

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

Sean Metzger, *Chinese looks* [electronic resource]: fashion, performance, race. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014.
[<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/bowdoin/detail.action?docID=10947170>]

Antonia Finnane, *Changing clothes in China : fashion, history, nation*. New York : Columbia University Press, 2008 [GT1555 .F56 2008]

Sandra Niessen, Ann Marie Leshkovich, Carla Jone, eds. *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*. Oxford University Press, 2004 [GT1370.R46 2003]

China through the Looking Glass. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015 [TT504.6.E85 C45 2015]

Wu Juanjuan, *Chinese Fashion: From Mao to Now*. Oxford; New York: Berg, 2009 [GT155.W79 2009]

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*

Dorothy Ko. "The Body as Attire: the Shifting Meaning of Foot binding in Seventeenth-Century China" *Journal of Women's History* 8-4 (Winter 1997): 8-27.
Listen to her conversation on foot-binding: <https://vimeo.com/44912506>

C. Fred Blake, "Foot-Binding in Neo-Confucian China and the Appropriation of Female Labor *Signs* 19-3 (Spring, 1994): 676-712.

Video stream: *Chinese Foot Binding: the Vanishing Lotus* by Tang Yuen Mei, Joani & Fung Wing Chuen Tely, New York, NY: Filmmakers Library, 2004.
<http://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/1641270>

II. THE MODERN

2.15-2.24 *Qipao & modern woman*

Helena Heroldov, "Allure of the body: Chinese Qipao" *Annals of the N. Prstek Museum* 35-1 (2014): 23–38.

Francesca Dal Lago. "Crossed Legs in 1930s Shanghai: How 'Modern' the Modern Woman?" *East Asian History* 19 (June 2000): 103-44.

Hazel Clark. "The CheunSam: Issues of Fashion and Cultural Identity." In Valerie Steele and John S. Major. *China Chic: East Meets West* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999): 155-65.

Matthew Chew. "The Contemporary Re-emergence of the Qipao: Political Nationalism, Cultural Production and Popular Consumption of a Traditional Chinese Dress" *The China Quarterly* 189 (March 2007): 144-61.

III. THE SOCIALIST

2.29-3.9 *Mao Suit & body invisible*

Tina Mai Chen. "Proletarian White and Working Bodies in Mao's China." *positions* 11, 2 (Fall 2003): 361-93.

----- "Dressing for the Party: Clothing, Citizenship, and Gender Formation in Mao's China." *Fashion Theory* 5, 2 (June 2001): 143-172.

Hung-Yok Ip. "Fashioning Appearances: Feminine Beauty in Chinese Communist Revolutionary Culture." *Modern China* 29, 3 (July 2003): 329-61.

Mao's New Suit. Documentary film by Sally Ingleton. Singing Nomad Productions, 1997.

3.11-3.27 SPRING BREAK

IV. THE COMMERCIAL

3.28-4.6 *wedding gowns and beauty economy*

Gary Xu and Meinu Jingji, "China's beauty economy: buying looks, shifting value, and changing place," [Feminist Economics](#) 13(3-4): 307-323.

Nicole Constable, "Nostalgia, Memory, and Modernity: Bridal Portraits in Contemporary Beijing," *Visual Anthropology* 19, 2006: 39-55.

Barbara Mittler, "Gendered Advertising in China: What History Do Images Tell?" *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2007): 13-41

V. THE GLOBAL

4.11-4.20 *orientalizing the orient*

S. Niessen, A. M. Leshkovich, and C. Jones, eds., *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*. Oxford: Berg, 2003.

China Through the Looking Glass: <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2015/china-through-the-looking-glass>

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*

Giuliana Bruno, "Surface, Fabric, Weave: The Fashioned World of Wang Kaiwai," in *Fashion in Film*, edited by Adrienne Munich (Indiana University Press, 2011): 83-105.

Hou Hsiao-hsien, *Flowers of Shanghai*

Gary Gang Xu, "Flowers of Shanghai: Visualizing Ellipses and (Colonial) Absence," *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, ed. Chris Berry, British Film Institute, London, p. 109.

Nicholas Kaldis, "Compulsory Orientalism: Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Flowers of Shanghai*," *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After*, ed. Chris Berry and Feii Lu, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2005, p. 130. [PN1993.5.T28 I85 2005](#)

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>.

