

Vanderbilt University
MLAS: The History of Fashion: Sex and Propaganda
Alex Sargent, Fall 2009
Buttrick 205, Thursday 6:30-9:00

Course Description

We will study Western fashion through the ages, from Ancient Greece to the present day. Through period silhouettes, fabrics, and the treatment of the form, we will examine how historic changes in fashion represent contemporaneous art and cultural trends and traditions that give each era a distinct look and effect.

Questions considered include: How have people used clothing throughout time to make broad and specific statements about their position in the world and who they aspire to be? How does the evolution of clothing relate to developments in art and architecture?

Class activities will include: a hands-on overview of the basics of fabric terminology, since the availability and cost of fabrics has always influenced styles and style makers; an examination of paintings and films which demonstrate trends and trendsetters in the history of fashion; the study of terminology of clothing to gain a visual vocabulary with which to recognize and date art; viewing short fashion videos which highlight how contemporary designers draw from historic fashion in the creation of their runway and everyday lines of clothing.

Students will take away the ability to view paintings and art in a new way, based on an understanding of period fashions.

Personally chosen projects throughout the course of the semester will enable students to make more careful and detailed studies of subject areas that are of particular interest. Each student's final project will be a culmination of their personal area of study developed through their earlier projects.

Time in class will be devoted to the development of student's class projects.

Textbooks

A Handbook of Costume Drawing, Second Edition, Georgia O'Daniel Baker and Helen Pullen
The Complete History of Costume & Fashion from Ancient Egypt to the Present Day, Bronwyn Cosgrave
The Annotated Mona Lisa, Carol Strickland, PH.D.

Optional Textbook

Vintage Fashion, Collecting and Wearing Designer Classics, 1900-1990, Emma Baxter Wright

Formal requirements

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| 1. Fabric identification sheets | 5% |
| 2. Production critique of the <i>Merchant of Venice</i> | 15% |
| 3. Midterm project | 20% |
| 4. In-class presentation on your chosen period of fashion history
OR paper that outlines the general trends of fashion throughout history | 15% |
| 5. Final project | 30% |
| 6. Participation in class | 15% |

**Grading on class projects will be on thoroughness and thoughtfulness of work. Formalized assignment sheets given out in class will outline requirements and expectations

Honor Code

Vanderbilt's honor code governs all papers, exams, quizzes, and original creative work in this course. Copying designs and written essays/text from the Internet is a violation of the honor code.

About the Instructor

Alexandra Sargent holds an MFA in Costume Design from Northwestern University. She is the designer and costume shop manager for the Vanderbilt University Theatre Department where she teaches Costume Design, Costume Technology, and The History of Fashion. Alex has worked as a freelance costume designer for theatre and dance, and has taught at Middlebury College, The University of North Carolina at Wilmington, The International Academy of Design and Technology, and Vanderbilt University. Collaborating with students to find connections between fashion and art history, and analyzing how fashion is used in bold and meaningful ways for story telling in theatre and film, has been an exciting and rewarding exploration.

Production Attendance

Attend a performance of and write a critical analysis on the Vanderbilt University Theatre production of *The Merchant of Venice* from 5-7 pages in length. Your critique can focus on just the costume designs in the production, or on the costumes and additional design elements, and if you wish on the acting within the production as well.

Sample Project Ideas (Projects will be developed in conjunction with the instructor)

Mid-term Project Ideas (midterm projects will be less comprehensive than the final project)

- Compare and contrast two or more paintings
- An in-depth study of a historic figure and the significance of their clothing
- A paper exploring the use of costumes in a chosen film. Are the costume choices historically accurate? If not, how and why has the designer purposefully manipulated the look of the period in order to serve the storytelling narrative of the film?
- Analyze a period portrait and how it represents the period in which it was painted both in terms of fashion and additional stylistic elements

Final Project Ideas

- A paper that outlines the general trends of fashion throughout history
- 3-D depiction of a number of period silhouettes and accompanying paper explaining the significance of those silhouettes in representing their respective periods
- Create collage boards comparing and contrasting various periods of fashion history
- Illustrated timeline of a topic and its relevance through a number of historic periods
- Create a timeline of fashion for at least five chosen periods of history showing why, when, and how fashion changed
- Some kind of visual timeline, choosing images and cultural norms from at least five separate periods, in order to show how the development of civilization can be understood to a degree by what was in vogue in art and in fashion.

Syllabus, The History of Fashion				
MLAS class, Fall 2009				
#	DATE	TOPIC	FILMS WE WILL VIEW CLIPS OF IN CLASS	READINGS
1	3-SEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The History of Fashion Overview▪ The basics of fabric technology: weaves and fibers▪ Standard types of women's garments		
2	10-SEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The Fashion of the Ancients: Egypt▪ Body proportions: standards for drawing the figure	Elizabeth Taylor's <i>Cleopatra</i>	H CD: 30-33 C & F: 7-29 AML: 1-11
DUE: Fabric identification sheets				

3	17-SEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fashion of the Ancients: Greece and Rome Drawing analogs 	<i>Troy and Gladiator</i>	HCD: 38-49 C&F: 30-79 AML: 12-19
DUE: Initial project ideas				
4	24-SEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Early and High Renaissance Costume Design: the basic elements 		HCD: 70-77 C&F: 114-141 AML:30-45
5	1-OCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>: presentation of designs for the VUT production The Elizabethan World 	<i>Elizabeth: the Golden Age</i>	HCD:78-85
Production Information for <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> : Oct. 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 @ 8:00 PM; Oct 4 @ 2:00 PM				
DUE: attend a performance of <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>				
DUE: finalized mid-term project idea				
6	8-OCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17th Century Baroque costume 		HCD:86-97 C&F: 142-161 AML:46-63
7	15-OCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The World of the Rococo 	<i>Dangerous Liasones</i>	HCD: 98- 101 C&F: 162-185 AML: 64-65
DUE: Critique paper for the VUT production of <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>				
8	29-OCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neoclassical and Empire 	Sophia Coppola's <i>Marie Antoinette</i> and <i>The Duchess</i>	HCD: 102-113 C&F: pgs. 186--211 AML: 66-75
DUE: mid-term project				
9	5-NOV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victorian World 	Kenneth Branagh's <i>Hamlet</i>	HCD:114-129 AML: 76-127
DUE: final project proposal				
10	12-NOV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victorian World continued In-class project development 		
11	19-NOV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20th century fashion, 1901-1946 		HCD: 130-157 C&F:212-251 AML: 128-202
12	3-DEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20th century fashion, 1947-2000 		
13	10-DEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrap up and in-class work time for final projects 		
14	17-DEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of final projects 		