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Fashion and gender: an ever-changing relationship

Prof. CECILIA CORNAGGIA

Area of study:	Fashion and Design
Area Code:	SO/CU340
Method of Instruction:	In-person

Description

Fashion has a crucial role in shaping gender identity within society, but its codes are constantly changing. Focusing on the last decades of European history, from the premodern era to today, this course aims to deepen the role of fashion in defining male and female identity within society.

Following a historical perspective, we will examine sociological and anthropological issues regarding:

1) fashion in pre-modern era (how fashion marked status differences more than gender differences; fashion in marginalized social groups); 2) fashion after the industrial revolution (the “useful man” and the “beautiful lady”); 3) fashion after the post-industrial revolution (fashion and free time; fashion and pop culture; fashion and subcultures); 4) today fashion: blurring the boundaries between masculine and feminine (cross-dressing and genderless fashion).

To address these topics, a body of sociological and anthropological literature will be proposed, from cultural to fashion studies. Specific attention will be devoted also to the relationship between fashion, gender and the media, understanding how fashion representations shape gender identity. Complementary to the theoretical part, the course will include the viewing and discussion of some film extracts. Finally, students will be asked to perform an analysis on fashion advertising, choosing between a digital ethnography on Instagram and an urban ethnography on out-of-home advertising in Milan. This practical experience offers the possibility to critically reflect on gender models in fashion today.

Learning goals

The learning goals of the course are:

- To understand how the relationship between fashion and gender has changed through history
- To introduce students to two different techniques of sociological investigation (ethnography and digital ethnography)
- To help students critically assess the meaning of fashion representations in a gendered perspective

Method of teaching

Seminar with film viewing and group activities.



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Course requirements

Students are expected to:

- Regularly attend class sessions;
- Be actively in the learning process: take part in classroom discussions;
- Deliver one group assignments and present it to the class;
- Pass a final Test.

Participation and Attendance Policy (a; b)

This course is expected to be highly interactive. Students are expected to proactively contribute to class discussion. As a consequence, students' participation will be assessed in terms of active and meaningful involvement in class discussions. Note that participation is not merely class attendance, although you must be in class in order to participate! I do take notice of participation in our class discussions. I also recognize that emergencies, illness etc. may cause you to miss the occasional class. If you are unable to attend, it is your responsibility to obtain any notes from your colleagues and communicate with your team members for group assignments outside of class.

Group Assignment (c)

In order foster cooperative learning and peer comparison, students will be responsible for participating in a group work. Each group will consist of 4-5 students; the final product will be a presentation or short video that each group will present at the end of the semester.

Final Test (d)

The final test consists of a written exam with six open questions. The six open questions of the written test will be of equal weight, evaluated with a score from 0 (in case of no answer) to 5 (in case of unexceptionable answer). The evaluation is made considering the number of responses, their relevance and completeness, the appropriate use of specific terminology, the clarity of the exposition, the reasoned and coherent structuring of the discourse, the ability to identify conceptual links and open questions.

Credits

6 ECTS

Grading

Students will be evaluated on their class participation, group assignment and in-class presentation, and final test. The final grade for the course will be calculated based on following distribution:

Attendance + class participation	20 % of final grade
Group assignment + class presentation	30 % of final grade
Final Test	50 % of final grade



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Course readings and materials

All readings, guided questions to aid readings and lecture slides will be available on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.unicatt.it>).

Instructor bio

Cecilia Cornaggia (born July 1992, Italy) is a PhD student in Sociology, Organizations, Cultures at the Catholic University of Milan, where she collaborates with the research centre ModaCult. Her main interests concern sustainable consumption in both fashion and food sector, and gender studies, which she deepens through the work of the SiD (Sociologhe in Dialogo) group. From 2021 she teaches Sociology of Fashion at Istituto Secoli, Milan.

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