

BUF 4700-OL70: Contemporary Issues in Fashion

Beauty Culture, Commerce & Innovation

3 credit hours

Spring Semester 2025

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs and by appt.

Asynchronous Course (no class meetings)

GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION: BUF 4700-OL70 is a senior-level seminar course. Students investigate a specialized topic or topics related to the fashion industry. Research, discussion, and weekly readings will culminate in a final paper and presentation. Themes vary each semester. This course is designed to provide an exploration of contemporary issues that designers, merchandisers, product developers, and consumers confront as they create, wear, and discard fashion. The course emphasizes, but is not limited to, topics such as sustainability, globalization, and ethics. The objective of the course is to develop a dialogue on practices in fashion with a sense of sustainability, ethics, and socially responsible manufacturing practices.

Prerequisite: SBS 3201; Pre- or co-requisite: One BUF 4000 level course

SPECIFIC COURSE OVERVIEW (Beauty Culture, Commerce & Innovation):

Beauty Culture, Commerce & Innovation is designed to provide students with a foundation for critical analysis of marketing and management issues in the beauty industry. This discipline of critical thinking will be achieved through surveying the development of the modern beauty industry and the corresponding social, economic, and cultural factors that have influenced, and been influenced by its evolution. Through readings, films, and guest lectures, it is intended that students will understand the broader context of the beauty industry's development, and gain a keener insight into how key beauty innovators have contributed to the marketing paradigms in place today. It is expected that with this foundation, students will be able to critically assess the broader landscape of requirements for innovation and evolution of the beauty industry as future industry professionals.

SPECIFIC COURSE DESCRIPTION (Beauty Culture, Commerce & Innovation):

Beauty Culture, Commerce & Innovation will present anthropological, cultural, and socio-economic perspectives of the development of the beauty industry from ancient times through the present day, with emphasis on the 20th century. Particular attention will be given to evolution of beauty culture, the adaptation of beauty products and ornamentation through different cultures, product and market innovations that changed beauty habits and rituals, and the contributions of other design arts to the packaging, merchandising, and product development of the beauty industry. Individual companies that shaped the modern industry and innovators in the beauty and fragrance industry will also be profiled.

SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES (Beauty Culture, Commerce & Innovation):

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical thinking about anthropological, socio-economic, and cultural factors shaping beauty attitudes throughout modern history and how this has influenced the development of different beauty product categories;
- Develop a critical understanding of the way in which key beauty innovators have successfully used socio-economic events and cultural trends as a source of brand strategy, innovation, and business growth;
- Develop a critical context of industry development that will enable a systematic search for new market, distribution, and product opportunities based on social, economic and cultural climates/trends;
- Understand and employ a more contextual approach to innovation and methods of development of product and marketing opportunities.

GENERAL LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Identify and explain current trends, and developments within the specialized topic (class discussion, assignments, research paper, presentation)
2. Communicate comprehensively about the specialized fashion topic (class discussion, research paper, presentation)
3. Recognize how this particular topic impacts the fashion business (class discussion, assignments, research paper, presentation)
4. Predict future possible directions of the topic area based on acquire knowledge (class discussion, research paper, presentation)
5. Write a major research paper on a selected topic (research paper)
6. Gain experience in a graduate-level style seminar course (class discussion, course assignments)

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Demonstrate intellectual honesty and personal responsibility (class discussions, class demeanor, research paper, presentations)
2. Gather, interpret, evaluate and apply information discerningly from a variety of sources (research paper, presentation)
3. Demonstrate expanded cultural and global awareness and sensitivity (class discussions, research paper, presentation)

STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

CUNY's Academic Integrity Policy: *Academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York.* Penalties for academic dishonesty include academic sanctions, such as failing or otherwise reduced grades, and/or disciplinary sanctions, including suspension, or expulsion. **Cheating** is the unauthorized use or attempted use of material, information, notes, study aids, devices or communication during an academic exercise. **Plagiarism** is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research or writings as your own. The following are some examples of plagiarism, but by no means is it an exhaustive list: **Internet Plagiarism** includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the Internet without citing the source, and "cutting and pasting" from various sources without proper attribution.

For a more detailed explanation, you can find the full **Academic Integrity Policy** here:
http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/aboutus/docs/policies/CUNY_ACADEMIC_INTEGRITY_6-2011.pdf

DISCUSSION FORUM GUIDELINES:

- Participation grade depends on the quality of a student’s Discussion Forum participation and posts.
- Debate, opinions, and participation are welcomed and encouraged! Respect for other classmates is essential.
- Make sure to follow the Discussion Forum prompt assignment (word count and responding to classmates’ posts)

REQUIRED TEXT:

Horvath, Delphine and Lindsay Karchin. (2023) *Cosmetics Marketing: Strategy and Innovation in the Beauty Industry*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

Excerpts provided via Bright Space Course Site:

Khanna, Nikki. (2020). *Whiter: Asian American Women on Skin Color and Colorism*. New York: New York University Press.

