

New York University
Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute
Syllabus for SS2: JOUR-UA 204.002 (Albert Course #2632)
Style NY: Covering the Fashion Industry
Summer 2021

Professor: Jessica Minkoff
Monday, Wednesday, 5:30 PM - 8:30PM
Class Zoom Link: Please refer to NYU Classes/Meetings

To contact professor: jlminkoff@gmail.com
20 Cooper Square

Course Description

Fashion and style have always been integral to the magazine industry—from the mainstream, runway-inspired glossies that thrive on the latest trends like Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, Elle and Marie Claire to daily papers like the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. Despite each publication having its own unique take on the fashion industry, they are all alike in that they express an opinionated view on clothing, designer talent, models and fashion as it relates to society and culture.

As fashion journalism (like most things) began to thrive more and more in digital media, magazines and periodicals have had to compete with a slew of bloggers and influencers who have proven to be early masters of the fashion journalism game online. Their points of view have attracted the attention of millions of followers. However, whether online or in print, great fashion writing expresses an opinion and makes connections to the past, present and future. This class will explore reviewing fashion shows, writing trend pieces, long-form stories and profile pieces. It will also delve heavily into the fast-paced world of blogs and social media, including Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok, touching on the differences and similarities of each medium. Finally, we will also practice techniques for real-world situations such as interview skills and navigating the world of PR agencies. There will be guest speakers from different facets of the fashion industry.

A note about this class being online for Summer 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic: Rooted in the study of fashion writing both past and present, Style NY is a course that was designed to work both as an online course and an in-person course. The structure of this class, as well as the assignments, will continue to allow for its students to gain a comprehensive understanding of fashion journalism via Zoom meetings, one-on-one coaching (by way of email and/or video chat) and peer review. Students can also expect to learn from and network with the course’s regularly-scheduled guest speakers from all facets of the fashion industry including print magazines, digital outlets, retail entities and social media.

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Demonstrate awareness of journalism’s core ethical values
- Understand and develop the ability to write a fashion show review
- Explore long-form fashion journalism and how to develop a trend piece
- Interview a profile subject and create a profile piece
- Brainstorm blog ideas and develop an understanding of social media as it applies to the fashion industry
- Demonstrate critical thinking, independence, and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democratic society
- Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives
- Use technological tools and apply quantitative concepts as appropriate

Course Structure

Zoom lectures and open discussion, in-class workshops, guest speakers, course readings, case studies, fieldwork, etc. Weekly assignments will be discussed in class. There will also be weekly assigned readings.

Readings

The required text discussed in whole or in part are:

Grace: The American Vogue Years by Grace Coddington

More Than Enough: Claiming Space for Who You Are (No Matter What They Say) by Elaine Welteroth

Tales from the Back Row: An Outsider's View from Inside the Fashion Industry by Amy Odell

An optional and recommended text is: *New York Times* "Thursday Styles" and "Sunday Styles," T, NYmag.com's "The Cut," WWD, "Business of Fashion" blog, Wall Street Journal's "Off Duty" section and WSJ magazine, plus online publications such as Vogue.com, Fashionista, and DailyFrontRow, Fashion Unfiltered, etc. Also keep abreast of major fashion monthlies such as Vogue, *Harper's Bazaar*, Elle, Marie Claire, GQ and special fashion issues of The New Yorker and New York.

The following books are also helpful and recommended:

The Elements of Style by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White

The Associated Press Stylebook

Location of books and readings: you can find all the reading on Amazon or on the Internet.

Course Requirements

The goal of this course is to generate and develop story ideas, pitch, research, report, and write a series of pieces – ranging from a personal essay, a show review, trend story, a timely feature, and a final long-form piece. Class participation (and attendance) factor into the final grade.

Grading

Final grades will be calculated as follows: papers and projects will not be given grades, only commentary, final grades will be calculated as a mix of class attendance and participation, handing in assignments on time, and demonstrating an overall understanding of the different forms of fashion journalism.

Week 1: July 7

Day 1 (7/7): Introduction, Reporting and Writing Basics.

The importance and prevalence of fashion coverage and the first-person journey through wardrobe.

Reading: "Why I Don't Wear Makeup" by Leandra Medine

LINK: <https://www.manrepeller.com/2014/04/why-i-dont-wear-makeup.html>

Assignment due 7/12: Write a 900-word personal essay about an experience where fashion or style has had an impact on your life. This could be something profound that changed the way you viewed the world, how a change in the way that you dressed reflected upon an evolution of self, how you could accurately or inaccurately surmise someone's character through the way they dressed or an instance of how you were taught to never wear a certain style again, etc. This exercise is meant to illustrate the connections fashion has beyond throwing on something to wear in the morning and how its effects can be resounding. It is also meant to enable you to familiarize yourselves with writing in the first person and finding what makes your voice as a writer unique.

