

Course Syllabus

A. COURSE INFORMATION AND TEACHING STAFF

1. Course	Name	MATERIAL CULTURE						
	Code	210414050						
	Activity	Lecture						
	Credit hours	3						
	Semester	Spring 2025/2026						
	Pre-requisite	210413100 FASHION AND SOCIETY						
2. Teaching staff, time and location	Section	Building	Room	Day	Time	Instructor	Office hours	
	1	MS	306	W	15:00-15:50	Dr.Nahed Mahmoud Kassem Habiballah Nahed.Habiballah@aaup.edu		

B. COURSE POLICIES

1. Commitment and Attendance	<p>Attendance is required; and university regulations in this regard are strictly applied. It is important to note the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The student is expected to follow all announcements issued by the university, faculty, department as well as the course instructor through the official channels. It is the student's full responsibility to get aware of these announcements and to react accordingly. The student has to communicate electronically with the course instructor, whenever needed, through the official channels exclusively which are limited to the AAUP email and Moodle messages only. The student is expected to attend all classes* and to arrive at classroom on time. If the instructor is late for class, the student must wait for at least 10 minutes before leaving the classroom. Absence by more than 25% of classes leads to an automatic withdrawal from the course (the grade W is assigned). The use of mobile phones or any other smart electronic devices is strictly prohibited during classes. <p>*a class refers to a lab session in case of labs.</p>
	<p>The student must perform all course assessment activities, i.e. assignments, quizzes, exams etc. It is important to note the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Absence from an exam or a quiz other than the final exam leads to a zero mark in that exam or quiz. An exception allowing a makeup is made for a student submitting a legitimate excuse that is accepted by the instructor in a timely manner. Absence from the final exam leads to an FA grade that eventually turns to an F grade. An exception allowing a makeup exam is made if the student submits an official excuse that is accepted by the Academic Affairs in compliance with the university regulations. Late policy is applied if the student fails to submit his/her assignments and/or projects in due time.
2. Performance of assessment activities	

Course Syllabus

<p>3. Academic Integrity</p>	<p>The student is expected to be honest during the performance of assessment activities. While not limited to the list below, the following actions are examples of cheating:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Copying from other students. 2. Using materials that are not authorized by the proctor during quizzes or exams. 3. Collaborating with other students during quizzes or exams. 4. Stealing or buying the content of exams, quizzes, and assignments. 5. Stealing ideas and work of others and presenting them as that of the student (known in academia as plagiarism). 6. Using mobile phones or any other smart electronic devices during quizzes or exams. 	
<p>4. Grading</p>	<p>The university uses the letter grading system. It is important to note the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The passing grade is D, and the corresponding score (out of 100) is determined at the end of the semester. 2. At the end of the semester, the scale of scores is determined by converting each score range to an appropriate letter grade. 	
<p>5. Learning and teaching methods</p>	<p>Lectures</p>	<p>Class sessions involve lectures, video shows, case studies, discussions, debates, and power-point presentations on topics and current issues related to the course contents.</p>
	<p>Readings</p>	<p>This must be a key responsibility to each student. Students should read the relevant parts of the textbook and other materials before class. They should be prepared to raise questions and to get engaged in arguments on related topics in the class schedule.</p>
	<p>In class learning activities</p>	<p>Students are encouraged to learn actively individually and cooperatively in groups. Students are expected to engage with the material, participate in the class, and collaborate with each other. Students will be asked to analyze an argument, demonstrate role play, discuss case studies, make presentations, or apply a concept to a real-world situation.</p>
	<p>Outside class learning activities</p>	<p>The course instructor assigns projects and home assignments to students individually or in groups.</p>
	<p>Feedback</p>	<p>The instructor provides the students with feedbacks on their performance throughout the course, which can help them to realize their weaknesses and work harder to improve their performance.</p>
	<p>Online learning</p>	<p>Online learning platforms are utilized to provide students with additional resources as well as a continuous access to the course material beyond the classroom.</p>

C. COURSE DETAILS

<p>1. Course description & purpose</p>	<p>This course introduces students to material culture through the lens of fashion and dress. It explores how garments, textiles, and the dressed body participate in the production of identity, power, gender, race, capital, and technology. Students will analyze clothing as socio-political and cultural objects while experimenting in the studio with materials, structure, and form.</p>
---	---

