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English 360 – Rhetoric of Fashion

Nicholas Mennona Marino

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Can a person not care about fashion? Because of a culture of disposability and the rise of telecommuting, the dress of the early 21st century has become increasingly casual. Yet casual dress does not imply thoughtlessness. Our clothing choices, from cut to color to brand, broadcast messages about our intentions and desires toward others. The dominance of casual dress codes and the rise of fast fashion today allows for an overwhelming number of choices for sartorial self-expression. This course will explore how our clothing choices contain rhetorical or persuasive potential that is often overlooked.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

* Students will learn to understand their fashion choices within aesthetic and social contexts
* Students will expand their understanding of texts to include specific items of clothing
* Students will interpret and analyze discourse from the fashion industry
* Students will show critical thinking and writing skills through a rhetorical framework as applied to fashion theory
* Students will passionately argue about what fashion means to them rhetorically both in writing and orally

ASSESSMENTS

The oral presentation asks students to curate a brand’s visual aesthetic and discuss how the brand emphasizes its uniqueness to consumers. The three essays include a personal narrative about the writer’s relationship with a specific item of clothing, a brand rhetorical analysis about the ethos of a fashion company, and a research essay about an ethical issue in the world of fashion.

TEXTS

Rebecca Arnold, *Fashion: A Very Short Introduction* DUPRE ONLINE

Shahidha Bari, *Dressed: A Philosophy of Clothes*

Roland Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image”

---, *The Fashion System* GT521.B313 1983 (CHECKED OUT)

Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion Theory: A Reader*

Scott Barnett and Casey Boyle, *Rhetoric, Through Everyday Things* DUPRE ONLINE

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* N7430.5.W39 1991

Elizabeth L. Cline, *The Conscious Closet: The Revolutionary Guide to Looking Good While Doing Good*

---, *Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion*

Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Social Theory*

Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers, *Defining Visual Rhetorics* DUPRE ONLINE

Tyler Little, *The Future of Fashion: Understanding Sustainability in the Fashion Industry*

Andrew Reilly, *Introducing Fashion Theory: From Androgyny to Zeitgeist*

Dana Thomas, *Fashionopolis: Why What We Wear Matters*

Barbara Vinken, *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System* DUPRE ONLINE