Week 2: July 12, July 14

Day 2 (7/12): The Shapers of the Shoot

Stylists and fashion editors work with photographers to shape the fantasy of a photo shoot but there is a lot more at play besides creativity and the beauty and artifice of the end result. An exorbitant amount of legwork and scheduling goes into each item featured in the shoot (not to mention location scouting, set design, travel, etc.). There is also a slew of politics and for large magazines, advertising constraints add another set of hurdles.

Reading: Grace: The American Vogue Years by Grace Coddington

Day 3 (7/14): Generating Story Ideas and Taking on a Larger Story + Independents

Exploring and expanding upon a broad subject, covering not just a specific trend or designer, but a whole movement or epoch. Examples: the 1970s in Paris, the grunge movement starting with Marc Jacobs' Perry Ellis collection.

Assignment due 7/19: Come up with a list of broader subjects within the history of fashion or even those that relate to the current state of the industry that you may want to explore and be prepared to talk about how you would go about covering them (who would you speak to, what references would you explore, etc.)

As advertising and the recession has led to hindrances of creativity for fashion editors, independent or indie fashion magazines are abounding.

Reading: skim the latest issues of 10 Magazine, Another Magazine, DuJour, I-D, LOVE, The Last Magazine, etc. If you do not have access to the print issues take a look at their websites.

Assignment due 7/19: Write a list of differences between indie magazines like the ones assigned in this week's reading vs. mainstream publications like Marie Claire, Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, etc.

Guest Speaker: TBD

Week 3: July 19, July 21**Day 4 (7/19): A Critical Eye**

A fashion show isn't just about the clothing on the runway—it is a whole theatre of experience. The best critics link what is happening on the runway to previous collections as well as the word outside of fashion. Established critics like Nicole Phelps of Vogue Runway and formerly of Style.com, Tim Blanks of Business of Fashion and Vanessa Friedman of the New York Times, try to channel the spirit of a collection or a season through imaginative modifiers and a thorough understanding of a garment's construction. This is often accomplished via in-person, telephone or email interviews with the designers prior to the show. This kind of a reviewer is a dying breed and when they give a negative review it can lead to news in and itself. Sometimes they are even banned from a brand's future shows (Cathy Horyn gave Hedi Slimane a terrible review following his debut at Saint Laurent and was not invited back). As corporate conglomerates have acquired fashion houses, they have affected fashion criticism as a whole and oftentimes now a review will not state the opinion of the reviewer as it had in the past.

Reading: Cathy Horyn's scathing review of Hedi Slimane's debut for Saint Laurent

LINK: <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/hedi-or-not-6377900/>

Guest Speaker: TBD

Day 5 (7/21): Profiles

When writing a profile on someone who is already a household name it can be difficult to reveal something new and intriguing especially if there has been an exhausting amount of profiles written about them. Beyond fame and fortune, you have an artist, but logistically, more and more, there are PR gatekeepers blocking the path (literally) and constraints of advertisers that often prevent writers from getting the material that they are looking for. The results can end up reading like a story of fabricated quotes. Oftentimes the best profile subjects are those on the periphery of fashion—the experimental designers, the non-successes, the behind-the-scenes insiders. An original subject isn't always the most obvious.

Reading: Dirk Standen's profile/interview with Hedi Slimane

LINK: <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/exclusive-hedi-slimane-on-saint-laurents-126446645943.html>

Reading: Business of Fashion's profile on Edward Enninful

LINK: <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/creative-class/the-creative-class-edward-enninful>

Assignment due 7/26: Come up with a list of profile subjects that you think would be interesting to explore and why.

Week 4: July 26, July 28

Day 6 (7/26): Fashion as Industry

A look at the current overall structure of the industry, from corporations to indie designers. The landscape of the fashion world is characterized by the dominance of very few corporations such as LVMH and Kering that are behind the major fashion houses controlling the talent that designs for each house and oftentimes trumping their creativity. We will explore what it is like to report on the fashion industry, which as a whole steadfastly refuses to give specific numbers.

Reading: <https://www.thefashionspot.com/buzz-news/latest-news/401107-at-a-glance-see-how-these-six-corporations-control-the-luxury-fashion-industry/>

Assignment due 8/2: Write an 800-1200 word profile piece on one of the subjects you had on your list. Reach out to them for an interview via phone or email. We will discuss how to do this in class.

Day 7 (7/28): Trend Pieces

Trend pieces isolate a visual motif and reflect on how the culture at large has influenced the trend or vice versa. How are these ideas subconsciously shared by disparate designers and the public? Denim has made a huge comeback, and even runway designers are showing denim as part of their ready-to-wear collections. Is it because that is what everyone is wearing on the street or just because creators think it looks cool? Trend pieces can touch upon the slight (the preponderance of a certain color) to the weighty (the continued lack of diversity on the runway).

