GSWS 831-5: Selected Topics: Fashioning Gender

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Lecture: Mondays 13:30 – 17:20
Graduate Component AQ 5019 - Wednesdays, 10:30 am – 12:30 (tentatively)
Office hours: Mondays11:00 – 12:30
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Course Description:
How do clothes, fabrics, accessories, and adornments signify gender? How do specific items of clothing—suits, dresses, pants, etc., or fabrics—silk, woolen, cotton, etc., or accessories—high or low heeled shoes, hats—or adornments—lace, braid, etc.—indicate that the wearers are men or women—and usually simultaneously, their social status and sometimes their ethnicity? How does the line or silhouette of an outfit communicate gender, class and ethnic origin? And how stable are the relationship between this aspect of material culture and gender, class, and ethnicity over cultures or time periods? For instance, why is it acceptably masculine for western churchmen to wear robes? Or, were garments that emphasized curves always and everywhere feminine? Or, why and when did lace become a feminine trimming? Or how did colourful Indian cottons become indicators of respectable middle class European masculinity? Does fashion challenge and reformulate gender? This course focuses on these types of questions in western (European and North American) fashion and gender systems, with due attention to the globalization of fashion and some comparisons to Eastern attire and its gender messages.

Graduate students who have no background in fashion/clothing/material culture, are expected to attend the lectures/visual displays for GSWS 319, Monday afternoons. Issues addressed in this format include how clothes, fabrics, accessories, and adornments signify gender. How specific items of clothing—suits, dresses, pants, etc., or fabrics—silk, woolen, cotton—or accessories—shoes, hats, purses, jewellery—or trimming—lace, braid—indicate that the wearers are men or women, and usually their social status and sometimes their ethnicity. How does the line or silhouette of an outfit communicate gender, class and ethnic origin? And how stable are the relationship between this aspect of material culture and gender, class, and ethnicity over time? How does fashion challenge and reformulate gender assumptions? The focus is on western (European and North American) fashion and gender systems, with some comparisons to Eastern attire and due attention to the globalization of fashion.

In addition, graduate students will meet most weeks in a seminar format on Wednesday, 10:30-12:30, to discuss the reading package plus additions for graduate level discussion, and to present two oral reports in weeks four through twelve.

Course Texts and Courseware:

Texts on reserve and on-line

Course Evaluation and Assignments:

| Attendance and participation in seminars: | 20% |
| Two half-hour oral presentations, weeks 4 - 12 | 40% |
| Term paper proposal and bibliography, week 9: | 10% |
| Term paper, due week 13: | 30% |

THE DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN’S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOOD WRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT. IN ADDITION, THE DEPARTMENT WILL FOLLOW POLICY T10.02 WITH RESPECT TO “INTELLECTUAL HONESTY,” AND “ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE” (WWW.SFU.CA/POLICIES/TEACHING)