

**DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL STUDIES  
TRENT UNIVERSITY**

**CUST 3190H: FASHION AND POWER**  
Peterborough Campus

|                                  |  |   |
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| <b>Instructor:</b><br>Anne Pasek | <b>Trent Email:</b><br>annepasek@trentu.ca | <b>Telephone:</b>                               |
| <b>Campus:</b><br>Peterborough   | <b>Office Location:</b><br>Scott House 204 | <b>Office Hours:</b><br>By email<br>appointment |

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| <b>Academic Administrative Assistant:</b><br>Patricia Heffernan | <b>Email:</b><br>cultstudies@trentu.ca        |
| <b>Office Location:</b><br>Scott House 202                      | <b>Telephone:</b><br>(705) 748-1011 Ext. 1771 |

**Course Description:**

This class is about garments, and all the ways in which the creative and manual work of their design and manufacturing is situated within wider cultural and material structures of power. Throughout the course, we will think about the production of fabric and clothing in itself, the ways in which fashion and media intertwine across history, as well as how fashioning acts as a form of culture. We learn how textiles and garments are made across global supply chains and increasingly digital modes of craftsmanship, and we will also watch and view media about their production, circulation, and use.

Much of the class will be oriented to helping you to produce a final project: a garment that makes a critical argument about the history or present of the fashion industry and/or its dissident subcultures.

The course will be conducted in multiple formats, combining lecture and class discussion with some practical instruction on digital image manipulation, printmaking and textile design, as well as formal critiques.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will complete this course with a better understanding of:

- The structures of the global fashion industry,
- The historical and racialized context from which different textiles and styles emerge,
- How style is mobilized by both marginalized and dominant groups, frequently in relation to one another,
- How textile technologies are intertwined with digital media, historically and today,
- Basic photomanipulation and printmaking skills

**Course Pre-requisites:** 4.0 university credits including 1.0 CUST credit or permission of the instructor.

**Required Texts:**

- Readings online (see schedule)

**Course Format:**

**Peterborough Campus:**

|          | <b>Day</b> | <b>Time</b> | <b>Location</b>  |
|----------|------------|-------------|------------------|
| Workshop | Mon        | 5-8pm       | Scott House, 105 |

**Course Evaluation:**

Overview:

| <b>Type of Assignment</b>             | <b>Weighting</b> | <b>Due Date</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Collegiality                          | 10% + 10%        | Feb 13 + April 3 |
| Assignments                           | 10% + 10%        | Jan 30 + Feb 13  |
| Final Project Sketch                  | 10%              | March 6          |
| Final Project<br>and Artist Statement | 25%<br>25%       | April 11         |

**Collegiality:**

Weighting: 10% + 10%

Due: Feb 13 + Apr 3

You're probably familiar with being evaluated for participation, expressed as an assessment of your attendance and talkativeness in class. You might also be familiar with some of the critiques of this model: it rewards extroverted folks in good health and makes life harder for everyone else. So here's an experiment in an alternative mode of assessing your active participation in this class, through a variety of different means. Mix and match between the options below to earn points (1 point = 2%). How many points you aim for, and the options you take to earn them, is up to you. There are 10 points (20%) budgeted to this part of your grade, but you can earn up to 12 points in the semester (which is to say that there's 4% bonus credit to be won!).

- Reading notes (1 point, available to each student up to five times):  
Take **thorough notes of one of the week's reading materials** and post them to the appropriate folder in Blackboard **before class**. Be sure to include page numbers and be careful not to plagiarize the text in your notes (you can quote key turns of phrase wherever you see fit, but mostly stick to summarizing and paraphrasing the author). Your goal here is to provide a useful reference guide for anyone looking to review what the readings were about and where that key

passage on a term can be found. I will award partial (or no) marks for notes that are unhelpfully minimal and I will check for plagiarism.

- Gratitude Assignment (1 point per email, available to each student twice): Email a peer from this class if they say something that resonated with you. Briefly **reflect on how their insights or perspectives have helped develop your thinking** (this is to say, you need to do more than just say that you liked something—you have to explain why and to what end). Make sure you let your classmate know that you do not expect a response from them, and that the message is simply to recognize their work. Please cc me on the email.
- Academic Mutual Aid (1 point, available to each student thrice): An ideal classroom is one where students help each other out in a variety of small but impactful ways. This category is a way to recognize and reward the help you extend to others. This might include: showing a peer how to use Omni or where to look for books in Bata, sharing a helpful tutorial, troubleshooting a problem, and so on. To record your good work, send a short summary email to me, cc'ing everyone involved.
- Letter to Future Students (2 points, available once): In the last week of class, write a short letter to students taking this course in future years. Share your tips for navigating the class (including my teaching and assessment style) that will help them succeed. Post your letters to Blackboard. As usual, I will award partial (or no) marks for letters that are unhelpfully minimal and I will check for plagiarism.
- Lead a Discussion (3 points, available to each student twice): Prepare an opener to our class discussions between 5-15 minutes long. You may want to present useful contextual information about the authors, share a story about how the themes of the readings intersect with your own experiences, or related to a recent/contemporary example in the news/popular culture. End with 1-2 questions for discussion.
- Add a Resource (1 point, available twice) Add a new and useful website, guide, tutorial, or other sort of support to the Additional Resources section on our Blackboard site.
- Lead a Workshop (6 points, available once): There are doubtlessly lots of skills already present in our classroom. You have the opportunity to share yours with the class by signing up to lead a brief (45 min – 1 hour) tutorial. It should involve hands-on learning time for your classmates as well as a brief personal reflection on how you came to learn this skill, how you use it, and how it might connect with the themes of the class. The topic is otherwise entirely up to you (but confirm with me first).
  - Some obvious ideas: *how to sew, how to embroider, how to knit, how to weave, how to dye, how to mend, how to tailor, how to silkscreen.*
  - Some less obvious but still very interesting ideas: *how to shop at a thrift store, how to shop online, how to read a fashion magazine, how to sell things, how to make clothes for digital avatars, how to navigate fashion TikTok.*

I'll input Collegiality grades on Feb 13 (10%) + April 3 (10%), but you can also earn all your points in any half of the class and I'll adjust the other grade category accordingly.

## **Assignments:**

Early in the semester you will complete two short assignments to demonstrate your skills with image manipulation software and printmaking. Assignments will be graded on technical skills and critical engagement with the course materials.

### *Assignment 1: Visual History of a Textile, Fabric, or Pattern*

Weighting: 10%

Due: Jan 30

- Develop a collage that tell the history of a specific textile, fabric, or pattern and its relationship to economic, racial, national, sexual, and/or corporate power. Post to the course website with a brief paragraph describing your rationale.

### *Assignment 2: Design Your Own Textile*

Weighting: 10%

Due: Feb 13

- Design your own fabric, textile, or pattern, one that critically interrogates the structures and regimes of power in fashion's history or present, or which offers an alternative to them. The fabric may be a purely digital design or it can be made through analog processes and photographed. Post to the course website with a brief paragraph describing your rationale.

## **Final Project:**

This course culminates in the creation of a final project that intervenes in some aspect of contemporary fashion and/or the garment industry, applying both your practical and critical thinking skills. The project can be a physical garment, a conceptual design realized in photomanipulation software or through analog processes, a wearable interface, or some other means by which you can jointly explore the course themes and techniques.

### *Final Project Sketch*

Weighting: 10%

Due: March 6

- Bring a visual proposal, with a maximum of five original images, that demonstrate what you plan to develop for your final project, and pitch this idea to the class. This might include supplementary materials: drawings, mock-ups, outlines, and so on. It must demonstrate a critical dialog with the contemporary fashion, garment, or textile industry as well as your understanding of digital image software or analog fabric, garment, or textile construction.

### *Final Project*

Weighting: 25%

Due: Apr 11

- o A fully realized critical making or research-creation project that visually and conceptually intervenes in some aspect of contemporary fashion and/or the garment industry.

