

Katie Gunter
AL 882
Final Project Rationale

What I Did

I designed a course (currently called “The Rhetoric of Dress and Culture”). Right now it’s a 400/600 class, but I’m thinking that it might work better as a grad-only class.

I’ve designed the class to focus on large group discussion. The information in the “Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)” are really just notes for me—I have purposefully chosen readings that I think work together and will provide lively, productive class discussion.

How I Did It

I used syllabi from

- *Cultural Rhetorics* (Malea Powell)
- *Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric* (Malea Powell)
- *Dress, Culture, and Human Behavior* (Theresa Winge)
 - My central text for dress studies was *The Visible Self* by Eicher et al (the current bible of dress studies)
- *Feminist Theory* (Stephanie Nawyn)
- *Rhetoric and Social Style* (Barry Brummett)

I made a dream reading list (the “required texts” is my works cited for this project) and tried to group things by category and places where they might overlap. I really enjoyed putting dress studies in conversation with cultural rhetorics. I rearranged the readings a million times—and I’m still not completely satisfied with them, but it’s time to stop. The course is really heavy on critical theory, especially in the beginning of the semester. This is purposeful. As a class, we need to develop a critical lens before we can look at dress in culture. It was really fun trying to go back and forth between the long view of the course and the short, weekly agendas. Orchestrating a path toward collaborative knowledge is one of my favorite parts of teaching and I would absolutely love to teach this course (or a variation of it) some day.

Why I Did It

This project originated from a selfish place: I knew that writing the discussion questions for each agenda would really let me put some exciting pieces together (I’ve been having trouble connecting all the different groups of things that I study and this forced me to create some working synthesis).

I also believe that there is a space for this type of class in the academy. There is work going on in apparel and textile design that overlaps with rhetoric—and the two disciplines would benefit from working at a mutual intersection.

What I Would Change

I know that I've put too much reading on the syllabus right now—but I figure that this can be adjusted as the semester progresses depending on the students and what they already know.



AL XXX: the rhetoric of dress and culture
whatever university
college of arts and sciences
20xx-20xx
credit hours: 3

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office hours: day time-time
or by appt.

course description:

This course will explore the intersections of dress, culture, and rhetoric. Drawing on a combination of dress studies and cultural rhetorics theories and methodologies, this course explores the ways that culture affects dress, how dress is a rhetorical act, and how all of this exists within a larger ideological framework. Students will develop an understanding of dress that expresses values from cultures and individuals living within a multi-cultural and global context.

required texts:

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," from *Lenin & Philosophy*
Baudrillard, "The Precession of the Simulacra"
Bhabha, Homi. Selections from *The Location of Culture*
Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*
de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*
Derrida, Jacques. "Signature, Event, Context," *Limited, Inc*
Eicher, Joanne B., Sandra Lee Evenson, and Hazel A. Lutz. *The Visible Self: Global Perspectives on Dress, Culture, and Society*.
Foucault, Michel. Selections from *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*
--Selections from *The Archeology of Knowledge*
Halberstam, Judith/Jack. *Female Masculinity*
Harding, Sandra. "Strong Objectivity," *Synthese*
Kristeva, Julia. "Approaching Abjection," from *Powers of Horror*
Lacan, Jacques. "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious," from *Ecrits*
Mignolo, Walter D. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*
Nicholson, Linda. *The Play of Reason: From the Modern to the Postmodern*
Silverman, Kaja. *The Subject of Semiotics*
Tuhiwai-Smith, Linda. Selections from *Decolonizing Methodologies*
West, Cornell. "Black Culture and Postmodernism"
Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*
Zizek, Slavoj. *How to Read Lacan*

objectives:

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand the relationship between dress and culture
2. Develop methods of analysis and critical thinking about the global context of dress
3. Examine the implicit and explicit behaviors associated with dress
4. Create thoughtful and insightful scholarship reflecting the course content

policies:

ADA Statement:

Military Assistance:

Academic Integrity:

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism:

Student Responsibilities:

Behavioral Issues:

attendance:

turning in work:

assignment	percentage
What I Wore Today Blog (Weekly Responses) (10)	10%
Participation in Class	20%
Literature Review Presentation	10%
Literature Review Paper	25%
Final Project	35%
Total	100%

grading:

Here's the meaning behind the numbers I put on your work (you can use these statements as clues about how you might work toward a higher grade):

A = Work of an outstanding nature that exceeds course standards and depicts an intuitive understanding of the subject matter and the mechanics of the assignment at the college level. Assignments do more than repeat material presented in class or in the text and meets all requirements in length and content.

B = Work that is distinctly above average in quality and thoroughness and depicts a mastery of the subject matter. A good understanding of the mechanics of the assignment at the college level is evident, but some errors may be present. Learner demonstrates an ability to do more than repeat the text, meeting all requirements in length and content, but with less accomplishment than A work.

C = Work of satisfactory nature in quality and thoroughness depicting a basic understanding of the subject matter. The assignment meets all requirements in length and content, but only reveals partial understanding of the mechanics of the assignment are at college level.

D = Work that is substandard in nature depicting a limited understanding of the subject matter. Although the assignment may meet the minimum requirements in length and content, it lacks some key understanding of the material AND/OR its mechanics are below college level.

F = Work that does not warrant credit because it does not meet minimum requirements in length or content, OR shows little understanding of material, OR mechanics are well below college level. Failure to complete an assignment in full or part may result in this grade.

calendar

Date	What's due today	What we are doing in class
Week 1	Althusser "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" Foucault <i>The Archeology of Knowledge</i> , Introduction Eicher et al "Body, Dress, Environment" (175-197; 200-204)	Defining terms
Week 2	Harding "Strong Objectivity" Eicher et al "Classification of Dress" (1-29) Eicher et al "Dress Research" (64-84; 90-112)	Introduce Lit Review Project Sign up for content areas
Week 3	Silverman <i>The Subject of Semiotics</i> Zizek, <i>How To Read Lacan</i> Lacan "The Agency of the Letter in the Subconscious..." from <i>Ecrits</i>	
Week 4	Baudrillard West Bhabha Nicholson Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, 6	
Week 5	Foucault Kristeva Derrida Butler	
Week 6	Halberstam Eicher et al "Dress and the Arts" (377-398; 422-429) Eicher et al "Physical Appearance and Dress" (152-169)	
Week 7	Wolf <i>The Beauty Myth</i> , selections Sobo "The Sweetness of Fat: Health, Procreation, and Socialibility in Rural Jamaica" Eicher et al: "Art and Dress" (311-329) "Ideals of Art and Dress" (335-354) "Conformity and the Art of Dress" (359-373; 420-421)	
Week 8	de Certeau Eicher et al "Dress, Culture, and Society" (34-57)	

Week 9	Mignolo Tuhiwai-Smith Decolonizing Methodologies 1-18 and 19-41 Baizerman et al “Eurocentrism in the Study of Ethnic Dress”	
Week 10		Lit Review Presentations
Week 11		Lit Review Presentations
Week 12	Written Lit Review paper due	Final exam Final projects due in class

Week 1

1. Overview
2. Who we read: Althusser, Foucault, Eicher et al
3. Discussion
4. Weekly Writings
5. Next time

Overview

- Theorists we read deeply believe that language can never hold (the) meaning, which is why some are really esoteric
 - It's on purpose
- Theorists break every rule
 - They are sort of forcing us to read differently and this is okay: quit being resistant!
- Theory comes out of action: it always has to do with the real world
 - The importance of historical context
 - We can never really say what we mean

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)**Althusser**

- Discourse mediates ideology (makes ideology seem like common sense)
 - It's function is to naturalize ideological positions
 - Solid tetris: no way out