Course Syllabus

2. Course learning outcomes (CLOs)	Upon the completion of the course, students will be able to achieve the following learning outcomes:			
	CLO1	Analyze	garments and objects as social, cultural, and political evidence	
	CLO2	Assess	and Evaluate how materials circulate within systems of capital and global production	
	CLO3	Understand	the body as a constructed, disciplined, and mediated site	
	CLO4	Apply	theoretical frameworks (material culture, semiotics, structuralism) to design analysis	
	CLO5	Translate	theoretical insights into experimental design outcomes	
	CLO6	Demonstrate	ethical, cultural, and material awareness in design practice	
3. Assessments	Assessment tool	Weight %	CLOs	Due week
	Assignment	15%	2,3,5	
	Participation	15%	1,2,3,4,5	
	Mid. Term	15%	2,5,6	
	Final Term Paper 40%	40%	1,4,5,6	
	Presentation	15%	3,4,6	
	Total	100%		

Course Syllabus

4. CLOs assessment	Outcomes	CLO 1	CLO 2	CLO 3	CLO 4	CLO 5	CLO 6
	1 - Assignment		✓	✓		✓	
	2 - Participation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	3 - Mid. Term		✓			✓	✓
	4 - Final Term Paper 40%	✓			✓	✓	✓
	5 - Presentation			✓	✓		✓



Course Syllabus

Week	Topics	Study material	Assignment	CLOs
1	Introduction to the course Go through syllabus			6
2	introduction what is material culture			1
3	<p>1 – Introduction: What is Material Culture? introduce material culture as a field and establish objects as cultural evidence. Objects - as embedded in cultural meaning and social histories</p> <p>focus - objects as evidence hierarchy: mind vs matter Method of investigation</p>	<p>Required Readings: Jules David Prown, Mind in Matter: An introduction to material culture theory and method (pp. 1-19)</p>	<p>Week 1 Session 2 – Studio – Object Analysis Workshop Exercise: Material biography of one personal garment. Deliverable: 1- page visual mapping. Step 1- Description (Fabric, Color, Shape, Stitching, wear marks) Step 2- Deduction (Function, body, interaction wearer identity) Step 3 – Speculation (what cultural meaning does the garment carry?)</p>	1,4

5. Course schedule

Course Syllabus

Week	Topics	Study material	Assignment	CLOs	
5. Course schedule	4	<p><u>Lecture 2</u> Commodity, Branding & Capital Objects, values and circulation Objective: to understand Fashion Movement</p> <p><u>Studio</u></p> <p>how can you transform the garment to be made more valuable?</p> <p>Auxiliary material: Film clip (the true Cost) Dir. Andrew Morgan</p>	<p>Required Reading: Elizabeth L. Cline – Overdressed: the shockingly high cost of cheap fashion, ch.1 Recommended reading: Arjun, Appadurai, the social life of Things (pp. 26– 43) Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1 (pp. 163– 177)</p>	<p>Assignment: Why do we treat clothing as disposable today? Garment deconstruction and annotation To bring: bring a cheap garment and analyze: To be discussed in studio 1- How much it costs? 2- How often it is worn? 3- Why it was purchased 4- When it will be discarded</p>	1,3
	5	<p><u>– Lecture</u> Fashion, Taste, Class & Distinction Fashion Movement, Paris Haute Couture, Houses such as Chanel and Dior Objective: understand symbolic capital in fashion</p> <p>Assignment: Why is couture valued even when impractical Bring to Studio: Images <u>Studio</u> Design a silhouette for three class positions. Workflow: Sketch – annotate – compare</p> <p>Auxiliary: Watch Dior & I (Dir. Frederic Tcheng, 2014)</p>	<p>Required Reading: Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction, Harvard University press, 1984, (pp. 1–7; 56–70) Recommended Reading Steele, Valerie. Paris Fashion. Berg, 1998, pp. 1– 15.</p>	<p>Assignment: Why is couture valued even when impractical Bring to Studio: Images</p>	2,4,5

Course Syllabus

Week	Topics	Study material	Assignment	CLOs
6	<p><u>- Lecture</u> Fashion, Taste, Class & Distinction Fashion Movement, Paris Haute Couture, Houses such as Chanel and Dior Objective: understand symbolic capital in fashion</p> <p><u>Studio</u> Design a silhouette for three class positions. Workflow: Sketch – annotate – compare</p> <p>Auxiliary: Watch Dior & I (Dir. Frederic Tcheng, 2014)</p>	<p>Required Reading: Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction, Harvard University press, 1984, (pp. 1–7; 56–70) Recommended Reading Steele, Valerie. Paris Fashion. Berg, 1998, pp. 1- 15.</p>	<p>Assignment: Why is couture valued even when impractical Bring to Studio: Images</p>	3,4,6

