



FASHION AND POWER

Class code**Instructor Details**

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Office hour: Wednesday 1:00-2:00

Class Details

Fashion & Power

Wednesday 3:00-6:00

Location: 408

Prerequisites

None

Class Description

The class will consist in a systematic exploration of the various realms where the relationship between fashion and power can be observed. These realms include gender, race, class, law, capital, religion, and the like. Each class will be devoted to the discussion of a text, a piece of fashion history and an image staging this piece, as tools in the understanding the way power unfolds through fashion in a given specific realm. Such a thematic exploration of the topic of the class should serve as a double introduction to fashion history (especially in the 20th and 21st centuries) and fashion theory (especially from the post-structuralist era onwards). The aim of the class is to help students overcome some of the most common clichés about the superficiality of fashion, without falling into the opposite trap consisting in trying to apply upon it categories that are foreign to it. Rather, the class will be about how fashion itself generates ideas, views and perspectives that can be of some use in understanding and displacing well-received conceptions about gender, race, class, religion, capital, etc. The class will be about fashion as theory, rather than theory applied to fashion.

Lectures, discussions, guest speakers, field trips to museums and shows.

**Desired
Outcomes**

Upon completion of the course, students should:

1. Have a basic knowledge of the history and evolution of fashion within its social and cultural contexts.
2. Be able to apply their analytical skills to deciphering the meanings of fashion in its various denotations, as elite institution, aesthetic style, mass movement, economic power, and general cultural mode.
3. Understand the relation between images of political and economic power and modes of dress, and develop an understanding of visual culture for the critical analysis of images generated by fashion, including journalism, advertisement, etc.
4. Elaborate an informed, critical approach to using fashion as a hermeneutical tool in the understanding of the contemporary.

**Assessment
Components**

Mid-term exam 30%
Final essay (1200 words) 30%
Oral presentations 40%, of which: general participation 30%; weekly reading summaries 20%; Session 5 presentation 10%; mid-term presentation 20%, final presentation 20%
Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

**Assessment
Expectations**

Grade conversion

A	=	16	Félicitations
A-	=	15	Excellent
B+	=	14	Très bien
B	=	13	Bien
B-	=	12	Encourageant/Assez bien
C+	=	11	Moyen plus
C	=	10	Moyen
C-	=	9	Passable
D+	=	8	
D	=	7	
D-	=	6	
F	=	0	Fail

Grading Policy

NYU Paris aims to have grading standards and results in all its courses similar to those that prevail at Washington Square.

**Attendance
Policy**

*Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. **To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades.** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.*

As per the Global Academic standard, unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade¹.

Other guidelines specific to NYUParis include:

- **Attendance to class and all course-related events, even outside of regularly scheduled course times, is expected and mandatory. Some class outings/make-up classes take place on Fridays**
- **Under no circumstances will non-University-related travel constitute an excused absence from class.** DO NOT book travel until you have received and carefully studied the syllabus of each of your classes.
- **If you are not sick enough to go to the doctor, you are well enough to go to class.** Doctor's notes will be expected for all medical-related absences.
- **No tests, quizzes, or exams will be made up.** A missed test, quiz, or exam will result in a zero. Questions about this policy should be directed to the Academic Affairs team, not your professor.

**Late Submission
of Work**

Any late submission will result in the loss of ½ grade point per day of lateness. This condition can only be waived in provably exceptional circumstances.

¹ NYU's "Policies and procedures for students studying away at a Global Academic Center"

Plagiarism Policy

New York University in Paris, as an academic community, is committed to free and open inquiry, to creating an intellectual and social environment that promotes this, and to upholding the highest standards of personal and academic integrity.

All NYUP students have the responsibility to uphold these stated objectives. As a member of this community, you accept the responsibility for upholding and maintaining these standards, which include refraining from all forms of plagiarism and cheating as detailed below.

Cases of plagiarism at NYUParis will be brought to the attention of NYUParis academic administration as well as the implicated student's home school Dean.