Foucault

- Discourse is the medium through which power (norms) function
 - Discourse is what establishes space for subjects
 - There is agency in the "bad tetris spaces"
- Ideology is a way to think about certain types of power

By writing, both Foucault and Althusser are making space for these ideas in a way that participates in powerful discourses—they have made some change because we sort of say "duh" now when we read it

Eicher et al

- "Body, Dress, Environment"
 - body modification
 - physical and cultural adaptations to environment

For Discussion

Discourse can be more than words: many theorists start with language: let's move further

- If difference lives in the physical difference between "pit" and "bit" then can we also see it in other manifestations of the body? Like clothes?

Weekly Writings

"What I Wore Today"

Weekly Writing



“What I Wore Today”

Weekly Writing

Week 1	Assignment described and posted on Blackboard	
Week 2-14	Paper due before class via Blackboard	
		Total: 20%

Assignment Overview

Because this class works at the intersections of dress and culture, I want you to take time each week to look inward and analyze your own dress and cultural practices. Each week you will be responsible for taking a picture of clothing (or a detailed description, if you are camera shy) that you wore one day with a 1-2 page critical response that discusses the choices that you made and how these choices situate you in contemporary American culture.

As the semester progresses and we develop a critical lens for examining dress practices, I will expect your responses to reflect this. You also need to make sure that you take some space in each weekly response and draw connections between readings as well as pose questions and make arguments (like a standard writing response).

Some Examples of “What I Wore Today” Blogs

- Academichic.com
- Delightfully-tacky.com/
- Orchidgrey.blogspot.com
- Blondebeadhead.com
- Dressinguprhetoric.wordpress.com

Next Time

- Read
- Response due before class

Week 2

1. Who we read: Harding, Eicher et al
2. Discussion
3. Next time

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)

Harding

- Traditional definitions of objectivity and its importance in the academy
 - Other approaches
 - “Strong” objectivity”

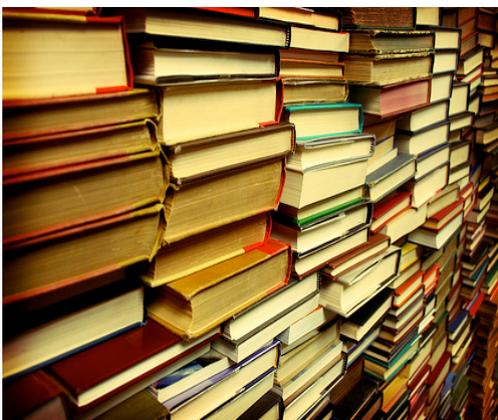
Eicher et al

- “Classification of Dress” (1-29)
 - Definition of dress includes all five senses
 - Tries to be objective
- “Dress Research” (64-48; 90-112)
 - Artifacts
 - Visual representations
 - Written descriptions
 - Pre and proscriptive literature
 - Dress history
 - Anthropology

For Discussion

- After reading Eicher et al’s definition of dress, how do you think it is representative of current ideologies about the body?
 - Are there spaces for resistance here?
- Put Harding in conversation with Eicher et al’s system of classification
 - is it possible to be objective when looking at dress?
- How do traditional methods of dress research fit with Harding’s discussion of research in the academy?
 - Put this in conversation with last week’s readings about ideology and knowledge

Literature Review Project



Literature Review

Week 2	Assignment described and posted on Blackboard Pick content areas	
Week 10-11	In class presentations	10%
Week 11	Paper due in class	25%
		Total: 35%

Assignment Overview

This assignment asks you make yourself an “expert” in a small, focused literature related to style, and share this expertise with the class. Think of yourself as a research assistant for the rest of the class in that literature. You will present a mini lesson to the class at the end of the semester with an annotated bibliography and an overview of the material. In the final paper, you should develop and defend a thesis or stance you take in regard to that literature.