Reading:

<https://www.vogue.co.uk/fashion/gallery/spring-summer-2020-trends>

<https://www.gq.com/story/spring-2020-trend-report>

<https://www.thecut.com/2018/08/what-its-really-like-to-be-black-and-work-in-fashion.html>

Assignment due 8/4: Write an 800-1200 word trend piece. Dissect the trend visually and reflect on it in a broader sense. For instance, say a handful of designers showed a futuristic dystopian look, it would be a good idea to reference the deluge of apocalyptic films that may have been released at the same time. And how does politics and the current social climate fit in? What are the parallels to these clothes to the outside world? Lock down and anchor to the fashion aspects of this trend, but also look beyond and connect the fashion to other arts, industries, current events, history, etc. Feel free to take a look at the most recent collections of Vogue Runway and nail down a trend that you are seeing or reflect upon street style trends that are prevalent on social media.

Week 5: August 2, August 4

Day 8 (8/2): Fashion & Controversy

Fashion never ceases to be controversial, but this often doesn't stem from the designs. Racism, deplorable sweatshop conditions, sexism, the list goes on. We will look at the battleground of the runway and its counterparts. From Calvin Klein stumbling onto the court in the middle of a Knicks game to John Galliano's anti-Semitic public meltdown to Dolce and Gabbana's racist advertising to the handful of brands being called out for actionless posts tied to #BlackLivesMatter, fashion icons and brands have been tumbling off their pedestals for seasons now. Creating multiple lines for spring, fall, pre-fall, pre-spring, men's and couture can also lead to some very public crack-ups for designers. You will also encounter PR professionals who are responsible for damage control.

Reading: <https://www.teenvogue.com/gallery/most-controversial-fashion-moments-2017>

In-Class Assignment: DietPrada often calls out designers like Vetements for controversial inspiration such as political riots (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CKHq3IVFHhH/>). Write a 400 word piece discussing your point of view on this type of controversy. If fashion is to be considered as an art, shouldn't it be okay for designers to be

inspired by things that invoke us to feel something? Or is it wrong to try and capitalize on something that could be considered disheartening and blind to those who were affected negatively by the political and/or social event?

Assignment due 8/9: Write a 150-300 word pitch for your final project. You can choose to do a profile piece, a trend story, a personal essay, etc.

Guest Speaker: TBD

Day 9 (8/4): Blogs + Social Media

Like every other industry, the Internet has changed fashion. It isn't just because e-commerce has redefined retail. With their immediate reporting on fashion shows, blogs and digital entities have shortened the trend cycle and a designer must now do an about-face with each collection to stay ahead. With their newfound power and growing audiences, bloggers and influencers have become front row stars and appear in lucrative advertising campaigns as tastemakers. Blogs have even changed the way editors dress by the omnipresence of "street style" photographers outside of shows. But how do you stand out in the crowd? We will discuss why it is important to have your own voice and bring a unique point of view to the table if you want to be relevant.

Reading: More Than Enough: Claiming Space for Who You Are (No Matter What They Say). By Elaine Welteroth

These days it is not enough to simply be a fashion journalist, contributing daily, weekly or hourly content to your publication. You must also be well versed in multiple avenues of social media. We will explore why it's important to engage with your readers and the intricacies of promoting certain content at certain times of the day to increase performance.

Week 6: August 9, August 11, August 13

Day 10 (8/9): Being Creative in the Industry

It is important to always be thinking about what is next in fashion, how you can bring something different and unique to the table, and ways to capitalize on a kind of story or really specific type of content that people may enjoy. Individuals who have successfully set up businesses in the fashion and beauty spheres have done so because they tapped into something exactly like the idea stated above. Examples include Emily Weiss of Glossier, Elaine Welteroth, Stephanie Mark and Jake Rosenberg of Coveteur, etc.

In-Class Assignment: Think about entities in fashion and beauty that fit this space and who discovered them.

Day 11 (8/11): The Art of the Interview + The Reality of the Fashion Industry

We will discuss the do's and don'ts of interviewing both for our writing and for job prospects as well as how to navigate the job search process.

The fashion industry has always been portrayed as glamorous and exciting. Even movies like *The Devil Wears Prada* elude a vision of working in fashion as one that is centered on skinny women in designer fashion navigating the city seamlessly. But just like every other industry there are challenges and pitfalls. Even the most established editors have had to endure manic bosses, crazy work hours, social injustices and fetching coffee at the drop of a hat.

Reading: Tales from the Back Row: An Outsider's View from Inside the Fashion Industry. By Amy Odell

Guest Speaker: TBD

Day 12 (8/13 DATE TO BE CONFIRMED ONCE STUDENTS CONFIRM THEY ARE AVAILABLE): Presentation of Final Projects

Guest Speaker: TBD

Accommodations

Students with disabilities that necessitate accommodations should contact and register with New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at [212-998-4980](tel:212-998-4980) or mosescsd@nyu.edu. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Diversity & Inclusion

The Institute is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. The Institute embraces a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions.