(un)Sustainable Fashion

Semester: Summer I 2019
Credits: 4
Class Time: Tue & Thu 5.00 pm - 8.00 pm
Class Location: TBD
Prerequisites: None

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Nimrah Syed is a multimedia designer and research practitioner. She has work experience for more than eight years in the creative sector with a background in fashion design and management. Her curiosity to understand the changing dynamics of our lifestyles led her to focus on interactive technology and design research. As a graduate from OCAD University in Toronto, her practice focuses on designing strategies for social challenges through design thinking.

She is currently a Resident Research Fellow at the Interactive Media Arts program at New York University, Shanghai.

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Course Description
Note: This course is aimed not only at design, business and/or environmental studies students but also for any student simply interested in the development of sustainable design and research practice.

This course encourages students to reflect on the current design practices in the fashion industry and explore the concept of sustainability through the lens of ethnography. This methodology curates an ethical understanding of human-engaged research approach to investigate contemporary design production and consumption practices at a systemic level.

As critics of unsustainable practices and enthusiasts for sustainable development, the students will explore factors involved in the business of fashion and approaches to designing solutions through the use of sustainability frameworks for challenges identified as part of their inquiry process. A visit to YiWu, one of the world’s major consumer goods manufacturing capitals, would further help in developing an understanding of mass production and consumption practices. The lectures and case studies are aimed to increase critical understanding and awareness of the importance of sustainability not as an individual concept but throughout the
lifecycle process. The guest speaker and in-class workshops will facilitate a hands-on approach towards the intended design outcome.

This course is a conceptual and production class which will involve a design intervention group project with either a problem solving or awareness raising approach, weekly in-class topic presentations and reading responses.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Evaluate the current and future sustainability of fashion and textiles
- Enhance critical thinking and understanding of complex relationships with multiple stakeholders to achieve sustainable outcomes
- Explore sustainability as a systemic approach incorporated throughout as part of the design process and not seen in isolation or as an afterthought
- Design sustainable solutions and/or raise thought provoking queries at different phases of the processes involved in the fashion industry
- Develop, conduct and evaluate qualitative user research through Design Ethnography along with an understanding of research ethics
- Hone collaborative skills through teamwork within an interdisciplinary environment and people with different interests, skill sets and personality types

**Topics Covered**

Anthropocene, Sustainability, Circular Economy, Cradle to Cradle Design Approach, Ethnographic Research, Sustainable Consumption Behaviour, Fast / Slow Fashion

**Schedule**

*The schedule is subject to minor changes in order to accommodate for the needs of the cohort and our desired learning goals. Guest speakers, workshops and field visit will be planned and adjusted accordingly.*

**Week 1 - Exploration**

**Class 1**

- Introduction to Anthropocene.
- What does sustainability mean?
- Exploring sustainability in the fashion industry.

**Assignment**

- Video & Reading Response

- A group of students (2-3) will select a textile material to explore as an in-class topic presentation along with documentation submission.

**Class 2**
- Documentary Screening (TBD) followed by discussion.
- What is Ethical Fashion?
- Fast Fashion vs Slow Fashion.
- In-class Topic Presentation: Textile Material Exploration

**Assignment**
- Reading Response

**Week 2 - Research Approach | Ethnography in Practice**

**Class 1**
- What is Ethnography?
- Research methods and practices.

**Assignment**
- Case Study Response
  - A group of students (2-3) will select a textile material to explore as an in-class topic presentation along with documentation submission.

**Class 2**
- Ethics of Ethnography.
- In-class Workshop: Mini Ethnographic Research.
- In-class Topic Presentation: Textile Material Exploration

*Field visit to Yiwu*
An ethnographic research trip to investigate mass production and consumption practices in one of the world’s largest wholesale commodity market.

**Assignment**
- Write a blog post about your ethnographic research process and observations along with supported documentation. The documentation may include audio, video and/or photo essays. Present your research findings in class.

**Week 3 - Business of Fashion | Design & Development**

**Class 1**
- Presentation: Ethnographic Research Observations.
- Sustainable design theory and practices.
- Design ethics for sustainability.

**Assignment**
- Reading Response
- Identify a challenge for design intervention within the fashion industry from either a production or a consumption perspective. Using ethnographic research approach in the process to reach to your design solution, present your idea in the next class.

**Class 2**
- Presentation: Design Challenge.
- Introducing Design Thinking framework.
- In-class Workshop: Mind Mapping.

**Assignment**
- Reading Response
Week 4 - Business of Fashion | Sustainability Frameworks

Class 1
- Introduction to Circular Economy.
- Linear vs Circular Approach.
- Lifecycle of a fashion product.

**Assignment**
- Case Study Response
  - A group of students (2-3) will select a textile material to explore as an in-class topic presentation along with documentation submission.

Class 2
- Cradle to Cradle Design Approach.
- In-class Workshop: Circular Approach for Design Challenge projects
- In-class Topic Presentation: Textile Material Exploration

**Assignment**
- Write a blog post about work-in-progress of your final project including research update with assets.

Week 5 - Business of Fashion | Sustainable Consumption Behaviour & Practices

Class 1
- Sustainable practices.
- Fashion, sustainability and politics.
- Production and consumption.

**Assignment**
- Reading Response

- A group of students (2-3) will select a textile material to explore as an in-class topic presentation along with documentation submission.

**Class 2**
- Guest Speaker: TBD
- Responsible Consumption.
- In-class Topic Presentation: Textile Material Exploration

**Week 6 - Project Review & Presentations**

**Class 1**
- In-class work time for the final project.

  **Assignment**
  - Work on your final project presentations.

**Class 2**
- Presentations.

  **Assignment**
  - Submit your final project presentations including all the assets and presentations with reflections.

**Grading**

**Grading Weightage**

- 30%  Design Intervention/Inquiry Project (Presentation + Slide Deck + Assets + Reflection)
- 20%  Field Visit Ethnographic Investigation
- 15%  In-class Topic Presentation + Documentation
- 15%  Critical Responses
- 10%  WIP (Idea evolution, Research update, Asset & Reflection)
- 10%  In-class Performance (including Attendance and Participation)

**Grading Scale**

A: Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning.
B: Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research.

C: Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level.

D: Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations.

F: Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria.

**Attendance & Participation**

Attendance in all classes is mandatory. Unexcused absences and tardiness will affect the overall grade. If the student intends to be absent or late, please let the instructor know in advance in order to figure out how to make up for missed class. Not doing so will result in an unexcused absence; 2 unexcused absences will lead to a failing grade.

Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions and to contribute to each class session. During peer presentations, students in the class must speak engage and give constructive feedback to their peers about their work in some capacity.

**Religious Observances**

New York University, as a nonsectarian institution, adheres to the general policy of including in its official calendar only certain legal holidays. However, it has also long been NYU policy that members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when compliance with their religious obligations requires it. However, students are expected to notify their instructor in advance if they intend to miss class to observe a holy day of their religious faith.

**Classroom Conduct**

Laptops are permitted in class to take notes and to follow along during demonstrations. During class discussions and student presentations, there will be a strict lids-down policy enforced. All other devices are not to be used, and checking social media during class is prohibited.

No student may record any classroom activity for a personal use without express written consent from the instructor. If a student has a disability such that the classroom activities need to be recorded or taped, please contact the instructor to request an appropriate accommodation.

**Academic Integrity**
Students are expected to read and understand the university’s policy on academic integrity as laid out in the Undergraduate Bulletin. Plagiarism and cheating will be penalized. If there are any questions or doubts about plagiarism, please do not hesitate to come to the instructor’s office hours.

**Students with Disabilities**

NYU is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. It is NYU Shanghai’s policy that no student with a qualified disability be excluded from participating in any NYU Shanghai program or activity, denied the benefits of any NYU Shanghai program or activity, or otherwise subjected to discrimination with regard to any NYU Shanghai program or activity.

The Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) in New York determines qualified disability status and assists students in obtaining appropriate accommodations and services. CSD operates according to an Independent Living Philosophy and strives in its policies and practices to empower each student to become as independent as possible. Their services are designed to encourage independence, backed by a strong system of supports.

Any student who needs a reasonable accommodation based on a qualified disability is required to register with the CSD for assistance. They should contact the Director of the Academic Resource Center, Cydney Delia (cydney.delia@nyu.edu) for assistance in registering.

**Tutoring and Writing Support**

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) provides tutoring and support to students looking to reach their highest academic potential. Students can schedule a meeting, or drop by, for any of the following:

- Individual and small-group tutoring in over 30 STEM and Business & Economics courses
- Individual writing consultations at any stage of the writing process
- Academic coaching in areas such as time management, reading & note-taking strategies, exam preparation, and goal setting
- Workshops on writing, academic skills, and technologies
- Group study and conversation circles
- Students are also welcome to study on their own in the comfortable, supportive atmosphere of the ARC.

**Library and Research Services**

The Library is available to support research needs of the students. The Library and Research Services have access to 14,000 print resources, 2,000 DVDs, and 1,000 databases (including over a million e-books, as well as streaming audio and video and image databases). Librarians with expertise in Business, Economics, Humanities, Science (STEM), and Social Sciences are
available in-person and online to help. Services include:

- One-to-one consultations to help with research projects
- Reference Desk hours for immediate help with finding and using resources
- Workshops on research strategies, special databases, academic integrity, and using citation tools.