*Final Project Statement*

Weighting: 25%

Due: April 11

- o A 4-5 page rationale for your final project, describing your inspirations for the project as well as both your technical and conceptual motivations. Describe why you chose to use the materials, styles, and formal systems that you've engaged, and why these choices are appropriate in making the larger conceptual argument about and/or intervention within fashion and/or the garment industry. The statement must reference at least 5 sources from the syllabus.

**Assignment & Final Project Evaluations:**

Visual work will be evaluated for both its critical and technical merits; both craft and concept matter in this course. Visual materials should be crafted to the standards appropriate to their intended audience (i.e. tears and exposed threads are appropriate for a punk garment but not for workwear) and express an original and incisive argument or intervention in conversation with a wider history of fashion or contemporary cultural phenomena. It's not enough for a project to look cute or interesting; it should make a critical point.

Written work will be evaluated for its clarity, grammar, and critical thinking. Citations should be consistently applied throughout.

While personal reflections can help bolster an argument, these should not provide the primary rationale for an assignment. Instead, seek to bridge personal concerns with wider social and (sub)cultural issues, drawing on your intimate knowledge to communicate the wider stakes of your project.

**Numerical Equivalents of Letter Grades:**

|              |             |             |             |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| A+ 90 – 100% | B+ 77 – 79% | C+ 67 – 69% | D+ 57 – 59% |
| A 85 – 89%   | B 73 – 76%  | C 63 – 66%  | D 53 – 56%  |
| A- 80 – 84%  | B- 70 – 72% | C- 60 – 62% | D- 50 – 52% |
| F 0 – 49%    |             |             |             |

Please refer to the policy on **grading** and **assessment** in the Trent University Calendar for further details.

## Week-by-week schedule:

### Class 1: Introductions

(Monday, January 9, 2023)

In class:

- Course overview
- Discussion of course philosophy, learning materials, and resources

We will screen in class: <https://vimeo.com/172025594>

### Class 2: Style

(Monday, January 16, 2023)

Listen:

- Articles of Interest, [American Ivy](#): Episode 1
- Articles of Interest, “Episode 2: [Plaid](#)” *99% Invisible*
- Articles of Interest, “Episode 6: [Punk Style](#)” *99% Invisible*

*In-class workshop:* TBD

### Class 3: Race

(Monday, January 23, 2023)

Read:

- *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* by Monica L. Miller (2009) – selections from the Introduction
- Tansy E. Hoskins (2014). *Stitched Up: The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion*. Chapter 7: Is Fashion Racist?

Listen:

- Articles of Interest, “[Episode 4: Hawaiian Shirts](#)”

*In-class workshop:*

TBD

### Class 4: Bodies

(Monday, January 30, 2023)

Read:

- Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams* (2003) – selections from the Introduction.
- Tansy E. Hoskins (2014). *Stitched Up: The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion*. Chapter 6: Fashion and Size

Listen:

- Articles of Interest, “[Episode 3: Pockets](#)”

*In-class workshop:*

- Needle and thread hand stitching & pocket construction.

### **Assignment 1 Due: Visual History of a Textile, Fabric, or Pattern**

#### Class 5: Consumers and Consumer Publics

(Monday, February 6, 2023)

Read:

- John Fiske, "The Jeening of America" (1989)
- Christopher Breward, "Femininity and Consumption: The Problem of the Late Nineteenth-Century Fashion Journal."

Peruse:

- The Women's Magazine Archive (via Bata Library)

*In-class workshop:*

TBD

#### Class 6: Materials and their Residues

(Monday, February 13, 2023)

Read:

- Andrew Brooks (2015). *Clothing Poverty*. Chapter 1.

Watch:

- "[Fast-Fashion is Hot Garbage](#)," *Climate Town*

Peruse:

- [Generative Textile Projects](#)

*In-class workshop:*

- Knitting + Textile Data Visualization with Lindsay Olivieri

### **Assignment 2 Due: Design Your Own Textile**

( Feb 20 Family Day. No Class )

#### Class 7: Wearable Interfaces

(Monday, February 27, 2023)

Watch:

- Kate Hartman, "[The Art of Wearable Communication](#)" (2011).
- Becky Stern, "[Laptop Compubody Sock](#)"

Read:

- Kat Jungnickel, “Clothing Inventions as Acts of Citizenship? The Politics of Material Participation, Wearable Technologies, and Women Patentees in Late Victorian Britain.”