Potential Content Areas (we can come up with more as a class)

- Visual communication
 - Finnegan, Hariman, Lucaites, Hartley
- Pop culture, style, and politics
 - Hariman, Van Zoonen, Street, Love
- Style and clothing
 - Barnard, Crane
- Gay/camp style
 - Alexander Doty, David Bergman,
- Consumption and style
 - Ritzer, Mort, Douglas & Isherwood
- Marketing and style
 - Walker, Gladwell, Levitt and Dubner
- Design and style
 - Sudjic, Norman, Rybczynsk
- The city and style.
 - Miles & Hall & Borden, Benjamin, de Certeau, Featherstone

Next Time

- Read
- Response due before class

Week 3

1. Who we read: Silverman, Lacan, Zizek
2. Discussion
3. Next time

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)**Lacan**

- Language has no center; nothing is Real
 - Critical turn in the western cannon
 - Made a lot of things accessible (Freud)
 - Mirror stage: coming to consciousness at a certain point in life (an ideological creation)
 - Meaning is only through comparison/difference
 - Other: desire, recognition
 - The child wants to be a complete self
 - The child wants the image to recognize it: the child sees the image as superior and wants approval: becomes neurotic and split
 - Neurotic self enters the symbolic: where cultural norms live and we start acquiring ideology
 - This is where dissatisfaction with the body starts
 - The unconscious is structured through language

Silverman

- Overview of semiotics

For Discussion

Lacan really messes things up for us:

- Let's put this in conversation with Althusser and Foucault from last week

Silverman's overview of semiotics:

- How does this relate to dress and culture based on what we read last week?

Next Time

- Read
- Response due before class

Week 4

1. Who we read: Baudrillard, West, Bhabha, Nicholson
2. Discussion
3. Next time

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)**Baudrillard**

- Interested in media and how they shape reality
- The distance between the material (the “Real”) and the presentation of it
- Simulacra: pure simulations have no relation to reality
- Simulation: process that produces the hyperreal; “generation by models of a real without origin: a hyperreal”
- 346-7: 4 steps from image to simulacrum (hyperreal)
 - Moralizes while he deconstructs
 - Disneyland: doing a deconstruction of cultural systems
 - Hyperreal is a condition of pomo and everything tends toward it

West

- Perspective
 - 394: can pomo “cast light on oppressed peoples?”
 - 396: asking people from the margins to look at what it means to be a part of that group: theoretical turn

Bhabha

- Epistemology vs enunciation
 - Wants to shift from culture as object of study to culture as a thing you practice with others

Nicholson

- Pushes feminism into pomo
 - Deconstruction
 - Lyotard (102)
 - Interpreting gender
 - A “feminism of difference” (72)

For Discussion

West and Bhabha turn the gaze: instead of being objects, they become subjects

- Pomo starts to look different and starts to deconstruct
- Cultural rhetoric is the study of the practice of culture
 - You have to participate in the culture you critique
 - Discuss this in relation to your “What I Wore Today” blogs

Next Time

- Read
- Response due before class

Week 5

1. Who we read: Foucault, Kristeva, Derrida, Butler
2. Discussion
3. Next time

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)**Foucault**

- How discourses affect bodies in the 19th and 20th centuries
- Deconstructs the story/idea that the Victorians were repressed
- “No body talk” is deconstructing negative body talk and positive body talk as opposite
- Lyotard: the threat of being rejected is what keeps people disciplined by discourse

Kristeva

- Abjection: catharsis, what is left over after you drink the milk
 - It is always already there
- Phobia: stuck in an abjective loop: work through catharsis

Derrida

- It's a stream of discourse
- Meaning making machines, all happening unconsciously
- Talking about and performing writing
- The difference between context (huge, everywhere, over-determined) and perspective (one person)

Butler

- We are stuck in normativity
- Everything (gender) is always in relation to the 2 poles (unconscious)
- Queer theory: this and psychoanalysis focus on desire and the subject
- Mercer: skinhead sex thing

For Discussion

- Now that we have really messed things up, where are we?
- Let's spend some time putting Butler in conversation with the others here
- How can we deconstruct dress?

