

English 350: Expository Writing

Rhetorics of Fashion: Style, Habit, and Aesthetics from Frock Coats to Fendi

Spring 2019, T-TH 9:30-10:45 AM

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Course Description

Most people get dressed each morning. After the decision to put on clothes, each person makes individual choices based on their lifestyle, mood, income level, and culture that inform what clothes they put on. In this course, we will investigate the relationship between clothing, the wearer, and the societal interpretation of this clothing.

The texts we will analyze over the course of the semester will respond to our Inquiry Question: **What is fashion, and how does it function rhetorically?** In grappling with this question, we will address the following course objectives:

- Understand the differences between fashion, style, and clothing.
- Explore the rhetorical relationship between clothing/wearer/viewer.
- Learn about the ethics associated with fashion creation, consumption, and marketing.
- Research and evaluate fashion-focused texts in textual, visual, and digital forms of media.

These course objectives will help us connect fashion-focused texts to their historical contexts, as well as the prevalence of fashion as a topic of interest in American culture. By the end of the course, you will be equipped to examine, interrogate, and write analytically about some of the scaffolding behind fashion choices (or lack thereof), and you will have a firm understanding of the reasons fashion impacts everyday life.

Through expository writing, we will use analytical habits of mind to explore the rhetorical elements of fashion. We will build on the skills you've learned in W131 to write about primary and secondary sources, and will use visual and textual analysis to support our written exploration of these concepts. We will also create multimodal composition pieces. Since fashion is a visual text, it's important that we read/view and use a spectrum of resources at our disposal to pursue our inquiry questions around this topic.

Required Texts

Texts

Davis, Fred. *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*.

All other readings will be uploaded on Canvas. Please note that while the major readings are on the syllabus, I will also be uploading visual texts and short additional pieces before each class.

Films

Breakfast at Tiffany's. Dir. Blake Edwards, 1961.

Saturday Night Fever. Dir. John Badham, 1977.

Valley Girl. Dir. Martha Coolidge, 1983.

The Devil Wears Prada. Dir. David Frankel, 2006.

Coursework

Essay 1: Definitional Analysis, 150 points [4-5 pages]

Define “fashion” or “style” based on one of the texts in the first unit, and provide a brief summary of the argument for this definition. Then, apply the definition to one of the primary texts in Unit 1. In what ways does the text fit or defy expectations of fashion or style? What does this understanding help us learn about the rhetorical goal of the primary text?

Production Assignment: Fashion Interview and Reflection, 25 Points

Interview someone you think embodies an interesting take on fashion. Prepare a set of questions about the choices they make, and explore their answers. You can prepare this interview as a video essay, video interview with reflection, or podcast-format audio interview with accompanying PowerPoint. Explore the meaning-making process of their choices and draw conclusions about how their fashion is communicating rhetorically.

Essay 2: Visual and Textual Analysis, 250 points [6-7 pages]

Compare two of the films from our course thus far. Write an essay that explores the ways in which the film’s visual choices impact the viewers. Use secondary sources from class to explore each visual representation and the ways in which they look at fashion in different, or similar, ways.

Archival Reflection: Elizabeth Sage Historic Costume Collection, 25 Points

Choose one exhibit within the collection and write a two page response. What did you notice about it? What did you learn about its context and history? How did the clothing impact you as the viewer?

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography, 25 points

Final Project: Written Component, 300 points; Presentation Component, 100 [8-10 pages]

Create a multimodal response to a text exploring fashion/style that you’ve found on your own. Explore the rhetorical relationship between the text and its audience. The thesis must be based on multiple secondary sources, both from class and from your own research.

Participation: Peer Review and Public Speaking, 25 points

In-Class Activities: Short writing assignments done in or before class, 50 points

Reader Response Journal, 50 points

Collected twice during the semester, this “journal” will include six two-page responses to the readings. You can choose whichever six you’d like, but you should choose three for the first deadline and three for the second. These are to be turned in at the end of the class discussion day for the text. You can only do one per reading.

Grades

The grades I assign to your work this semester are a measure of how successfully you have completed a task—an indicator of how well you appear to have learned the lessons that the task intends to teach. Grades are not a measure of your worth as a person or your potential as a student. They are also not a reward for the effort you have made toward completing an assignment. At their best, grades are one important piece of how you learn both what you’re doing well and what you can improve this semester. If you have any questions about your grades after having carefully considered my comments on your work, please ask me.

| Grade | % | What it Means |
|-------|----------------------------------|--|
| A | 97-100 A+ 93-96 A 90-92 A- | Superlative work. Addresses all the requirements of the assignment in a compelling and insightful way. Manifests consistent attention to detail in both the ideas being presented and the writing that conveys them. Leaves you thinking well after the last word goes by. |
| B | 87-89 B+ 83-86 B 80-82 B- | Excellent work. Clearly and engagingly addresses the requirements, issues, and major ideas of the assignment. Writing is not only readable but also rewarding, attuned to the needs and interest of the reader. Almost entirely error-free. |
| C | 77-79 C+ 73-76 C 70-72 C- | Adequate work. Meets all the basic requirements of the assignment. Clearly addresses the main issues and ideas the assignment articulates. Writing is readable overall with occasional lapses in correctness and style. Punctuation, spelling, source citation, and other mechanical matters are largely error-free. |
| D | 67-69 D+ 63-66 D 60-62 D- | Barely meets the most basic requirements of the assignment. Addresses the important issues or ideas that the assignment engages, but largely without insight. Frequent lapses in style, correctness, and mechanics impact readability and indicate a lack of careful proofreading. |

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| F | Everything else | Fails to meet the most basic requirements of the assignments. Fails to address important issues or ideas that are central to the assignment. Fails to demonstrate attention to style, correctness, and mechanics. |
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Course Policies

The following policies for the course enable us to know what to expect from each other this semester. Please see me if you have any questions.

Attendance and tardiness. Your attendance is an important factor in your success in this course. If you're not present for discussions, there's no way to learn from your classmates and myself. You may be absent three times this semester without penalty; I recommend saving these for illnesses and emergencies. Each absence beyond these three will lower your final course grade by a third of a letter (e.g., B to B-). It's best to notify me in advance if you must miss a class. Also be sure to inform me in advance of special circumstances, such as religious holidays or other university-excused absences, for which there will be no penalties (you must provide all relevant documentation). If you have an emergency or illness, please remain in contact with me by email so that we can make appropriate arrangements for you to keep up with assigned work. In general, remember that the sooner you inform me of any complications to your regular attendance this semester, the more options we'll have for ensuring that they have as little negative impact as possible on your performance. Tardiness will be penalized as $\frac{1}{3}$ of an absence (so three late appearances equal an absence); frequent tardiness or lateness that causes you to miss a large portion of a class meeting may count against your total absences.

Drafts and late assignments. Revision is a critical part of inquiry and writing. For that reason, you will be required to bring drafts of your work to several of our class meetings (as indicated in red on the schedule). Sometimes this will be a draft of a specific section, and sometimes it will be a complete rough draft of an assignment (which means a full-length version that addresses all of the requirements that are specified on the assignment sheet). Failure to bring and submit the required rough draft materials on the days they are due in class will result in a 10% penalty (that is, one letter grade) on the final assignment. Activity points will be distributed at my discretion throughout the semester and cannot be made up without prior arrangements with me. All assignments must be submitted in class on the due date listed. You will be penalized 10% of the final grade for the assignment every calendar day that an assignment is late.

Participation. I hope you will do your part to help foster a respectful and comfortable environment in our class. Discussion of the text objects and scholarly articles is essential to our learning process for this course, and so your participation will be required throughout the semester. If you do not do the work necessary to participate, you will be asked to leave and you will be marked absent. When contributing to class discussion—and you will, of course, contribute!—please refrain from the use of potentially offensive or hurtful language, even in jest. The grotesque relies on audience response, and each of us will have a different response to each text. Be respectful of any response to the material, even if (and perhaps especially if) you don't understand it at first.

Technology Policy. In addition to being physically present for class, you need to be mentally present as well. As a result, if I see your phone or laptop out, you will be marked absent. There will

be no warning. If a laptop is essential to your form of note-taking or learning, please speak to me within the first week of class so arrangements can be made. In addition, I will also not accept electronic submissions of papers unless you speak to me more than 24 hours before the deadline and we make arrangements.

Canvas. Be sure to check Canvas regularly this semester for updates, announcements, and course materials. An updated version of the syllabus will always be available there.

Writing Tutorial Services (WTS). I encourage you to visit a tutor at Writing Tutorial Services for feedback on your work at any stage of the writing process. Their incredibly valuable services are free to all IU students. WTS is not a proofreading service. Rather, tutors do something much more valuable: they assist you in developing your ideas and skills in written communication. You can call WTS at 855-6738 for hour-long appointments in the Wells Library, and you can check their website (www.indiana.edu/~wts) for hours at other WTS centers.

Student disability services. If you require assistance or appropriate academic accommodations for a university-documented disability, please speak with me after class, during office hours, or by appointment. If you have not yet established your eligibility for disability support services through the Office of Disability Services for Students in the Herman B. Wells Library, Suite W 302, please contact them first (855-7578).

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of other people's words or ideas, whether deliberately or accidentally. Any written work with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the ideas, wording, and structure are yours, with exceptions indicated by quotation marks and citations. Evidence of plagiarism will result in an F in the course, and a report on your academic dishonesty will be filed with the Dean of your school and the Registrar. Please see the Indiana University “Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct” at <http://www.in.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/>.

Meeting with Me. The office hours listed on the first page of this syllabus are the times you are guaranteed to find me in my office, ready to talk with you about any aspect of the course, especially your written work. Be sure to bring drafts, outlines, or concrete questions about the material. If you are unavailable during these times, talk with me or email me to see about scheduling an appointment for another time. I check my email once a day on weekdays, so do not expect an immediate response. For conversations about your drafts and/or grades, please see me in person. Coming to office hours does not mean that you will necessarily do better on your assignments; it does ensure, however, that we will have a chance to enact some of the feedback, questioning, and conversation that all good writing requires before it can be great.

Again, welcome to W350, and I look forward to working with you and your writing this semester!



Rachel McCabe

| Schedule | Class Activity and Readings | Assignment Due |
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| Week 1 | UNIT 1: EVERYDAY FASHION Defining Terms—What is fashion? What is style? | |
| 1/8 | Introduction | |
| 1/10 | <i>Fashion, Culture, and Identity</i> . Chapter 1: “Do Clothes Speak? What Makes them Fashion?” pp. 1-18. Chapter 2: “Identity Ambivalence, Fashion’s Fuel,” pp. 19-30. | Biography Due |
| Week 2 | Rhetoric and Style/Fashion | |
| 1/15 | <i>A Rhetoric of Style</i> , Chapter 1: “Style at the Center of Popular Culture,” pp. 1-41. | |
| 1/17 | <i>A Rhetoric of Style</i> , Chapter 4: “A Rhetoric of Style for the Twenty-First Century,” pp. 116-148. | |
| Week 3 | The Influence of Class | |
| 1/22 | <i>Fashion as Communication</i> , Chapter 1: “Etymologies and Definitions of Fashion and Clothing,” pp. 8-26. | |
| 1/24 | Roland Barthes, <i>The Language of Fashion</i> , 1st two chapters, pp. 1-30. | Essay 1 Draft Due |
| Week 4 | The Influence of Culture | |
| 1/29 | <i>Arcades Project</i> , “B FASHION,” pp. 62-81. <i>Fashion in Focus</i> , Chapter 3: “The Clothes Maketh the Man,” pp. 41-66. | |
| 1/31 | Peer Review | |
| Week 5 | UNIT 2: ANTI-FASHION Defiance of Social Expectations | |
| 2/5 | <i>Breakfast at Tiffany’s</i> * Deborah Tannen, “Wear Jumpsuit. Sensible Shoes. Uses Husband’s Last Name.” | Essay 1 Due |
| 2/7 | Aimee Bender, “Off.” | |

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| Week 6 | Anti-Fashion | |
| 2/12 | <i>Fashion, Culture, and Identity</i> , Chapter 8: “Antifashion: The Vicissitudes of Negation,” pp. 159-188. | |
| 2/14 | <i>Subculture</i> , Chapter 1: “From Culture to Hegemony,” pp. 5-22. | |
| Week 7 | The Culture of Anti-Fashion | |
| 2/19 | <i>Subculture</i> , Chapter 5: “The Function of Subculture,” pp. 73-89, Chapter 6: “Subculture: The Unnatural Break,” pp. 90-99. | |
| 2/21 | <i>Saturday Night Fever*</i> <i>Valley Girl</i> | 1st Journal Deadline |
| Week 8 | Film Analysis/Creation Week | |
| 2/26 | Film Production Day | Film Production Assignment Due |
| 2/28 | <i>Subculture</i> , Chapter 7: “Style as Intentional Communication,” pp. 100-112, Chapter 8: “Style as homology,” pp. 113-127. | |
| Week 9 | Punk (Anti-)Fashion | |
| 3/5 | <i>Pretty Vacant</i> : “The 100 Club: Whatcha Gonna Do About It?” pp. 11-27. | |
| 3/7 | Field Trip to the Sage Fashion Collection | Essay 2 Draft Due |
| Week 10 | Course Essay 2 | |
| 3/19 | Peer Review | Sage Collection Response Due |
| 3/21 | Course Review | Essay 2 Due |
| Week 11 | UNIT 3: THE ETHICS AND RHETORICS OF HIGH FASHION The Fashion Cycle | |
| 3/26 | <i>Fashion, Culture, and Identity</i> , Chapter 6: “Fashion as Cycle, Fashion as Process,” pp. 101-120. | |

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| 3/28 | <i>Fashion, Culture, and Identity</i> , Chapter 7: “Stages of the Fashion Process,” pp. 121-158. | |
| Week 12 | Ethical Fashion | |
| 4/2 | https://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/11/style/11fashion.html <i>Fashion in Focus</i> , Chapter 6: “Express Yourself: the Politics of Fashion” | Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due |
| 4/4 | https://www.forbes.com/sites/victoriapavlova/2018/11/29/fast-fashion-ethics-should-clothing-e-tailers-be-more-transparent/#1f75ae9057fc David Sedaris, “The Perfect Fit.” | |
| Week 13 | Representations of High Fashion | |
| 4/9 | <i>The Devil Wears Prada</i> “‘To Care for Her Beauty, to Dress Up, Is a Kind of Work’: Simone de Beauvoir, Fashion, and Feminism” | |
| 4/11 | Discussion of Final Projects | Final Project Draft Due |
| Week 14 | UNIT 4: FINAL PROJECT Preparation | |
| 4/16 | Peer Review of Pieces and Conferences | |
| 4/18 | Peer Review of Pieces and Conferences | |
| Week 15 | Presentations | |
| 4/23 | Presentations | 2nd Journal Deadline |
| 4/25 | Presentations | Final Projects Due! |

*An asterisk indicates that this content includes scenes of violence, sexual assault, or other difficult material. Please let me know if you do not want to read/watch this material and we will find a suitable alternative.