

## T-Shirt Essay

**By: Dominique Whelan**

In my Gender, Dress, and Society class, we explored the deep connection between gender, dress, and society. As a senior student majoring in the business and technology of fashion, this course gave me valuable insights beyond just clothing styles. I learned that fashion isn't just about what we wear; it reflects our culture, norms, and identities. Throughout history, clothing has been used for self-expression, social status, and even rebellion. This understanding helped me see how fashion shapes our perceptions and interactions.

Gender was a major topic. We discussed how clothing has been traditionally associated with gender and how this has changed over time. From the strict gender rules of the past to today's more fluid fashion, I gained insight into how societal expectations influence our clothing choices. I also learned to analyze how fashion can reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes critically. We looked at cultural trends to see how clothing affects traditional gender roles.

We also discussed the intersectionality of fashion and identity. Factors like race, class, sexuality, and nationality all affect how we relate to clothing. This made me appreciate the diversity in fashion and the importance of inclusivity in the industry. Understanding the economic side of fashion was another key lesson. We examined the gender wage gap, the lack of women in leadership roles, and the exploitation of female workers. This highlighted the need for change in the industry to achieve gender equality. In summary, this class gave me a deeper understanding of fashion's impact on society. It equipped me with critical thinking skills essential for my future career, whether in design, marketing, or management. I now grasp the social and cultural implications of the work I'll be doing.

As I navigate through gender, dress, and society, I've realized that my clothing choices go beyond mere style. They're also about expressing myself and responding to societal expectations. During my upbringing, various influences shaped how I see gender and clothing. Family, friends, media, and cultural norms all formed my identity and fashion sense. As I've grown, I've become more aware of how my clothing reflects my gender identity. Whether I stick to traditional norms or challenge them, each outfit says something about who I am and how I want others to see me. Living in society, I understand the stereotypes and expectations linked to my gender and how they affect what I wear. While I might conform to some of these expectations, I also try to express myself authentically and challenge stereotypes whenever I can. In the end, I see myself as someone who uses clothing to express myself while navigating the complex interplay of gender, identity, and societal norms. My style is a reflection of who I am, influenced by many factors, and evolving as I continue to learn and grow.

The T-shirt that I created is a simple reflection of various important parts of my life. First, my favorite *color* is blue, representing coolness and calmness. I try my best to ease through life while striving to encompass a very relaxed state most of the time. The *shape and structure* of this cotton T-shirt are boxy and loose-fitting. I hand-dyed this T-shirt using a Kumo Shibori method including *wrapping* tight yarn loops scattered throughout the shirt to create a tie-dye effect. I then ordered iron-on patches that speak about my likes and meaningful moments in my life. The first patch I chose were different *colored* roses, pink and red. I've always loved floral designs ever since I was a kid, along with a deep love for actual flowers in my home. The next three patches I chose all had to do with lips and lipstick, bounding my love for beauty and makeup. The *texture* of these patches had sequin glitter throughout. When I was 18, I went to classes to be certified in Levels 1 & 2 of Beauty and Fashion in makeup artistry. I've had a connection to it my entire life and continue doing it as a side job. The next patch I chose was an evil-eye symbol, showing my love for the Mediterranean and Greece. The *color* of this patch was a rich blue, encompassing the Mediterranean vibe. I traveled to Greece back in 2019 and fell in love with the atmosphere and people. The evil-eye symbol is projected throughout Greece in jewelry, accessories, and antiques. The next patch, my center patch, sums up my entire personality, bold, outgoing, and strong. I chose the symbol of "Pow!" because it reminds me of Wonder Woman, a strong, resilient fictional character who is a role model in a sense to all women. The *volume* of this patch stands out from the rest because of the confidence that it exudes. The next patch I chose is a pair of *pink* heels, I love all shoes, but specifically heels. Given that I'm already tall, I was always uncomfortable being even taller in heels, but I've grown to love the feeling of being comfortable with my height, with and without heels. The patch is colored *hot pink* and represents my love for all things women-related. The final patch I chose was a perfume bottle with Paris on it. My grandmother always had a deep love for Paris and always wanted to visit it to experience their culture and food but unfortunately never had the chance to. I thankfully had the opportunity to fulfill her dream and visit Paris back in 2015. This memory will always stay with me and Paris will always hold a special place in my heart. I *suspended* pearl decor in the *shape* of a heart, showing my heart is large and full of empathy. Lastly, to point out another theme, I love *textured* glitter and sparkles in any fashion sense, which is why they are scattered throughout my piece. I signed my name at the bottom "Dom" to show my nickname and signature. I wanted to create my shirt to depict a sense of who I am in fashion, and what means the most to me in my heart.