PLAGIARISM: a form of fraud, presenting someone else's work as though it were your own²

- A sequence of words from another writer who you have not quoted and referenced in footnotes³
- A paraphrased passage from another writer's work that you have not cited.
- Facts or ideas gathered and reported by someone else⁴
- Another student's work that you claim as your own
- A paper that is purchased or "researched" for money
- A paper that is downloaded free of charge from the Internet

CHEATING

- Copying from another student's exam or quiz
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance (crib sheets, internet, etc.) during an exam or quiz
- Having someone take your exam
- Accessing an exam or quiz in an unauthorized fashion prior to its administration
- Collaborating with other students or unauthorized persons on a take home exam
- Using the same written material for two courses without the express permission of both instructors
- Fabricating or falsifying data

Required Text(s)

- Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion Theory: A Reader*
- Bonnie English, *A Cultural History of Fashion in the 20th and 21st Centuries: From Catwalk to Sidewalk*

These books will serve as references for the class. However, they will be supplemented by other sources, to be distributed throughout the semester.

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)

- Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*
- Roland Barthes, *The Language of Fashion*
- François Boucher, *20,000 Years of Costume: The History of Fashion and Personal Adornment*
- Deirdre Clancy, *Costume since 1945: Historical Dress from Couture to Street Style*
- Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*
- Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes*
- Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of the Modern Dress*
- David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body Sculpting in the West*
- Morag Martin, *Selling Beauty: Cosmetics, Commerce, and French Society, 1750-1830*
- Colin McDowell, *The Anatomy of Fashion: Why We Dress The Way We Do*
- Colin McDowell, ed., *The Pimlico Companion to Fashion*
- Valerie Mendes, *Fashion Since 1900*

² NYU's Expository Writing Department's [Statement on Plagiarism](#)

³ NYU [Statement on Plagiarism](#)

⁴ NYU [Statement on Plagiarism](#)

- Alissa Quart, *Branded*
- Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe*
- Margaret Scott, *Fashion in the Middle Ages*
- Susan Vincent, *The Anatomy of Fashion: Dressing the Body from the Renaissance to Today*
- Linda Welters & Abby Lillethun, eds., *The Fashion Reader*

Scanned extracts from some of these books might be distributed over the course of the semester and would then be part of your required readings, but you are welcome, and encouraged, to consult the books as you wish. All texts with ad hoc articles and images from catalogues and from the press – newspapers, fashion magazines, etc – that are relevant to the course’s theme, and you are encouraged to bring in such materials during the semester.

Internet Research Guidelines

Readings indicated here should be supplemented by relevant readings from the bibliography, and you are encouraged to pursue your own enquiries as freely and widely as you can. Wikipedia is a decent starting point, but it does not replace proper book- and journal-based research. You are required to give references to all citations, whether print or digital.

Additional Equipment

None

Session 1

General introduction: Methodological and conceptual framework

February 1

Viewing of William Klein’s *Who Are You, Polly Magoo?*

Discussion: Fashion & Power, what does it mean?

Assignment: select an advertisement poster in the street, describe it, and discuss what you consider as one of the hidden tenets of its message (1 page)

Session 2

Fashion and Class

February 8

Image: Movie poster of Audrey Tautou as Coco Chanel

Piece: The tie

Text: Georg Simmel, “Fashion”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 56, No. 6 (May 1956), p. 541-558 + Chapters 19 and 20 in Barnard

Session 3

Fashion and Body

February 15

Image: Still from Sam Mendes’ *Skyfall*, showing Bérénice Marlohe in Carine Gilson outfit

Piece: The lingerie

Text: Jean Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, p. 129-151 + Chapters 24 to 27 in Barnard

Session 4

Fashion and Religion

February 22

Guest speaker: Mark Alizart, founder of the LVMH Prize for Young Fashion Designers and author of *Pop Theology*, on the relationship between fashion and Protestantism

Assignment: select and discuss one of Mark Alizart’s claims made during his presentation (1 page)

Session 5

Fashion and Gender

March 1

Image: Amazon wearing trousers, Greek vase, 470 B.C.