5. Course
schedule

Course Syllabus

Week	Topics	Study material	Assignment	CLOs
7	<p><u>Lecture</u> The Disciplined Body modernity and the new forms of control, the body as a tool for 'new' disciplinary processes Objective: Clothing and control</p> <p><u>Studio</u> Corsetry and Victorian Silhouette Corsets reshaped women's bodies to match social ideals, The History of the Corset: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhkzQHBVOCg Focus: measurement, sizing, normalization. Discussion Fashion as body discipline – can you think of something Palestinian Anti-fit experimental garment. Objective – restriction. Workflow: Build – test – reflect</p> <p>Auxiliary: corset visuals</p>	<p>Required Reading: Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (pp. 135–169) Recommended reading: Joanne Entwistle, The Fashioned Body (pp. 1–25)</p>	<p>Assignment: Reflection Bring – Fabric, pins</p>	2,3,5,6

5. Course schedule

Course Syllabus

Week	Topics	Study material	Assignment	CLOs
8	<p>lecture Gender & Performativity Fashion Movement – Androgynous Fashion Objective: How attire challenges gender and social norms. Designers like – Yves Saint Laurent introduced the Le Smoking suit for women (1966)</p> <p>– studio Hybrid design Focus: how clothing challenges gender norms Garment destabilizing gender & social coding. Workflow: Identity – disrupt – design</p> <p>Auxiliary material: Clip from Yves Saint Laurent (2014)</p>	<p>Required Reading: Judith Butler, Gender Trouble (Preface + pp. 43–57) Recommended reading Entwistle, pp 111-125.</p>	<p>Assignment: Compare garments.... Think of creating hybrid garment Bring Images,</p>	1,4,6
9	<p>Lecture Race, Empire & Textile Histories Objective: Mapping - Textile systems Fashion Ideas - Cotton and Empire Colonial trade created modern textile markets</p> <p>– Studio Objective mapping Workflow: Routes – power – discussion The fabric of civilization Workflow: Routes – power – discussion Textile trade route mapping, material extraction and empire Auxiliary: documentary https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2lOx_mTS7g</p>	<p>Required Readings: Edward Said, Orientalism (pp. 1–28) Recommended Reading: Sven Beckert, Empire of Cotton (pp. 29–63)</p>	<p>Assignment – Trace textile, Bring a Map tracing one piece of garment Focus: extraction & colonial textile economies</p>	2,4,6

5. Course schedule

Course Syllabus

Week	Topics	Study material	Assignment	CLOs
10	<p><u>lecture</u> Craft, Authenticity & Invention Objective – critique tradition Fashion Movement - Slow fashion Designers re-emphasizing craft and local production</p> <p><u>Studio</u> Objective: Reinterpret “tradition” using industrial material. Workflow: Translate – material – present Auxiliary: Embroidery visuals Slow fashion explained - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Qlozy32NDY</p>	<p>Required Readings: Glenn Adamson, The Invention of Craft (pp. xiii–xxv) Recommended reading: Eric Hobsbawm, “The Invention of Tradition” (pp. 1–14)</p>	<p>Assignment: bring craft reference Focus: Who defines authenticity?</p>	1,3,4,6
11	<p><u>– lecture</u> Craft, Authenticity & Invention Objective – critique tradition Fashion Movement - Slow fashion Designers re-emphasizing craft and local production</p> <p><u>– Studio</u> Objective: Reinterpret “tradition” using industrial material. Workflow: Translate – material – present Auxiliary: Embroidery visuals Slow fashion explained - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Qlozy32NDY</p>	<p>Required Readings: Glenn Adamson, The Invention of Craft (pp. xiii–xxv) Recommended reading: Eric Hobsbawm, “The Invention of Tradition” (pp. 1–14)</p>	<p>Assignment: bring craft reference Focus: Who defines authenticity?</p>	2,4,5

5. Course schedule

Course Syllabus

Week	Topics	Study material	Assignment	CLOs
12	<p><u>– lecture</u> Subculture & Resistance Fashion Movement – Punk Fashion associated with Vivienne Westwood Punk used fashion to reject mainstream Values Objective: dissent, protest and social change</p> <p><u>Studio</u> Objective: Protest. Workflow: Alter → message → critique. Auxiliary: Documentary clip – the Punk Revolution in Fashion</p>	<p>Required Reading: Polhemus, Ted. Streetstyle. Thames & Hudson, 1994, pp. 1–15. recommended reading Dick Hebdige, Subculture (pp. 1–19; 87–110)</p>	<p>Assignment: Document style. Focus: style as refusal – document Style</p>	2,4,6
13	<p><u>lecture</u> Uniforms & Authority Fashion ideas - Military influence in fashion Objective – Authority - institutional clothing & power</p> <p><u>Studio</u> Redesign authority uniform. Workflow: Analyze → redesign → present. Auxiliary: fashion and War https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvzpBRP9NP0</p>	<p>Required Reading: Craik, Jennifer. Uniforms Exposed. Berg, 2005, pp.1–15. recommended reading Roland Barthes, The Fashion System (pp. 3–20)</p>	<p>Assignment: analyze a military inspired garment, deconstruct it and design a garment that critiques power</p>	2,4,6