Sutton, Denise. (2012, 2009). *Globalizing Ideal Beauty: Women, Advertising, and the Power of Marketing*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Sutton, Denise. (forthcoming 2025) “Fashion Fair Cosmetics: The Legacy and Relaunch,” *Fashion & Beauty: Case Studies in Innovation*. London: Lexington Books/Bloomsbury.

Jones, Geoffrey. (2010). *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Etcoff, Nancy. (2000). *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty*. New York: Knopf.

Kendall, Mikki. (2020). *Hood Feminism: Notes From the Women the Movement Forgot*. New York: Viking. (“Pretty for a …”)

Koehn, Nancy F., Anne Dwojeski, William Grundy, Erica Helms, and Katherine Miller. (March 2007). “Madam C.J. Walker: Entrepreneur, Leader, and Philanthropist.” Harvard Business School Case 807-145, (Revised April 2011)

Haiken, Elizabeth. (1997). *Venus Envy: History of Cosmetic Surgery*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Lee, Heijin, Christina Moon, Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, eds. (2019). *Fashion and Beauty in the Time of Asia*. New York: New York University Press.

Scranton, Philip, ed. (2000). *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender and Culture in Modern America*. New York: Routledge. (Estee Lauder chapter)

Tedlow, Richard. (2003). *Giants of Enterprise: Seven Business Innovators and the Empires They Built*. New York: Harper Business. (Charles Revson chapter)

Weems Jr., Robert. (2016). "A Man in a Woman's World: Anthony Overton's Rise to Prominence in the African American Personal Care Products Industry," *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 101, No. 4, pp. 407-435.

Yacob, Shakira, et al. (2018). "Local Branding Strategies in Southeast Asian Islamic Cultures," *JATI – Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol 23 (1), 101-131. *Halal beauty products

ASSESSMENT (ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING):

15% Class Participation (Discussion Forum assignments)
15% Product Review
15% Critical Argument Paper #1
15% Critical Argument Paper #2
40% Case Research Analysis Paper

CLASS PARTICIPATION GRADING

Class Participation will be graded on:

- Demonstrated reading of assigned material on the Discussion Forum, and in writing assignments
- Respect for other students' viewpoints
- Sharing of contemporary outside material germane to learnings
- Engagement/writing assignments in the Bright Space Discussion Forum
- **Video is required for any online meetings**

Final Research Paper Options:

1. A RESEARCH PAPER on a **beauty topic of your own choosing**

Papers are to be submitted via Bright Space assignment link, each student will also present a four-minute presentation of their research to the class with slides. Research papers should be in APA style, and 10 pages in length (excluding images and bibliography). **Due May 22nd.**

2. CASE RESEARCH ANALYSIS: INCLUSIVITY IN **BEAUTY**

Beauty history is incomplete. Much of what has been written about beauty culture and the beauty industry to date has been *exclusive*, prioritizing Eurocentric and American developments and perspectives.

The goal of this case research analysis is to expand the canon of beauty history and scholarship to include groups, cultures, or customer segments who, from your point of view, have been underrepresented, undervalued, or not fully understood by the beauty industry. Areas can include, but are not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, geographic region, religion, and sexual orientation.

Your paper should identify and analyze a company or entrepreneur that, through innovation or initiative, has broadened inclusivity of the beauty industry, either intentionally or not. Examples of case studies include the role of MAC Cosmetics and the transgender community, Chanel's Boy de Chanel makeup line, the growth of Halal beauty, or Venus Williams' Eleven launch. I encourage you to be broad in your subject consideration, given the need for more global examples in the beauty history canon.

Papers are to be submitted on or before **May 22nd** via Bright Space assignment link; each student will also present a four-minute video presentation of their research with slides. Creativity in selection is

encouraged, however, please ensure there is enough material to support your research. Research can include primary and secondary source material, including digital archives, launch materials, interviews, and reviews. Papers should be 10 pages maximum, excluding bibliography.

Template for your case research analysis:

1. What was the strategic need, problem, or opportunity the company was trying to address?
2. What is the background of the company or entrepreneur, and why would they have been (or not) uniquely positioned to address the gap?
3. What was the proposed objective and innovation or communication?
4. What was the socio-economic or cultural context that supported this innovation or initiative in its success?
5. What has been the impact for key consumer groups, the company, and the industry as a whole? Were there alternative solutions that the company did not embrace, which could have been recommended?
6. How does this case analysis relate to discussions of modernity and how beauty dictates or evolves with modernity?