Next Time

- Read
- Response due before class

Week 6

1. Who we read: Halberstam, Eicher et al
2. Discussion
3. Next time

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)**Halberstam**

- Example of a queer methodology
 - Lacan and urinary segregation (25)
 - Moving past pmo and Nicholson (46)
 - Foucault and historiography (53) + queer methodology
 - Stone butch
 - Limitations of current vocabulary in discourse around sexuality (147)
 - Performing gender: chapter 6

Eicher et al

- “Dress and the Arts” (377-398)
 - dress as an art form
 - costume vs every day dress
- “Physical Appearance and Dress” (152-169)
 - physical diversity and similarity
 - sex differentiation (162)
 - body conformation

For Discussion

- Discuss Halberstam in relation to last week’s readings (Derrida, Foucault, Butler)
- Eicher et al discuss sex differentiation through clothing
 - Problematize this in conversation with Halberstam
- Where is the line between costume and every day dress in relation to sexuality?
 - Drag?

Next Time

- Read
- Response due before class

Week 7

1. Who we read: Wolf, Eicher et al, Sobo
2. Discussion
3. Next time

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)**Wolf** (selections)

- Beauty is a myth that oppresses women
 - Women can have a mind or a body, but not both

Eicher et al

- “Art and Dress” (311-329)
 - Aesthetics of dress
 - Moral value (314)
 - Analyzing the meaning and form of dress
 - Fumpy butts
 - Cultural typologies
- “Ideals of Art and Dress” (335-354)
 - Cultural standards of beauty
 - Shape
 - Size
 - What makes an ideal
 - Beauty through dress
 - Self esteem (348-354)
 - Dress codes
- “Conformity and the Art of Dress” (359-373; 420-421)
 - Individuality vs conformity

Sobo

- Cultural meanings of fat
 - Meaning changes over time
 - Relation to survival

For Discussion

- The readings for this week make it clear that beauty is culturally constructed
 - Connect this to Butler and Halberstam
- Put “Conformity and the Art of Dress” in conversation with the first week’s readings about ideology
 - How much agency do we really have when we decide what to wear?

Next Time

- Read
- Response due before class

Week 8

1. Who we read: de Certeau, Eicher et al
2. Discussion
3. Next time

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)**de Certeau**

- Culture is created through the practices of every day life
 - By consuming culture we are (re)producing it
 - Culture is **always already** there
 - Tactics and strategies

Eicher et al

- “Dress, Culture, and Society”
 - Definition of culture (36)
 - Definition of society (38)
 - “Scale of world cultures” (40)
 - Ethnocentrism
 - Contemporary culture and dress

For Discussion

- “The Practice of Every Day Dress”
- Tactics and strategies of dress
 - Safety pins? What else?

Next Time

- Read
- Response due before class

Week 9

1. Who we read: Mignolo, Tuhiwai-Smith, Baizerman et al
2. Discussion
3. Next time

Who We Read (Things I Want to Make Sure We Talk About)**Mignolo**

- The Western Code
 - Need to “delink”
 - Capitalism and the colonial matrix of power

Tuhiwai-Smith

- The western researcher exists within a larger discourse of colonialism
 - We need to own our positionality
 - Knowledge is powerful
 - Systems that produce knowledge are kept invisible

Baizerman et al

- Eurocentrism in the study of ethnic dress

For Discussion

- The mass production of clothing and the relationship between capitalism and CMP
- Going back to Harding (from week 1), how does Mignolo discuss objectivity?
- How do Mignolo and Tuhiwai-Smith help situate Baizerman et al?
- Discuss the "scale of world culture" ("dress, culture, society") in relation to Mignolo
 - Ethnocentrism and Tuhiwai-Smith

Next Time

- Lit review presentations
- Response due before class



“What I Wore Today”

Weekly Writing

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