Piece: The trousers

Text: Dick Hebdige, *The Meaning of Style*, p. 100-127 + Chapters 16, 17 and 18 in Barnard

Session 6

Fashion and Consumption

March 8

Guest speaker: Emanuele Coccia, EHESS, author of *Sensible Life*, on the metaphysics of shopping

Assignment: select and discuss one of Emanuele Coccia’s claims made during his presentation (1 page)

Session 7

MID-TERMS

March 15

In-class written dissertation

Session 8

Fashion and Ecology

March 22

Image: “Made in USA” American Apparel ad

Piece: The T-shirt

Text: experts from Kate Fletcher and Mathilda Kam, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Sustainability*

and Fashion, tbc

Session 9

Fashion and Law

March 29

Image: Le Plaideur cashmere Lawyer's Robe

Piece: The robe

Text: Gabriel Tarde, The Laws of Imitation, p. 244-255, p. 287-310 + Chapters 4 in Barnard

Session 10

Fashion and Taste

April 5

Visit of the exhibition "Tenue correcte exigée: quand le vêtement fait scandale", Musée des Arts Décoratifs

Assignment: using one piece showcased during the exhibition, describe the factors explaining the scandal caused (1 page)

Session 11

Fashion and Race

April 19

Image: Still from Sapeurs: A Short Documentary by Guinness

Piece: The hat

Text: bell hooks, Black Looks: Race and Representation, p. 21-39, p. 61-77 + Chapters 21-22 in Barnard

Session 12

Fashion and Desire

April 26

Image: Helmut Newton x-ray shot for Vogue France

Piece: The high heel

Text: Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste, p. 226-256 + Chapters 44 to 47 in Barnard

Session 13

Fashion and Capitalism

May 3

Image: David Beckham Breitling for Bentley ad

Piece: The watch

Text: Thorstein Veblen, Theory of the Leisure Class, p. 257-287 + Chapters 29 to 31 in Barnard

Session 14

Fashion and Media

May 10

Image: Still from Zack Snyder's Man of Steel, featuring Henry Cavill wearing Warby Parker Chamberlain eyewear

Piece: The spectacle

Text: Raymond Williams, Culture and Materialism, p. 170-195 + Chapters 12 to 15 in Barnard

Session 15

FINAL EXAM

May 17

In-class written dissertation

Classroom Etiquette

- No eating in class.
- No cell phones in class.
- No laptop computers in class unless permission is expressly given by your professors.
- Leaving class to go to the bathroom or yawning in class is considered rude in France.

Required Co- curricular Activities

Suggested Co- curricular Activities

Please note that the syllabus is subject to changes, and that listed speakers have not yet been confirmed at the start of term.

Your Instructor

Laurent de Sutter is Professor of Legal Theory at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Brussels, Belgium). He has taught at Université Catholique de Louvain and Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, and has been a visiting researcher at Benjamin N. Cardozo School Of Law (Yeshiva University, New York), Käte Hamburger Kolleg "Recht als Kultur" (Bonn University, Bonn), and Waseda Institute for Advanced Study (Waseda University, Tokyo). His researches focus on the relationship between law, images, desire and transgression. He is the author of many books, translated into several languages, including, recently, "Magic, une métaphysique du lien" (2015), "Théorie du kamikaze" (2016), "'Quand l'inspecteur s'emmêle' de Blake Edwards" (2016), "Poétique de la police" (2017). He also serves as the Managing Editor of the "Perspectives Critiques" series at Presses Universitaires de France, and "Theory Redux" series at Polity Press; is a member of the Editorial Board of "Law & Literature" and "Décalages, an Althusser Studies Journal"; and an international member of the Scientific Committee of Collège International de Philosophie. A well-known media figure, Laurent de Sutter collaborates as a columnist with several newspapers, magazines and radio broadcasts.