ASNS & GWS 2076: FASHION & GENDER IN CHINA
(subject to minor change)

Spring 2016
Prof. Shu-chin Tsui
http://courses.bowdoin.edu/asian-studies-2076-spring-2016/

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines women’s fashion in China as a lens on social-cultural identity and gender politics. Readings and discussions span historical periods, geographical locations, social-cultural groups, and identity categories. From bound feet to the Mao suit, and from qipao to wedding gowns, fashion styles and consumer trends inform a critical understanding of the nation, gender, body, class, and transnational flows. Topics include the intersections between foot-binding and femininity, qipao and the modern woman, the Mao suit and the invisible body, beauty and sexuality, oriental chic and re-oriental spectacle. With visual materials as primary sources and using the insights of fashion theory, the course offers students an opportunity to develop visual literacy and enhance analytical skills.

COURSE GOALS

- To investigate the social-cultural history and visual articulation of fashion trends from the perspective of gender politics and visual rhetoric.
- To develop skills in analyzing visual sources such as paintings, photographs, advertisements, and video works.
- To be able to interpret the semiotics of dress and the meanings of dress.
- To make connections between fashion and gender politics as well as gender identity.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the social and cultural constructions of gender, sexualities, and nationality, and how these are expressed through fashion patterns.
- Understand recent scholarship on the semiotics of dress as a way of performing gender and identity.
- Use primary sources (visual and media) and secondary scholarship to engage in research, presentation, discussion, and rhetorical analysis.
- Apply a feminist perspective in the analysis of fashion and gender across different cultural contexts, time periods, and disciplines.

COURSE INFORMATION
Class: MW 1:00-2:25 CT-16-whiteside room
Office Hours: F 2:00-4:00 or by appointment
Contact info: stsui@bowdoin.edu X3594

BOOKS ON RESERVE


Positions 11-2 (fall 2003) http://positions.dukejournals.org/content/11/2.toc

TOPICS AND READINGS

1.25-1.27 INTRODUCTION: the course and the concepts: fashion politics & fashion studies

Tina Mai Chen and Paola Zamperini, “Guest Editors' Introduction” positions Fall 2003 11(2): 261- 269. introduction to WordPress & library resource/research

I. THE TRADITIONAL

2.1-2.10 Foot-binding & femininity


Listen to her conversation on foot-binding: https://vimeo.com/44912506


http://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/1641270

II. THE MODERN

2.15-2.24 Qipao & modern woman


III. THE SOCIALIST

2.29-3.9 Mao Suit & body invisible


3.11-3.27 SPRING BREAK

IV. THE COMMERCIAL

3.28-4.6 wedding gowns and beauty economy


V. THE GLOBAL

4.11-4.20 orientalizing the orient


**VI. THE CINEMATIC**

4.25-5.4  
*fashion in film*

Introduction: fashion shows / Adrienne Munich -- Fashioning film. Costume design, or, what is fashion in film?

Wang Kar-wai, *In the Mood for Love*


Hou Hsiao-hsien, *Flowers of Shanghai*


Bernardo Bertolucci, *The Last Emperor*

5.9-5.11  
*student presentations & fashion shows*

**COURSE ASSESSMENT**

*Attendance and participation: 15%*

- This is a discussion-oriented course, and your active participation and meaningful contribution are essential to your success: facilitating discussion as a leader and preparing for discussion questions. Your engagement with class activities and participation in discussions are so important that each student is expected to attend all class meetings. Should you have a medical emergency or other unavoidable issue, please let me know via email prior to class. More than two unexcused absences will result in a 1/3 reduction of your final grade (for instance, from B to B-). More than five absences will cause you to fail the course.

*Reading response: 15%*

- Critical reading is an integral part of the course and needs to be completed prior to each class. The reading response addresses several questions: describing the major assertion or thesis statement by the author, explaining how the author develops and supports the thesis, and
evaluating the extent to which the reading helps or fails to help our comprehension of the subject. You’ll be asked to upload the reading response to blackboard as instructed.

**Visual rhetorical/semiotic analysis & oral presentation via WordPress: 35%**

- Visual rhetoric: “a visual document communicates primarily through images or the interaction of image and text. The goal of visual rhetorical analysis is to demonstrate your understanding of how the visual document or image communicates its messages and meanings.” We’ll put rhetorical analysis into practice through oral presentations and web-posting via WordPress. For detailed information on the posting assignment and class presentation, please see the weekly handout.

**Final research/semiotic analysis paper: 35%**

- The final course evaluation, built upon daily exercise, will be a research and rhetorical/semiotic analysis paper of 8 to 10 pages, double-spaced. Again, for detailed information, please see the attachment.

**A note on deadlines**

- To be faire to all the students enrolled in class, late papers, reading assignments, or other assigned work will not be accepted unless you have a medical emergency or unexpected crisis.

**Course blackboard:**

- The blackboard for this course is a center for important information: syllabus, lecture handouts, writing assignments, study guide questions, and storage room for all your work. Please check it frequently and carefully.

**Academic honesty:**

- We live in an electronic age and sources for this course can come largely from online. I must state clearly that anyone who conducts intentional plagiarism will automatically fail the course. “Plagiarism is the use of the words and/or ideas of another as if they were one's own and without acknowledgement of their source.” For college policy on plagiarism, please go to the link: [http://academic.bowdoin.edu/academics/plagiarism](http://academic.bowdoin.edu/academics/plagiarism).