NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS

**BUF 4700 CONTEMPORARY TOPICS IN FASHION**

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

**Credits: 3**

**INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Jessica Roncero Appelstein, M.P.S.**

**Office Hours: by appointment**

**Office Phone: 973-590-4701**

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**TEXTBOOK:**

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| **The Creative Research: The Theory and Practice of Research for Creative Industries: 2nd Edition, Hilary Collins (Bloomsbury Publishing)**  **IBSN: 9781474247085** |

**Meeting Date/ Time: Mondays, 6-8:30PM**

**Room: Namm N-505A**

COURSE DESCRIPTION: 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.

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

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| **Outcome** | **Assessment** |
| Identify and explain current trends, and developments within the specialized topic | In class discussions, assignments, term paper & presentation |
| Communicate comprehensively about the specialized fashion topic. | Class discussion, term paper & oral presentation |
| Recognize how this particular topic impacts the fashion business. | Class discussion, assignments, midterm examination, term paper & presentations |
| Predict future possible directions of the topic area based on acquired knowledge. | Class discussion, term paper & oral presentation |
| Write a major research paper on a selected topic | Term paper |
| Gain experience in a seminar, graduate level style course | Class discussions & course assignments |

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES

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| **Outcome** | **Assessment** |
| Demonstrate intellectual honesty and personal responsibility | Class discussions, class demeanor, term paper & oral presentations |
| Gather, interpret, evaluate, and apply information discerningly from a variety of sources | Term paper & oral presentation |
| Demonstrate expanded cultural and global awareness and sensitivity | Class discussion, term paper & oral presentation |

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK:

*The Creative Research: The Theory and Practice of Research for Creative Industries: 2nd Edition, Hilary Collins (Bloomsbury Publishing)*

*IBSN: 9781474247085*

Selected texts will be put on reserve in the library or made available electronically for student use during the course. Students will also engage in primary research from a variety of sources. Other readings will be selected by the Fashion faculty based on the course topic.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING: This course is a senior level seminar course, with topics determined by the professor prior to the scheduling of each section. However, all courses will include both written and oral components, and class participation (either in class or with online discussion boards or other social media) is essential. The professor for each section of this course will determine the weighting of the individual assignments. However, they must ensure that all Student Learning Outcomes are met.

GRADING:

Participation 20%

Research and Development of assignments 30%

Written Final Paper 30%

Final Presentation 20%

Total Percentage 100%

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

PARTICIPATION: Your success in this class depends on your willingness to put effort into your work. You are expected to participate in all large and small group activities, exercises and discussions. Participation will help you understand the subject matter and will be considered when determining your final grade. Participation is 20% of your final grade. Coming to class is NOT participation.

Participation involves:

• Active Learning. Taking notes, asking questions and taking responsibility for your own learning.

• Working with others in group activities: A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Don’t drag your team down by refusing to get involved.

• Attending class regularly. If you aren’t here, you can’t learn.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Accordingly, this class will adhere to the following “Digital Device Policy” prohibiting the use of such devices during all in class meetings:

• Many people in our society have not yet learned professional, considerate, behavior regarding electronic devices.

• Turn off all cellular telephones, beepers, wrist watch alarms, etc. before you enter class.

• If your electronic device audibly activates during class, you will be deducted 5 points from your final grade.

• If you are expecting a life and death announcement from an immediate family member— brother/sister/parent/spouse/child — please notify me before class of that situation.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

All papers MUST be typed. A page is the equivalent of a 2.0 line-spaced 8.5 x 11-inch paper with one-inch margins using 12- point type in black ink in Times New Roman font. Follow the page length guidelines for each assignment and number each page. All work MUST contain the student name(s), 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. Write in college-level American English that is appropriate to the business community.

Papers will be graded on the following criteria:

• Clear and thorough application of direct and database marketing concepts and principles (including material covered in the assigned reading, lectures, and discussions).

• Demonstration of original, logical, strategic thinking including a complete analysis of facts, logical synthesis, and persuasive conclusion/recommendation. Specific examples should support the analysis. Address the specific requirements of the assignment.

• Quality of research (depth, breadth, appropriateness) and proper acknowledgement of references, including complete citations using APA style in-text notes, when appropriate.

• Appropriate language and tone, accurate spelling, correct grammar, appropriate punctuation, and logical organization. You will not receive an A if your writing is awkward, contains grammatical or punctuation errors, or is disorganized.

E-PORTFOLIOS: CUNY City Tech asks all students to participate in building a program-long ePortfolio of the work that they complete while taking classes at the College. Through a process of collect, select, reflect, and connect, students learn to judge the quality of their own work, speak about their learning, and present evidence of their current knowledge and skills. College faculty will assist with this process by recommending that you store at least one significant piece of work from each course in your Blackboard content collection.

EMERGENCIES In a case of an emergency, you may submit your assignment the following class day. For once a week courses you may e-mail your assignment to me prior the start of the class to get full credit. Documentation on Professional Letterhead of the emergency will be expected. Coming late to class does not constitute an emergency.

COLLEGE POLICIES (ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, ADA, RESOURCES): See standard policy document.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS: While specific details of this course will be left to the discretion and design of the individual instructor, the course will follow this basic outline.

