

**New York City College of Technology  
Interdisciplinary Committee  
Course Review Form**

**DATE:** October 12, 2020

**REVIEWER:** Denise H. Sutton

**COURSE TITLE & NUMBER:** History of U.S. Fashion Law, 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present: The Ugly Side of Fashion

**PROPOSED BY:** Professor Alyssa Dana Adomaitis and Professor Kerin E. Coughlin

**CREDIT HOURS:** 3

**PREREQUISITES:** ENG 1101, and either HIS 1111 or GOV 1101

**COURSE IS:** ☐ Existing ☒ New ☐ In development

**PROPOSED COURSE DESIGNATION:** ☐ College Option ☐ elective ☐ Capstone ☐ other:

**DEPARTMENT HOUSED IN:** Social Science

**PROPOSED STRUCTURE (e.g., co-taught, guest lecture, LC, other):** Co-taught

**CREDIT DISTRIBUTION (if co-taught):** 1.5 hours each/shared

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** This legal history course traces the development of U.S. fashion law from the twentieth century through the present, in three areas in which complex questions frequently have arisen: intellectual property (including trademarks and counterfeiting, or "knockoffs") This legal history course traces the development of U.S. fashion law from the twentieth century through the present, in three areas in which complex questions frequently have arisen: intellectual property (including trademarks and counterfeiting, or "knockoffs").

**DESCRIBE & EVALUATE HOW COURSE MEETS INTERDISCIPLINARY CRITERIA?**

In general, the course meets interdisciplinary criteria; however, I would like to see a more detailed focus on the cultural/social aspects of the course (see CROWN Act example in "Weaknesses" section). This should also be elaborated upon in the learning outcomes as well.

**DESCRIBE & EVALUATE THE INTERDISCIPLINARY STRUCTURE?**

This course will be co-taught by Professor Alyssa Dana Adomaitis (Fashion/Business) and Professor Kerin E. Coughlin (Law) and situated in the Social Science Department (History). The argument for interdisciplinarity is solid, and this course is clearly different from a standard Business Law course in that it focuses on fashion not only as a business but also as a "creative industry"—both from a legal and cultural/social standpoint. Professor Adomaitis has a background in social psychology of dress and behavior, which supports a critical aspect of this proposal: Fashion is not only a business but it also is a medium through which people communicate individuality, creativity, cultural heritage, ethnic and racial heritage, gender, sexuality, and religion. This course highlights the importance of understanding the historical evolution of laws pertaining to these cultural/social issues as well as issues of business such as

trademark and “knock-offs” or fake brands. The cultural/social aspect needs more detail (see CROWN Act example in “weaknesses” section).

## **DOES COURSE MEET REQUIREMENTS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION? Yes.**

**STRENGTHS:** Fashion, which includes the beauty industry, is a global multi-billion dollar a year business that has a major economic *and* cultural impact. The industry has evolved over time, and the course traces these events. This connection between business, law, and culture is made in the proposal, and the historical perspective is incredibly important. This course has the potential to be an exciting way for students to study history and law through a fashion lens that includes the consideration of cultural/social factors. Wonderful use of Robson’s *Dressing Constitutionally: Hierarchy, Sexuality, and Democracy from our Hairstyles to Our Shoes*, and Ramachandran’s article seems to address the cultural aspect as well.

**WEAKNESSES:** The three central areas of this course proposal are: intellectual property, employment, and constitutional rights, which seems to narrow the interdisciplinary focus narrows a bit. Is there a way to include the cultural/social aspect of fashion here as a central area? (or expand upon one of the central areas by including this) Perhaps include a greater emphasis on the “creative industry” aspect of the business of fashion. The fact that people communicate individuality, creativity, cultural heritage, ethnic and racial heritage, gender, sexuality, and religion through fashion, isn’t reflected in the *three central areas* of the course.

One important piece of legislation that illustrates the point above is the **CROWN Act** (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) that just recently passed the House of Representative and is now in the Senate. The Act aims to end hair discrimination and is an important step to combat racial discrimination. Unilever’s Dove brand is a founding member of the CROWN coalition: great opportunity to connect business with law and efforts to eradicate racial discrimination around issues of hair for Black women, men, and children. There are examples in the proposal that support the law/history aspect—I would like to see some examples from fashion.

Lastly, this course will be difficult to scale up (i.e., offer more sections) and staff because one of the proposers has a very specific background (i.e., in both Law and History) that makes it possible for this course to be offered now. As this course is housed in the Social Sciences department, the Chair of this department must make sure that someone with an advance degree in History is always one of the instructors of this course (e.g., in the event that Professor Coughlin cannot teach it or cannot teach additional sections). So, in this case, there may be a need for three instructors like the ARTH ID course.