



## HI 451/WS 451: Fashion as History

College of Arts and Sciences, Boston University  
 226 Bay State Road, Rm. 504  
 Spring 2017, Thursdays, 12:30-3:15

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 Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-2:30 and Thursdays 3:15-4:15, 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This upper-level colloquium will treat clothing and other products of material culture as historical documents.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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 critical reflections (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 Shoes: Pleasure and Pain exhibit at the Peabody Essex Museum and the textile department at the Museum of Fine Arts, 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)
- Irene Guenther, *Nazi 'Chic'?: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (Bloomsbury, 2004)
- Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (Claridge, 1994)

In addition to the above texts, several primary and secondary sources will also be posted online and on a class Blackboard 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. critical reflections on designated week's reading. *I will read these "reflections" 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, 10 to 12 pages in length. I will circulate more information about the research assignment well in advance of the due date.

### Grading Breakdown:

Class participation and attendance (including visits to Boston-area fashion archives): 25%

Weekly Critical Reflections (1-2 pages): 35%

Research Proposal (3-5 pages): 5%

Research Paper (12-15 pages): 35%

### Format for Research Paper and Critical Reflections:

All papers (including drafts) must:

- Be typed/word-processed. Handwritten work is not acceptable;
- Be double-spaced in 12 pt. font (Times New Roman preferred but not required);
- 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;
- 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. *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**

**January 19: Introductory: What is fashion? What can fashion tell us about the present? About the past?**

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])
- Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), Chapter 2 [on Blackboard]

### **UNIT TWO: FASHION AND GLOBALIZATION**

## January 26: Cotton and Globalization\*

Reading:

- Giorgio Riello, “The Globalization of Cotton Textiles: Indian Cottons, Europe, and the Atlantic World, 1600-1850,” in Prasannan Parthasarathi and Giorgio Riello, eds, *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 261-287 [on Blackboard]
- Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (New York: Random House, 2014), Introduction and Chs 9-13, pp. 242-426
- Listen to “Planet Money’s T-Shirt Project” podcasts at: <http://www.npr.org/series/248799434/planet-moneys-t-shirt-project>

\* Response Paper due

## February 2: 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]
- Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 23-93 [on Blackboard]
- 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]
- 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

### February 9: 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), pp TBA
- *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

## **February 16: Fashion and Revolution/ The Research Paper and Research Process\***

Reading:

- Linzy Brekke, “‘To Make a Figure’: Clothing and the Politics of Male Identity in Eighteenth-Century America,” in eds John Styles and Amanda Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 225-246 [on Blackboard]
- Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2011), Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 153-216 [on Blackboard]
- 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]

\*Response Paper due

**February 23: Field Trip to the Textiles Collection at the MFA (contact Lauren Whitley), details TBA**

**March 2: Field Trip to the *Shoes: Pleasure and Pain* exhibit at the Peabody Essex Museum, details TBA**

**March 9: No Class (spring break)**

## **UNIT FOUR: FASHION AND GENDER**

**March 16: Men in Suits/ Reflections on Field Trips\***

Reading:

- Ann Hollander, *Sex and Suits* (New York: Knopf, 1994)
- 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]

\*Response paper due

### **March 23: Fashion as Liberation? Women, Clothing and Agency/ Item share\***

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

\*Brief description of research item due

## **UNIT FIVE: FASHION AND IDENTITY POLITICS**

### **March 30: Fashion and the Making of Subcultures\***

Reading:

- Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the meaning of style* (New York: Routledge, 1979), Intro and Ch. 1, 1-19 [on Blackboard]
- 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]
- Shaun Cole, “Butch Queens in Macho Drag: Gay Men, Dress, and Subcultural Identity”, in *Men’s Fashion Reader* (2008), 279-293 [on Blackboard]
- In-class screening of *Paris is Burning* (1990)

\*Research proposal due

### **April 6: Fashion, Race and Social Resistance/Secondary Source share\***

Reading:

- Kathy Peiss, *Zoot Suit: The Enigmatic Career of an Extreme Style* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), Chapter Four [on Blackboard]
- 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]
- In-class screening of *The Zoot Suit Riots* (film)

\*Bring in one secondary source to share with the class related to your research project

*April 7: Special Event: British Opium and Wool in China Event, 4pm, details TBA*

## **UNIT SIX: PRODUCING FASHION**

### **April 13: Fashion as Industry\***

- Nancy Green, *Ready-to-Wear, Ready-to-Work* (Duke, 1997), Chapters 5 and 6, pp. 138-187 [on Blackboard]
- Selected primary source readings on the Rana Plaza disaster [TBD]
- In-class screening of *The True Cost* (also available on Netflix)

\*Research Paper drafts due to peer groups

## **UNIT SEVEN: THE RESEARCH PAPER AND COURSE CONCLUSIONS**

**April 20: No Class: Small Group Writing Workshops – to be scheduled**

**April 27: Research Paper Presentations/Course Conclusions**

**\*\*Research Papers due at start of class on April 27\*\***