

New York University
Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute
The Beat: Style in the City
JOUR-UA 201 002 | Spring 2025 | Mondays 6 - 9:40 p.m. Room 657
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office hours: immediately following class or by appointment via Zoom (sign-up sheet)

There is no city for fashion like New York City: news, designers and trends are all made here. New York Fashion Week has new, exciting energy with shows by Raul Lopez of Luar, Sandy Liang, and Rachel Scott of Diotima (to name a few) redefining style in the city. And the Garment District, which used to be the bustling center of fashion in the city, is making a comeback and finding a new crop of young designers.

But the fashion industry is changing: TikTok and Instagram are making everyone a critic, see-now-buy-now is making consumer choices more immediate and trends are cycling through at a speed we've never seen before. So how do we, as journalists, meet this moment?

We will focus on developing your reporting skills, including features, Q&As and profile writing; with a keen objective of pitching and developing your ideas to define what fashion means today. Some key questions we will answer: Who are the designers leading the conversation? What are the trends and what does that say about how we live? What is the industry news happening and how will that shape fashion? What are the events — New York Fashion Week, the Met Gala, the CFDA Awards — that we can report on while being in the city? This course will explore those questions and more — providing the opportunity for you to get on-the-ground reporting and feedback, as a fashion writer would.

This course will also feature guest speakers — editors, critics and designers — who can provide real feedback and valuable connections to the industry. We will focus on developing your reporting skills, including features, Q&As and profile writing; with a keen objective of pitching and developing your ideas.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, among other assignments, you will have a short profile and news stories to show. That means you'll also learn how to:

- Understand core journalistic values
- Ideate and develop a story pitch that includes framing, an intended publication and a sharp, new angle
- Write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner
- Demonstrate critical thinking, independence, and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democratic society
- Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
- Research industry professionals and key leaders who can help you develop your career in fashion journalism
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives
- Pitch editors
- Develop your voice
- Learn about writing structure including how to write and report out a scene, as well as an anecdotal lede
- Discuss and stay on top of fashion news
- Identify fashion trends and analyze what they say about how we are living

Class Structure

Each class will be broken up into a few segments — there will (*almost*) always be a lecture — and sometimes a pitch session, guest speaker and peer review workshop, depending on where we are in our draft process. We will also take advantage of all the city has to offer and send you off on a couple of reporting excursions.

Required readings are listed under each class — you must come to class prepared to talk about the piece in a knowledgeable way. That means being able to talk about the piece's structure, use of sources, framing and what works/doesn't work.

The readings and assignments should be on the syllabus in advance. If anything changes, expect an email from me with the following week's reading and assignment. (However, it is your responsibility to come prepared either way.) I will inform you of any changes to the syllabus or guest speakers at that time.

Guest speakers are chosen to provide valuable insight into our topic that week. Please come prepared for each guest speaker, which means have questions you want to ask them and familiarize yourself with their work.

For every assignment, we will have a pitch session. That means you must develop 2 - 3 ideas to pitch verbally. Pitches must include the framing and an intended publication that you would pitch to, having done some research and pre-reporting.

Course Requirements

I want to meet with each of you for office hours at least once during the semester. Please set up 1:1 time with me. You can meet with me as many times as you'd like, but meeting with each of you at least once is a requirement.

You must come to class fully prepared. That means: due dates are honored — in a newsroom, you will be expected to meet deadlines set by your editor (and this class is preparing you for that.) Please let me know if you need more time/clarification. Class attendance is mandatory, and you cannot miss class to work on assignments for this or for another class. If you are ill and can't make it to class, please notify me the day of your absence before class begins. If you miss more than three classes, you will risk failing this class. If you miss a class, please reach out to your classmates for notes and any additional assignments. In addition to class attendance and participation, students will need to budget time outside of class to research, report, write and edit their work. Late assignments will not be accepted, reviewed, nor critiqued.

There is a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, copying or fabrication — ChatGBT is not allowed for this course. If you want to advocate for a specific use case, we have to have a prior discussion, and it needs to be approved.

Some Tech Rules

Please bring your laptops to class; but put them away when we have a guest speaker. You can record (ask the speaker first) and take notes on notebooks. To limit distractions, we will have “tops down” policy during most of the class. Also, no cell phones can be visible. We will use laptops only occasionally for referring to readings and in-class exercises.

Assignments + Grading

Assignments are due, via email, on the **highlighted dates and times** listed below. Please use **Microsoft Word docs or Google Docs only**. Send them to joannaknikas@gmail.com

Below is a detailed look at how you will be graded —

- News blog (350-500 words): 5%
- Q+A (500 words): 10%
- Review (500-750 words): 10%
- Service piece (750-1,000 words; 2-3 sources): 15%
- Short trend story (1,000-1,500 words; 2-3 sources and a scene or anecdote): 20%
- Profile (1,500-2,000 words; 2-3 sources, a scene *and* anecdote): 20%
- Bonus: Met Gala reporting: 5%
- Class participation and readings: 20%

Note: *all* drafts should include a hed and dek and be thoroughly checked for grammar and spelling.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS + REFERENCES

- Read: “*Dress and Morality*” by Aileen Rebeiro
- Read: “*Sex and Suits*” by Anne Hollander
- Read: “*The Fashionable Mine*” by Kennedy Frazier (optional)
- Watch: *Bill Cunningham New York* documentary on Apple TV

- Listen: *The Run-Through With Vogue* podcast (Ep: Oct. 1, 2024 Editors on Their Favorite Fashion Week Moments.)
- Listen: *The Business of Fashion* podcast (Ep: Sept 3, 2020 Cathy Horyn on Why Fashion Media Must Evolve // Ep: July 12, 2024 Why the Fashion Industry Needs a Makeover)

JANUARY 27: Introduction and course overview

Let's discuss: What defines fashion today? As people who engage with fashion every day — what are the trends and collaborations that you are seeing that are interesting to you? As members of Gen Z, how do you think fashion differs today and what does your generation care about? And how will that inform your work this semester? We'll also review the types of stories we'll read and write this semester and how they're reported — including Q+As, ahead of next week.

In-class exercises: News blogs and workshopping people/questions for the Q&As

Readings we'll discuss in class:

["Stylists Have Spoken: Drake's Pants Are Too Big" by Asia Milia Ware](#)

["Would You Spend \\$7000 on an Animal Shaped Bean Bag Chair" by Danya Issawi](#)

DUE ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 31ST AT NOON: FASHION NEWS BLOG

FEBRUARY 3: Fashion Q&As

DUE ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD AT 10 AM: EMAIL Q+A PITCHES BEFORE CLASS

We'll have our first pitch session, with each student pitching 2 - 3 ideas of people they want to interview in a Q&A-style. We will also discuss the assigned readings, focusing on what we liked and disliked from the Q&As. We will also go over interviewing basics and strategies and how to plan and organize a Q&A-style interview.

In-class exercises: Practice Q&As; Q&A pitch meeting.

Reading we'll discuss in class:

["Tom Ford is Home. Watching Netflix With His Dog" by Matthew Schneier](#)

["Julia Fox Gets Dirty to Come Clean" by Jessica Testa](#)

DUE ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH AT NOON.: FIRST DRAFT OF Q+A

FEBRUARY 10: Refining the fashion Q&A

We'll workshop your first drafts — what questions landed and what questions didn't land the way you wanted? Is there anything you didn't follow up on that you wish you had? What key details did you miss? What can you cut? We'll also discuss the assigned readings and review structures, purpose, topics, strategies, and more for fashion review writing. **And we'll hear from guest speaker Danya Issawi, a fashion news writer at New York Magazine.**

In-class exercises: Workshopping Q&A drafts

Reading we'll discuss in class:

["We Have Questions for Subway Sessions"](#) by Danya Issawi

["Inside the Closets of 15 Stylish People"](#) by Danya Issawi

DUE ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH AT NOON: FINAL DRAFT OF Q+A

FEBRUARY 17 - PRESIDENT'S DAY NO CLASS

FEBRUARY 18: Fashion reviews 101

DUE ON TUESDAY, FEB. 18 AT 10 AM: EMAIL SHORT SUMMARIES OF FASHION REVIEW PITCHES

Let's talk about fashion reviews! Nowadays, everyone's a critic. However, the role of the fashion review in journalism is more important than ever because it provides context and valuable institutional knowledge for the reader. Critics like Cathy Horyn of *The Cut*, Vanessa Friedman of *The New York Times* and Tim Blanks of *Business of Fashion* regularly attend fashion shows and write about what they see. These reviews discuss the quality of clothes, provide context about the designer and include their opinion on if the collection was good ... or not. For our purposes, we will write about a collection that you can go into stores and see yourselves — a new collaboration, a new store opening or even a new bag.