In Class Workshop:

- [Kitronik Microbit Emoji Bag](#)

### Class 8: Going Local

(Monday, March 6, 2023)

Class visit: Leslie Menagh – Madderhouse Textile Studio (<https://www.madderhouse.com>).

**Due: Final project proposal sketch**

*NB: March 10<sup>th</sup> is the final day to withdraw from courses at Trent. After this date, you are locked into getting a grade. Please reach out to me if you’d like some help weighing this decision.*

### Class 9: Second-Hand

(Monday, March 13, 2023)

Read:

- Jennifer Le Zotte, *From Goodwill to Grunge: A History of Secondhand Styles and Alternative Economies*. Introduction.
- Hanna Rose Shell, “Shoddy Heap: A Material History Between Waste and Manufacture”

*In-class workshop:*

TBD

### Class 10: Supply Chains

(Monday, March 20, 2023)

Read:

- Rob Horning, “[The Accidental Bricoleurs.](#)” N+1.
- Minh-Ha T. Pham, “How to Make a Mask: Quarantine Feminism and Global Supply Chains.”

Peruse:

- [Fashion Revolution](#)

*In-class workshop:*

TBD

### Class 11: Going Digital

(Monday, March 27, 2023)

Read:

- Anne Pasek and Nicole Starosielski, “Fiber, Fingers, and Code: Manufacturing Software and Seamlessness in the Garment Industry”

*In-class workshop:*

TBD

Class 12: Presentations

(Monday, April 3, 2023)

**Final Project Presentations**

Deadline: Final Project

Tuesday, April 11, 2023

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**Supplemental Readings:**

- Boateng, Boatema. *The Copyright Thing Doesn't Work Here: The Intersection of Western Intellectual Property Law and Traditional Knowledge in Africa*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Cubacub, Sky. “[Radical Visibility: A QueerCrip Dress Reform Movement Manifesto Zine!](#)” 2018.
- Plant, Sadie. *Zeros and Ones: Digital Women + The New Technoculture*. London: Fourth Estate, 1997.
- Rosner, Daniela. *Critical Fabulations Reworking the Methods and Margins of Design*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018.
- Ulrich, Laurel. *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*. New York: Knopf, 2001.
- Garnet Hertz, “[What is Critical Making?](#)”
- Kat Jungnickle, “[Bikes & Bloomers.](#)”

**Further Viewings:**

- [We Went to The Fake Sneaker Capital of China \(HBO\)](#)
- [Made in Mexico](#)
- [LocalFiber: Working Towards Finding Solutions in the Upstate NY Fiber-to-Textile Supply Chain](#)
- [Planet Money Makes a T-Shirt](#)

**Further Listenings:**

- [The Labor of Fashion: Shirtwaists and the Labor Movement in the Early 20th Century](#)

- [Fast Fashion's Dirty Little Secret \(Hint: It's Oil\)](#)
- [Articles of Interest, Season Two](#) (Luxury)

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### **Potential Project Resources:**

#### *Odette Critical Making Studio in the Bata Library*

- [Ultimaker S5](#) 3D printer
- [PFAFF Creative 1.5](#) embroidery machine
- [Cricut Maker](#) computer-controlled fabric/paper/wood cutter

#### *Wearable Technology*

- [LilyPad](#) -> DIY e-textile kits with lots of tutorials
  - o See also <https://www.instructables.com/member/Plusea/> for additional tutorials
- [Adafruit](#) -> DIY electronics kits with e-textile applications.
  - o See also <https://www.buyapi.ca/adafruit/>

#### *Traditional Cut and Sew*

- [Tilly and the Buttons](#) -> Good sewing tutorials, with an emphasis on basic skills
- [Threads by BD](#) -> more advanced pattern making tutorials

#### *Knitting*

- Tin Can Knits' [Simple Collection](#) -> Free easy knitting patterns with tutorials for beginners
- [Very Pink Knits](#) -> YouTube tutorials of a variety of knitting stitches and techniques

#### *Digital Design Tools*

- LinkedIn Learning [Affinity Photo Tutorials](#) -> Freely available for Trent students
- [Marvelous Designer](#) & [CLO3d](#) -> Digital garment construction and patterning tools, with lengthy free trial periods.