CRITICAL ARGUMENT PAPERS (2)

These papers are approximately three pages (double-spaced), presenting your opinion on an assigned question and demonstrating an understanding of the classroom material, and utilizing outside research to help support your opinion. A copy of the paper – in APA style - should be submitted (via Brightspace assignment link) on the night it is due. A detailed question/prompt will be provided for each paper.

Papers will be graded on:

- Clear, thoughtful analysis of topic
- Demonstration of independent thought
- Utilization of relevant course and outside source material
- Grammar, style, and spelling

All papers MUST be typed. A page is the equivalent of a 2.0/double-spaced 8.5 x 11-inch paper with one-inch margins using 12-point type in Times New Roman font. Follow the page length guidelines for each assignment and number each page. All work **MUST** contain the student's name, the course name and number, the date the assignment is submitted, and the name of the assignment. Please plan accordingly for all your assignment due dates. Effective writing helps clarify ideas and communicate those ideas to others. Be organized, clear, and succinct. Grammar, punctuation, style, and spelling count. **Make use of City Tech's Writing Center for assistance.**

PRODUCT REVIEW

The product review assignment is designed to demonstrate your analytical and writing skills as well as your understanding of the reading material assigned during the semester. The paper should be approximately three pages. Students will choose one beauty product and will review three general areas: 1) product efficacy (What claims does the product make? Does it follow through on these claims – via use of the product and/or consumer reviews?), 2) ingredients (look up scientific names, translate, and define purpose), and 3) marketing campaign (who is the target market/consumer? What is the marketing strategy, message, images, and language used?).

Students will **use APA style for citation**. This assignment must be typed and posted online via the Bright Space assignment link and on the Discussion Forum.

For all writing assignments: Please refer to the **grading rubric** on the last page of the syllabus for more detail.

Syllabus subject to change! Always check BB for latest version.

Bright Space DISCUSSION FORUM

Students' engagement in discussion forums on Bright Space will be part of their participation grade. The forums will center around course material. Students will read the assigned writing and then engage in a discussion on the forum. Prompts will be provided by Dr. Sutton.

Grading System: All grades will be based in proportion to the following scale:

A	=	93-100
A-	=	90-92.9
B+	=	87-89.9
B	=	83-86.9
B-	=	80-82.9
C+	=	77-79.9
C	=	70-76.9
D	=	60-69.9
F	=	59.9 and below

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One: Jan 27

Session Topic: Welcome/Introductions and review of syllabus

Discussion Topic: “What is Beauty?” Discussion Board Writing Assignment

Week Two: Feb 3

Origins of Beauty Culture: Ancient Civilizations Through to the Industrial Age (mid-1800s)

Discussion Topic: The concept of beauty and beauty culture; its relation to disciplines such as biology, sociology, economics, politics, and gender throughout history.

Read: *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty*, Nancy Etcoff (excerpt on course BS site)

Assignment due: Discussion Forum Assignment #2 on Etcoff, prompt provided by Dr. Sutton in the forum.

Week Three: Feb 10

Discussion Topic: The concept of beauty and beauty culture; its history and relation to disciplines such as biology, sociology, economics, politics, and gender throughout history.

Read: Intro, CH 1, *Cosmetics Marketing*; Intro, CH 1, *Beauty Imagined* (on BS)

Week Four: Feb 17

Discussion Topic: The concept of beauty and beauty culture; its history and relation to disciplines such as biology, sociology, economics, politics, and gender throughout history.

Read: Introduction, *Whiter: Asian American Women on Skin Color and Colorism* (on BS)

Assignment Due: Discussion Forum Assignment #3 (*Whiter* and *Beauty Imagined*)

Week Five: Feb 24

Session Topic: Beauty as Modernity: Belle Époque 1880s-WWI

Discussion Topic: Modernity and the Industrial Revolution's influence on the beauty industry, early beauty innovators—Elizabeth Arden, Helena Rubinstein, and Madam CJ Walker.

Read: Harvard Business School Case Study on Madame CJ Walker, and Robert Weems' Anthony Overton article (both on BS)

Assignment due: Discussion Forum Assignment #4 (Walker and Overton)

Week Six: March 3

Continue Session Topic: Continued - Beauty as Modernity: Belle Époque 1880s-WWI

View the film: *The Powder and the Glory*.

Available on Apple TV (and other places): <https://tv.apple.com/us/movie/the-powder-and-the-glory/umc.cmc.3q84v3s8enq9zh6x7usho2pn6>

Read: *Cosmetics Marketing*, CH 2

Assignment Due: *Critical Argument Paper #1*

Week Seven: March 10

Session Topic: Massification of Beauty: 1920s-30s

Discussion Topic: The birth of advertising and the expansion of the beauty industry; the influence of the “new woman” on popular culture; emerging medical disciplines' effect on beauty business and innovation.