We will start with our fashion review pitch meeting. In class, we will talk about what makes a good review and how to do it, as well as craft some of our own nut-graffs. (Which is key for writing a good review.) **We will also hear from a guest speaker, who writes fashion reviews quite often. Surprise!**

In-class exercises: Review pitch meeting; reading lede and nut grafs and rewriting them.

Readings we'll discuss in class:

["The Fakery Begins at New York Fashion Week"](#) by Cathy Horyn, 2023

["Future Take Note: Raf Simons was Here"](#) by Cathy Horyn, 2004

["How I Lost \(And Found\) My Style"](#) by Cathy Horyn

DUE ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21 AT NOON: FIRST DRAFT OF REVIEW

FEBRUARY 24: Refining the reviews 2.0

Let's talk about fashion service! Fashion service pieces can provide readers with valuable knowledge on how to dress, how to care for their clothes or even how to style a certain piece.

This type of journalism thrives online (mainly on TikTok) and in situations where people must turn to experts.

In class, we will start by pairing you up with a peer, and you will take turns reading and giving feedback on each other's work. You will then learn how to read like an editor: What questions arise when reading? Is there a part you get stuck on? Where do you start to get bored and look away? I will also set up 1:1's with each of you to review the drafts.

We will prepare you for your next assignment: a service piece. A service piece requires you to interview 2 - 3 sources. So how do you find these sources? How do you approach them, and what questions do you ask to get the best answers? How do you know what to follow up with when chatting with them? Finally, what kind of service can you provide the reader and how do you best answer their questions? **We'll also hear from a guest speaker, Vogue writer and editor Leah Faye Cooper**

In-class exercises: Workshopping review drafts

Readings we'll discuss in class:

["Introducing Julez Smith"](#) by Leah Faye Cooper

DUE ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH AT NOON: FINAL DRAFT OF REVIEW

MARCH 3: Service pieces

DUE ON MONDAY MARCH 3RD AT 10 AM: EMAIL SHORT SUMMARIES OF SERVICE PITCHES

We will start with a service pitch meeting, where you will be expected to have 2 - 3 fully fleshed-out pitches with an intended publication and framing. Then we will spend some time looking for sources and reaching out to the sources.

Afterward, we will start to talk about how to build a scene. Building a scene is particularly important in fashion journalism, as you are giving readers access to a world they might not ever be allowed into. So how do you set a scene and make the reader feel like they are there? Use your five senses to describe it, but also bring yourself into the scene: How do you feel? What do you see? Ask questions of the people around you too! We'll also do an in-person assignment where you will all be asked to go out and find a nearby scene to write about and then come back and talk/write about it. This will be important once we get into profile writing. **And we'll discuss the week's assigned readings and hear from a guest speaker: writer Laura Pitcher.**

In-class exercises: Service story pitch meeting; an in-class assignment of going out into the world and finding a scene to write about. I will be available for 1:1 time for those who want to choose a scene to write about later in the week.

Readings we'll discuss in class:

["How to Find Your Personal Style, According to 12 People With Style"](#) By Laura Pitcher

MARCH 10: Service pieces 2.0

DUE ON MONDAY, MARCH 10 AT 10 AM: SERVICE STORY MEMO/OUTLINE

We will start with discussing your service story memo — what questions do you still need to be answered and how do you think you will organize your story? What central question are you trying to answer, and do you think your piece does that expertly?

Then we'll dive into your next assignment: a trend piece. Where do you see trends in the world and what makes a "trend." How do you know it is ... *real*? We will read some examples of good (and one bad) trend pieces to avoid any pitfalls.

In-class exercises: Service story memo check-ins and time to work on them in class; read some trend pieces and identify good (and bad) ones.

Readings we'll discuss in class:

["The Monocle Returns as a Fashion Accessory"](#) by Allen Salkin

["Behold, the Ballet Sneaker"](#) by Nicole DeMarco

DUE ON FRIDAY, MARCH 14 AT NOON: FIRST DRAFT OF SERVICE PIECE

MARCH 17: All about trends

We'll do a peer review and 1:1 time with me to discuss the first draft of your service pieces. You will have some time in class to implement those changes and ask questions.

Next up, we will start discussing the final assignment: a profile. Each student will need to bring in one profile piece for the class to discuss and we will all talk about what makes for a great profile subject, especially in fashion. (Hint: it's not *always* who you think it will be.)

In-class exercises: Workshopping service drafts; profile pitch reading and exercise.

