentrating primarily on developments in the West), this seminar will begin to explore what clothing can tell us about trade and commerce, empire, gender, sexuality, class, race, industry, revolution, nation-building, identity politics and globalization. The goal of this seminar, however, is not just to understand fashion as a “window” onto the past. Rather, we will aim simultaneously to see fashion, and material culture more generally, as playing a fundamental role in the shaping of that past. Requirements for this course will include: weekly response papers (1-2 pages), a research proposal (3-5 pages), and a research paper on a topic chosen by the student (12-15 pages). For the final paper, students will visit local fashion museums and collections, including the Massachusetts Historical Society, and choose an item of clothing, footwear or fashion-related accessory on which to focus their research.

Course Texts (required):

- *History and Material Culture: A student's guide to approaching alternative sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (New York: Routledge, 2009)
- Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (New York: Random House, 2014)
- Ashley Mears, *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Model* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)

In addition to the above texts, many primary and secondary sources will be posted online and on a class Blackboard Learn web site.

Course Requirements:

- **Attendance.** Course attendance is required. See Class Attendance Policy.
- **Class Participation.** As this is a seminar, it is absolutely essential that you come to class ready to discuss the required readings and other relevant course materials. To help you with this, I will be requiring you to write 1-2 pp. response papers on designated week's reading. *I will read these responses carefully, and they will be graded.* In addition to completing these writing assignments, I encourage you to take an active approach to learning. Make sure to take notes while you prepare for class, and ask yourself questions. Why do you think that a particular reading has been assigned? What are its main ideas and concepts? If you find a reading dull, why? What about it seems strange or difficult to understand? Asking yourself these kinds of questions will help you to participate more effectively in class discussion.
- **Writing Assignments.** In addition to the weekly critical reflections, you will be required to write a research paper, 12-15 pages in length. I will circulate more information about the research paper well in advance of the due date.

Grading Breakdown:

Class Participation and Attendance (including field trips): 25%

Weekly Response Papers (1-2 pages): 35%

Research Proposal (3-5 pages): 5%

Research Paper (12-15 pages): 35%

Format for Research Paper and Response Papers:

All papers (including drafts) must:

- Be typed/word-processed. Handwritten work is not acceptable;
- Be double-spaced in 12 pt. font;
- Be spell-checked – spelling errors are not acceptable;
- Be grammar-checked to the best of your ability – we will review grammar conventions throughout the semester; and
- Include your name, a title, the course title, assignment, page numbers, and the date.

Late Assignments:

Please contact me well in advance of an assignment's due date if you think that you will have difficulty meeting a particular deadline. *All papers submitted late without my permission will automatically be marked down one half grade per day.*

Attendance Policy:

Class attendance is required. Please notify me in advance (if possible) if you know that you will need to be absent from class. *Under no circumstances will a student who misses more than three classes pass this course. Those who have more than 1 unexcused absence will see this reflected in their class participation grade.*

Plagiarism Policy:

This course is designed to encourage critical thinking and writing. In order to become critical thinkers and writers, you must complete all stages of the work yourself: taking the words of others, or presenting the ideas of others as your own not only prohibits you from learning the skills of academic research, it also is a violation of the University's Code of Academic Integrity: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>. *The minimum penalty for such offenses is to fail the assignment; the more common penalty is to fail the course.* If you ever have questions about how to cite a source (be it a text, website or person), please contact me. I'm more than happy to help answer your questions – that's what I'm here for. We will regularly review the University's plagiarism policy.

Special Circumstances:

If you have a disability registered with Disability Support Services or some other special circumstance that might affect your work this semester, please let me know both verbally and in writing as soon as possible, so I can make appropriate accommodations.

Course Schedule

UNIT ONE: COURSE FOUNDATIONS

September 10: Introductory: What is fashion? What can it tell us about the present? About the past? Introduction to the Research Paper and Process

Reading:

- Thorstein B. Veblen, "Dress as an Expression of the Pecuniary Culture," in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), at <http://moglen.law.columbia.edu/LCS/theoryleisureclass.pdf> (start at p. 77 [Ch. 7])

September 17: The Stakes of Fashion

Screening and discussion of *The True Cost* (documentary)

UNIT TWO: FASHION AND GLOBALIZATION

September 24: Cotton and Globalization*

Reading:

- Giorgio Riello, “The Globalization of Cotton Textiles: Indian Cottons, Europe, and the Atlantic World, 1600-1850,” in Prasanna Parthasarathi and Giorgio Riello, eds, *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 261-287 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (New York: Random House, 2014), Introduction and Chs 9-13, pp. 242-426

In-class slideshow on *Fashion from Nature* exhibit at the Victoria & Albert Museum

* Response Paper due

October 1: Fashion and the Making of Empire*

Reading:

- Jean Comaroff, “The Empire’s Old Clothes: Fashioning the Colonial Subject,” in *Cross-Cultural Consumption: Global Markets, Local Realities*, David Howes, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 19-38 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 23-93 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Verity Wilson, “Studio and Soiree: Chinese Textiles in Europe and America, 1850 to the present,” in eds. Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner, *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 229-242 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Rafia Zakaria, “Clothes and Daggers,” at <https://aeon.co/essays/ban-the-burqa-scrap-the-sari-why-women-s-clothing-matters> [online]

* Response Paper due

UNIT THREE: FASHION AND THE POLITICAL

October 9 [substitute Monday]: Fashion and Revolution*

Reading:

- Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2011), Chapter 5 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Lynn Hunt, “Freedom of Dress in Revolutionary France,” in eds Sara E. Meltzer and Kathryn Norberg, *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 224-249 [available as an E-Book via Mugar Library]

- Verity Wilson, “Dress and the Cultural Revolution,” in *China Chic: East Meets West*, eds. Valerie Steele and John S. Major (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 167-186 [on Blackboard Learn]

*Response Paper due

October 15: Fashion and Nation/Writing the History of Material Culture*

Reading:

- Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Highland Tradition of Scotland,” in Eric Hobsbawm, ed *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 15-42 [on Blackboard]
- Excerpts from Irene Guenther, *Nazi ‘Chic’?: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (Bloomsbury, 2004), Chapters 1, 4, 5 and 8 (e-book, available via Mugar Library website)
- *History and Material Culture: A student’s guide to approaching alternative sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (New York: Routledge, 2009), Introduction and Ch. 1, 1-46

* Response Paper due

October 22: Research 101/Mugar Library Orientation/Database and Secondary Source Share

October 29: Massachusetts Historical Society trip (details TBD)

UNIT FOUR: FASHION AND GENDER

November 5: Men in Suits*

Reading:

- Ann Hollander, *Sex and Suits* (New York: Knopf, 1994), Chapters 1 and 2 [on Blackboard Learn]
- David Kuchta, “The Making of the Self-Made Man: Class, Clothing, and English Masculinity, 1688-1832,” in Victoria de Grazia, ed, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (1996) [on Blackboard Learn]

*Response paper due

November 12: Fashion as Liberation? Women, Clothing and Agency/Research project share and discussion of developing good research questions*

Reading:

- “Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform” web site, at: <http://dressreform.tripod.com/>
- Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), Chapters 1 and 2, pp.1-65 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Dorothy Ko, “The Body as Attire: The Shifting Meanings of Footbinding in Seventeenth-Century China,” *Journal of Women’s History* 8, no. 4 (Winter 1997), pp. 8-27 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Mary Louise Roberts, “Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women’s Fashion in the 1920s,” *American Historical Review*, 98, 3, (June 1993), pp. 657-684 [on Blackboard Learn]

- Lizzie Widdicombe, “The Plus Side,” *The New Yorker*, 22 September 2014 at <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/22/bigger-better> [online]

*Response paper due/Item Share

UNIT FIVE: FASHION AND IDENTITY POLITICS

November 19: Fashion and the Making of Subcultures/Research and Writing Workshop I (organizing research/developing an argument/formation of research groups)*

Reading:

- Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style* (New York: Routledge, 1979), Intro and Ch. 1, 1-19 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Betty Luther Hillman, “‘The most profoundly revolutionary act a homosexual can engage in’: Drag and the Politics of Gender Presentation in the San Francisco Gay Liberation Movement, 1964–1972”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 20, 1 (2011), 153-181 [on Blackboard Learn]
- Shaun Cole, “Butch Queens in Macho Drag: Gay Men, Dress, and Subcultural Identity”, in *Men’s Fashion Reader* (2008), 279-293 [on Blackboard Learn]
- In-class screening and discussion of *Paris is Burning* (1990)

*Research proposal due at start of class

November 26: Fashion, Race and Social Resistance/Secondary Source share/Research and Writing Workshop II (sustaining scholarly arguments/engaging with secondary literature)*

Reading:

- Kathy Peiss, *Zoot Suit: The Enigmatic Career of an Extreme Style* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), Chapter Four [on Blackboard Learn]
- Shane White and Graham White, “Slave Clothing and African American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Past & Present*, 148 (August 1995), 149-186 [on Blackboard Learn]

*Research Paper thesis statements and outlines due at start of class

UNIT SIX: SELLING FASHION

December 3: Making the Model: A Discussion with Sociologist Ashley Mears/Research Paper Workshop*

Reading:

- Ashley Mears, *Pricing Beauty*, Chapters 1, 4 and 5

*Research Paper drafts due to working groups at the start of class

UNIT SEVEN: THE RESEARCH PAPER AND COURSE CONCLUSIONS

December 10: Research Paper Reflections/Course Conclusions

****Research Papers due at start of class on December 10, unless other arrangements have been made in writing****