Week 1 - Week 3 (9/9, 9/16, 10/7):

Topics for discussion –

* *9/16: Inclusivity in the fashion/modeling industry.*

**Questions to consider:** Are we inclusive enough? Why or why not? What are the implications of significantly changing industry standards? E.g. Can body positivity be taken too far? Is there a level of being overweight that constitutes being unhealthy, even though we can probably all agree that you do not need to be a size 6 or under to be considered healthy? Would dismantling current standards be a positive thing? Think about whether we did the same in other industries, i.e. college admission standards, standards for passing an airline pilot exam, standards for becoming a brain surgeon. Is it ok to lower/change standards in some industries but not others? Comment.

* *10/7: “Racism”/bigotry/ignorance/cultural appropriation in the fashion industry.* **Questions to consider:** What are some recent and historical examples of bad behavior from fashion companies? Do you think these companies are truly racist or bigoted or did the incident stem from ignorance more than anything else? What kinds of efforts can fashion companies make in order to become more aware and culturally sensitive? Are there brands already doing a great job of this that can be used an industry examples?

Week 4 - Week 8 (10/21, 10/28, 11/4, 11/11, 11/18)

Topics for discussion -

* *10/21 & 10/28: Animal cruelty/ethics and animal testing in the fashion industry.*

**Questions to consider:** What types are products are currently tested on animals? What are the pros and cons of animal testing? Should there be a limit as to what animals can be subjected to so far as tests go? Is it ethical to use animal products in clothing? Historically, how have people used animal products in their daily lives to clothe themselves. Is how we use animal products today very different from how they have been used in the past? What are the current ethical standards used in the farming and slaughter of animals for fashion purposes? In the event that you believe we should continue to use animal products for clothing and accessories, do you also believe that standards need to become stricter or more relaxed? Why?

* *11/4 & 11/11: Labor laws and how they impact the fashion industry.*

**Questions to consider:** What are the current labor law policies in the U.S., China, India, Bangladesh, Ethiopia etc.? Should we hold other countries that we contract with for production purposes to the same standards as the U.S.? What would be the potential benefits or drawbacks of doing so? Is it ethical to try to compel other countries to change their labor laws at all? Consider whether it is better for a child/teen to have the opportunity to work to help support their family when they may otherwise go hungry. How would you define exploitation?

* *11/18: It’s not all bad! Positive things about fashion.*

**Questions to consider:** How many people are employed globally by the fashion industry that may otherwise be without work? How much wealth does the industry generate for the economy? What are some other intangible, psychological benefits of fashion? In what ways does it enrich our lives creatively? Does the industry drive innovation that can benefit us in a multitude of ways?

Week 9 - Week 12 (11/25, 12/2, 12/9, 12/16)

Topics for discussion –

* *11/25: Politics & fashion and why companies fail.*

**Questions to consider:** It is advisable for fashion/retail companies to take a political stance? What are the potential benefits or drawbacks of involvement? Discuss recent or historical examples of companies making political statements. Did this action affect the company positively or negatively (Think Nike re: the “take a knee” movement, Gillette’s “toxic masculity” ad, and Mara Hoffman, Prabal Gurung, Jonathan Simkhai and Calvin Klein’s efforts (among others) in support of the feminist movement and Planned Parenthood. Are fashion brands in a good position to take a political stance? Do fashion designers/brands really understand politics and should they be listened to? Or, might these political stances be marketing efforts in order to capitalize on a political trend?

Sometimes it seems like a company that does everything right or is successful for a long time suddenly begins to fail. Take JCPenney, Sears, Forever21, etc. as examples. What did these (or other companies) eventually do wrong? How could they have avoided their downfalls?

* *12/2: Profit margins and designer markup.*

**Questions to consider:** Is it ethical that designer brands charge 10x what a non-designer brand would charge for a garment or accessory of similar/exact quality? What are the costs associated with branding? How do marketing efforts towards branding benefit the consumer? What benefit (emotional or psychological) does the consumer get from owning a designer brand vs. an unbranded or unknown brand’s product? Is it generally true that designer brands work with artisans (largely in Europe and high wage countries) who make the product largely or fully by hand? E.g.: There may be up to 18 hours of production on a single Chanel bag which involves 180 different procedures and up to 15 people to make. Does high cost of labor and lack of automation with machines justify the high prices of designer goods?

* *12/9 & 12/16: Term Paper Presentations*

Course Activities: Course format will include a combination of any of the following activities:

• Field Trips / High Impact Learning Practices: Field trips will look to visit construction sites, tour newly constructed buildings and urban spaces or visit institutions, including but not limited to museums, galleries, or other colleges with discussions led by either the instructor or on-site experts in the field or the subject.

• Lectures/ Guest Lectures: Lectures will be given by either the instructor or by invited guest lecturers or experts in the field or subject.

• Activities: Students will participate in activities that provide them with the opportunity to apply what is learned in a given subject.

• Research Activities: Students will participate in research activities including case study research to address issues identified during field trips, lectures or other class activities.

• Presentations: Students will participate in written, oral and graphic presentation of course subjects and issues identified through research.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: To be determined by the specific instructor and topic.