DUE ON FRIDAY, MARCH 21 AT NOON: FINAL DRAFT OF SERVICE PIECE

MARCH 24 - SPRING BREAK NO CLASS

MARCH 31:

DUE ON MONDAY, MARCH 31 AT 10 AM: EMAIL SHORT SUMMARIES OF TREND PITCHES BEFORE CLASS

First up: a trend pitch session. Please come prepared to talk about your trend piece with 2 - 3 sources you will want to chat with for your trend piece. Trend pieces can provide the reader with information about a subculture and even set a scene of how that trend is being interpreted in the world. As well as, a scene you want to attend and report on. This can be the scene at a sample sale line, the laundromat to the stars, a shop in the Garment District etc. You will have time to work on your memo and we will go through what is expected of a memo.

We will also hear from another guest speaker, profile writer Alison P. Davis of New York Magazine.

In-class exercises: Trend story pitch meeting

Readings we'll discuss in class:

["Meghan on Montecito"](#) by Allison P. Davis

“A Vibe Shift is Coming. Will Any of Us Survive It?” by Allison P. Davis

DUE ON FRIDAY, APRIL 4 AT NOON: FIRST DRAFT OF TREND STORY

APRIL 7th:

DUE ON MONDAY, APRIL 7 AT 10 AM: EMAIL SHORT SUMMARIES OF PROFILE PITCHES BEFORE CLASS

Let’s hear those profile pitches! Profiles can be a very valuable storytelling tool to help readers understand the people who make the fashion industry what it is, *yes, designers*, but also the people work behind the scenes: a cobbler who has been meticulously crafting shoes for decades, a seamstress in the Garment District, a celebrity stylist who carefully crafts an image.

And we’ll hear from a guest speaker, writer Emilia Petrarca.

In-class exercises: Trend story memo/outline review and feedback; profiles pitch meeting; in group.

“Charli XCX Finally Grabbed the Spotlight. Now She’s Remixing It.” by Emilia Petrarca

“Why is Every Bride I Know Choosing This Designer?” by Emilia Petrarca

“We Asked 350 Readers What is Tasteful and What is Tacky” by Emilia Petrarca

DUE ON FRIDAY, APRIL 11TH AT NOON: FINAL DRAFT OF TREND STORY

APRIL 14

DUE ON MONDAY, APRIL 14 AT 10 AM: PROFILE REPORTING MEMO/OUTLINE

Let’s keep talking about profiles: who are the people surrounding the subject who can give us a full picture? We will workshop your memos and talk about who can be additional sources. Maybe it’s a spouse, someone they work with, or even someone from their past. We will discuss how to bring your subject to life for the reader and read some fashion profiles.

Plus, we will discuss the first Monday in May ... aka the Met Gala. What stories have you seen that you thought were valuable pieces on the Met Gala? What stories would you like to read on the Met Gala? Who are the key players you want to hear from?

In-class exercises: Profiles exercise; workshopping trend drafts.

Reading we’ll discuss in class:

“The Suitor” by Rachel Syme

APRIL 21

DUE ON MONDAY, APRIL 21TH AT 10 AM: FIRST DRAFT OF PROFILE PIECE

Let’s chat about profiles (again) today! We will give each other feedback on your first draft and you will have a 1:1 session with me. We will continue to talk about your reporting plan, what sources you already have, what scene you can build and give you time to work on it in class, with your peers (and me) providing feedback.

In-class exercise: Workshop profile drafts and strategizing reporting plans.

Reading we’ll discuss in class:

“The Woman Who Became McQueen” by Cathy Horyn

APRIL 28

DUE ON MONDAY, APRIL 28TH AT 10 AM: SECOND DRAFT OF PROFILE// AND MET GALA PITCHES

This is the day we will really get into the nitty-gritty edits of your profile and see what else you need to add.

We will also be talking about the Met Gala! So come prepared to talk about your ideas and pitches.

MAY 5th: Met Gala Day!

It's the first Monday in May, which means ... it's Met Gala day! This is an exciting day for everyone in fashion, so you are expected to go on a reporting excursion. Since this is the last class, let's end where we began with fashion news. You will be expected to go and find a story surrounding the Met Gala. This can be a traffic controller at the Met, the people who stand outside the Mark Hotel, waiting for celebrities to show up, or, if you are lucky, a look inside the exhibition.

In-class exercises: A Met Gala excursion

MAY 12: Final profiles due

I will be available from May 5th to May 12th for one-on-one profile editing sessions, where we will go over what needs to be done for your profile.

DUE ON MONDAY, MAY 12TH AT NOON: FINAL DRAFT OF PROFILE