## **University Policies**

### **Academic Integrity:**

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's Academic Integrity Policy. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more:

[www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity).

### **Access to Instruction:**

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and documentation from a regulated health care practitioner and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in a course, the student should contact the Student Accessibility Services Office (SAS) at the respective campus as soon as possible.

## **Course Policies**

### **Collegiality Policy:**

We're going to be discussing a range of topics that at times intersect with longer histories of racism, sexism, colonialism, and other such unpleasantness. You may also bump into these topics when looking for examples for your assignments. Do not, however, share materials that include prejudicial slurs, hate speech, sexually graphic imagery, or anything else that could be distressing to your classmates. You can expect that I will give you a head's up in advance of discussions on this stuff in class and to heavily moderate these conversations to ensure that we critically analyze—but do not amplify—these themes.

### **Resubmissions:**

Because I do not have the time to mark resubmissions for the whole class, my policy is to disallow them for everyone. The grade that you get for your work is final and non-negotiable. Please meet with me in advance of assignment deadlines if you're concerned about grades, or would benefit from additional support.

### **Accessibility, Accommodations, and Adaptive Learning:**

I strongly value inclusivity in my classroom and I want to do all I can to ensure that everyone is able to learn in a fair and equitable environment. If there is anything I can do to improve and adapt the learning environment for you—including but not limited to greater textual, visual, or auditory cues; different speeds of speech; repetition of course concepts; or supplementary digital materials—please do not hesitate to let me know. This is true at any period in the semester, whether or not you identify as having a disability, and whether or not you are formally registered with Student Accessibility Services.

Have a different name or pronoun than the one you're registered under? Let me know and I'll be happy to use them.

### **Attendance & Absences:**

We're still in a global pandemic and so the delivery of this class could change if school policies and public health regulations shift. It's also the case that some students are struggling with borders, housing, work, and a range of problems that can make it difficult to be in class, in person, every week. Moreover, it's fair to say that the past few years have left us all pretty exhausted, under-resourced, and risk intolerant. And so, no matter our intentions, this won't be a normal semester.

Accordingly, there is no strict, face-to-face attendance policy for this class. If you're sick, if you're overwhelmed, or if you're out of the country, you can join in-class discussions via Zoom. I won't be tracking your attendance, but I will be tracking your contributions to building a supportive peer learning environment (see the Collegiality Points assignment).

That said, my tech set up for remote learning is very ad hoc. And, as we think more about manual skills and embodied knowledge, I expect there will be some real limitations to joining over Zoom. I will attempt to address these to the best of my ability, but know that you're likely not going to enjoy the same quality of learning environment via video conference.

### **Late Submissions:**

To repeat the above, things—broadly—aren't great. The number of requests (in advance, or fretfully belated) I've seen for late submissions have skyrocketed in the past few years. But beyond the obvious and varied disruptions behind this trend, I think there's also a laudable cultural shift afoot: more and more students are advocating for their mental health and learning accommodation needs than before than pandemic. I want to encourage that tendency, while also setting us both up to have a semester with the least stress and crunch possible.

If you won't be able to make a deadline in this course, **email me as soon as you can and we'll set a new deadline, without penalty. Please don't share specific medical details about your request.** I do not need to know why you need an extension; I will instead take it on good faith that this is something you're requesting for reasons that are real and serious.

That all said, I also want to urge you to carefully weigh the pros and cons of requesting an extension. The course is tightly plotted so that you can move through at a steady pace. Pushing back your work to juggle other deadlines almost certainly sets you up for added stress (and so too potentially worse writing outcomes). The same goes for feedback from me: To keep up with my ongoing commitments, I likely won't have time to give your late submissions more than just a grade. You're likely the best judge of your own circumstances, but if you'd like to talk through your circumstances, let's set up a meeting.