5. Course schedule

Course Syllabus

Week	Topics	Study material	Assignment	CLOs
14	<p><u>– lecture</u> Modest Fashion & Global Circulation Focus: global modest fashion industry Objective: politics of body</p> <p><u>Studio</u> Auxiliary Film the rise of modest fashion, Dolce & Gabbana abaya collection</p>	<p>Required Readings: Lewis, Reina. Modest Fashion. Tauris, 2013, pp. 1–15. Tarlo, Emma. Visibly Muslim. Berg, 2010, pp.1–15.</p>	<p>Assignment: Design modest fashion beyond stereotype.</p>	1,3,4,5
15	<p><u>lecture</u> Architecture of the Body: Structure & 3D Printing 3 D printed Couture – Designer Iris Van Herpen, work redefines clothing as structure rather than fabric Objective – Upcycle</p> <p><u>– Studio</u> Build prototype. Auxiliary: Mini documentary – iris van herpen: transforming fashion</p>	<p>Required Reading: Quinn, Bradley. Techno Fashion. Berg, 2002, pp. 87–101.</p>	<p>design a garment, fabric or patterns through structured design</p>	2,4,5,6
16	<p>final project presentation</p>		<p>Develop a conceptual garment based on identity, resistance, sustainability, or body politics. Include research dossier and prototype.</p>	1,2,3,4,5,6

5. Course schedule

Course Syllabus

D. COURSE MATERIAL

REQUIRED READINGS (Core Theoretical Framework)

These are the backbone of the course:

- Prown, Jules David. "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method." Winterthur Portfolio 17, no. 1 (1982): 1–19.
- Cline, Elizabeth L. *Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion*. New York: Penguin, 2012, Chapter 1.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, pp. 1–7; 56–70.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979, pp. 135–169.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, Preface + pp. 43–57.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979, pp. 1–28.
- Adamson, Glenn. *The Invention of Craft*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, pp. xiii–xxv.
- Polhemus, Ted. *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1994, pp. 1–15.
- Craik, Jennifer. *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression*. Oxford: Berg, 2005, pp. 1–15.
- Lewis, Reina. *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015, pp. 45–60.
- Lewis, Reina. *Modest Fashion: Styling Bodies, Mediating Faith*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2013, pp. 1–15.
- Tarlo, Emma. *Visibly Muslim: Fashion, Politics, Faith*. Oxford: Berg, 2010, pp. 1–15.
- Quinn, Bradley. *Techno Fashion*. Oxford: Berg, 2002, pp. 87–101.
- Fletcher, Kate. *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys*. London: Earthscan, 2008, pp. 1–15.
- Pullin, Graham. *Design Meets Disability*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009, pp. 15–29.

1. Textbook

RECOMMENDED READINGS (Conceptual + Fashion-Focused)

These support accessibility and design application:

- Woodward, Sophie. *Why Women Wear What They Wear*. Oxford: Berg, 2007, pp. 1–15.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *The Social Life of Things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 26–43.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital*, Vol. 1. London: Penguin, 1976, pp. 163–177.
- Steele, Valerie. *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History*. Oxford: Berg, 1998, pp. 1–15.
- Entwistle, Joanne. *The Fashioned Body*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000, pp. 1–25; 111–125.
- Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton*. New York: Knopf, 2014, pp. 29–63.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. "The Invention of Tradition." Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 1–14.
- Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge, 1979, pp. 1–19; 87–110.
- Barthes, Roland. *The Fashion System*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp. 3–20.
- Kanna, Ahmed. *Dubai: The City as Corporation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, pp. 79–110.

2. Reference material



Course Syllabus

3. Internet resources

AUDIOVISUAL / FILM / MEDIA LIST

These are essential for your students (very good choices already):

- The True Cost (Dir. Andrew Morgan, 2015)
- Dior and I (Dir. Frédéric Tcheng, 2014)
- Yves Saint Laurent (2014)
- "The History of the Corset" (YouTube)
- "The Fabric of Civilization" (YouTube)
- "Slow Fashion Explained" (YouTube)
- "Punk Revolution in Fashion" (Documentary clip)
- "Fashion and War" (YouTube)
- "Iris van Herpen: Transforming Fashion" (Documentary)
- "Closing the Loop: Sustainable Fashion"
- "Adaptive Fashion Explained"