Read: Chapter on Ponds from *Globalizing Ideal Beauty*; (on BS); *Cosmetics Marketing*, CH 3

Week Eight: March 17

Session Topic: Continued - Massification of Beauty: 1920s-30s

Read: CH 3/*Venus Envy*, “Consumer Culture and the Inferiority Complex.” (on BS)

Assignment Due: Discussion Forum Assignment #5 (*Venus Envy*)

Week Nine: March 24

Session Topic: The Beauty Boom: WWII – 1950s

Discussion Topic: The influence of politics on beauty culture and industry; the emergence of next generation entrepreneurs; the impact of television on the beauty business.

Read: *Beauty and Business*, “Estee Lauder: Self-Definition and the Modern Cosmetics Market”; *Giants of Enterprise*, “Charles Revson” (on BS)

Assignment Due: *Critical Argument Paper #2*

Week Ten: March 31

Session Topic: Beauty Consolidates and Redefines 1960s -1970s

Discussion Topic: The influence of youth culture and activism on beauty culture and industry; the creation of beauty subcultures and segmentation within the beauty industry.

Read: CH 4 *Cosmetics Marketing*; “Black is Profitable: The Commodification of the Afro, 1960-1975” (on BS)

Week Eleven: April 7

Session Topic: Beauty Consolidates and Redefines 1960s -1970s

Discussion Topic: The influence of youth culture and activism on beauty culture and industry; the creation of beauty subcultures and segmentation within the beauty industry.

Read: “Pretty for a ...” article from *Hood Feminism* (on BS); Film: *The Beauty of Blackness* (2022) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt18363426/>

Assignment Due: Discussion Forum Writing Assignment #6 (*Black is Profitable* and *Hood Feminism*)

April 14 – Spring Break (enjoy!)

Week Twelve: April 21

Session Topic: Beauty and Sustainability

Discussion Topic: The influence of activism on beauty culture and industry; government regulations, product ingredients, and product development.

View the film *Toxic Beauty*: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9541486/>

Assignment Due: Discussion Forum Writing Assignment #7 (*Toxic Beauty*)

Week Thirteen: April 28

Session Topic: Shifting Geographies of Fashion and Beauty

Read: *Cosmetics Marketing*, CH 5 and 6; Shakila Yacob, “Local Branding Strategies in Southeast Asian Islamic Cultures”; Heijin Lee’s article from *Fashion and Beauty in the Time of Asia*.

Assignment Due: Product Review Assignment due

Week Fourteen: May 5

Individual and/or group writing sessions with Dr. Sutton

Week Fifteen: May 12

Individual and/or group writing sessions with Dr. Sutton

Week Sixteen: May 19

Assignment Due: Final research paper due

**BUF 4700: Beauty Culture, Commerce & Innovation
(Contemporary Issues in Fashion)
ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC**

Category	Exceeds Expectations 93-100 A	Meets Expectations 90-92.9 A- / 87-89.9 B+	Approaches Expectations 83-86.9 B	Does Not Meet Expectations 82 or below B- or below
THOUGHTFUL ARGUMENT ANALYSIS AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT	Demonstrates an exceptional, in-depth level of comprehension of the subject matter, including business and cultural aspects as it pertains to the assignment. Expertly identifies and explores key issues and viewpoints, with evidence of original and unexpected research and thought process. Exceptionally well-prepared analysis and judgment. Exceptional command of language, spelling, and grammar, with captivating, organized style.	Exhibits a strong understanding of the subject matter, including business and cultural aspects as it pertains to the assignment. Identifies and explores key issues and viewpoints, with evidence of solid research. Prepares an above-average paper that shows a thoughtful analysis. Strong aptitude for writing and language, with graduate-level writing and few spelling errors.	Shows a moderate level of understanding of the subject matter, but limited incorporation of multi-faceted elements of the question. Identifies and explores top-line issues and viewpoints, with mostly class-based evidence and a thought process lacking in full exploration. Repeats source texts with little analysis and engagement. Overly wordy or simplified, without attempts to edit or correct spelling prior to submission.	Fails to show an understanding of the question and subject matter. Issues and viewpoints are off-point. Analyses are superficial. Thought process and evidence are weak. Repeats source texts without analysis. Sub-par standard of writing, with excessive spelling and grammatical errors. Incomplete sentences and other mistakes that indicate paper was rushed and not edited prior to submission.

<p>UTILIZATION OF RELEVANT COURSE CONTENT AND OUTSIDE SOURCE MATERIAL</p>	<p>Incorporates extensive course content and outside research to produce a highly original and creative paper.</p>	<p>Uses both course content and some outside research but does not integrate closely to push argument further in originality.</p>	<p>Provides minimal research, primarily from classroom readings, with sources irrelevant to paper. Reliance on superficial materials, with thoughts less grounded in fact and scratching the surface of the subject matter.</p>	<p>Rudimentary research, with limited to no sourcing from classroom or outside materials. Guesswork and platitudes dominate paper.</p>
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