

Mark-E0058

Sociology of Consumption and Fashion

The concept of “fashion” is filled with meaning and much of this stems from its everyday use—we say something is “in fashion”, “fashionable” or “the latest fashion.” Yet these statements only scratch the surface of what fashion means to contemporary consumer culture. This course aims to illuminate precisely this. More specifically, we will focus on how the cultural world of fashion is constructed and what roles do consumers play within it.

The course is primarily designed for those pursuing a career in the fashion industry. Students will be exposed to cutting edge academic work as well as renowned experts in the Nordic fashion industry. That said, the course also serves as a special topic consumer behavior class. We dive deep into theory as well as empirics of fashion consumption; the course will cover certain topics relating to consumer behavior (identity, gender, semiotics, sociology consumption) at much greater depth than a regular consumer behavior class—even an advanced one. Therefore, the course will also be of high value to aspiring trend scouts, (market) researchers, branding experts, entrepreneurs, and B2C marketing managers.

The responsible teacher for the course is **Oscar Ahlberg**, Doctoral Candidate in Marketing at the Department of Marketing at Aalto University School of Business.

1. INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:

1. Assess different fields of fashion and map out their constituting elements as well as their relations.
2. Produce valuable insights on consumers preferences, projects, and desires relating to fashion.
3. Demonstrate analytical abilities to explain what consumers do in the world of fashion
4. Produce consumer brand strategies, both in fashion and beyond
5. Demonstrate knowledge on the interplay of consumer culture, technological developments, and the production of fashion.
6. Assess critically the role of fashion in wider societal issues such as, gender norms, sustainability, and communal belonging.

2. ASSESSMENT

The course is evaluated on the grading scale (0-5).

Breakdown of the final grade (100%):

- Two individual assignments (40%)
- Activity points (20%)
- Group work (essay and presentation) (40%)

Passing the course requires obtaining at least 50%, completing all assignments and attendance of the mandatory guest lectures.

3. ASSIGNMENTS AND READINGS

A collection of articles and book excerpts comprise the reading material for the course. The below list is preliminary. The full list of articles detailing which texts correspond to each course theme will be available and updated in MyCourses. All assignment instructions will be available in MyCourses when the course starts.

Reading the articles for each class is considered mandatory. Admissions or evidence of sub-par preparation will lead to penalties in course grades. We expect you to familiarize yourself with the articles and apply the relevant theories in your group and individual assignments.

3. COURSE WORKLOAD

Here is a breakdown the expected breakdown of the course workload:

22h	Lectures
90h	Individual assignments and preparation for lectures
48h	Group work + presentation preparation
160h	TOTAL 6 ECTS

4. CURRENT SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Tuesday 10 January

Course Introduction and Fashion in Consumer Culture

Oscar Ahlberg

Thursday 12 January

Fashion in Consumer Culture

Oscar Ahlberg

Class readings:

Tokatli, N. (2018). "Fashion, functionality, and the contemporary consumer", *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 1469540518773814.

Belk, R. (2019). "On Standing Out and Fitting In", *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 10(3): 219-227.

Recommended:

Miller, D. (2004). "The little black dress is the solution. But what's the problem?" *Berg*.

Östberg, J. (2011). "Style", In D. Southerton (Ed.), *The encyclopedia for consumer culture* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Meamber, L. A., Joy, A., & Venkatesh, A. (2017). Fashion in consumer culture. In M. Keller, B. Halkier, T.-A. Wilska, & M. Truninger (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook on Consumption* (1st ed., pp. 431–441). Routledge.

McCracken, G. (2009). "Culture Fast and Slow", in *Chief Culture Officer*.

Gronow, J. (1993). "Taste and fashion: the social function of fashion and style", *Acta Sociologica*, 36(2), 89-100.

Tuesday 17 January

The Fashion System and Semiotics in Fashion

Oscar Ahlberg

Class readings:

Barthes, R. (2013). "On the Fashion System", in *The Language of Fashion*. Bloomsbury.

McCracken, G.D. & Roth, V.J. (1989). "Does clothing have a code? Empirical findings and theoretical implications in the study of clothing as a means of communication", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 6(1), 13-33.

Recommended:

Barthes, R. (2013). "Fashion and the Social Sciences" in *The Language of Fashion*. Bloomsbury.

Barthes, R. (1977). *Elements of semiology*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Murray, J. B. (2002). The Politics of Consumption: A Re-Inquiry on Thompson and Haytko's (1997) "Speaking of Fashion": Table 1. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(3), 427–440

Berger, A.A. (2016). "Signs: Fashion", in *Applied Discourse Analysis* (pp. 51-60). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Thursday 19 January

Fashion in Consumer Culture: Sociological Perspectives, Body and Gender

Guest lecture – Petra Paasonen, Doctoral candidate (mandatory attendance)

Class readings:

Entwistle, J. (2000). Fashion and the fleshy body: Dress as embodied practice. *Fashion Theory*, 4 (3), 323-347.

Zanette, M. C., & Scaraboto, D. (2019). From the corset to Spanx: shapewear as a marketplace icon. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 22 (2), 183-199.

Recommended:

Brice, J., Thorpe, H., Wheaton, B. & Longhurst, R., (2022). Postfeminism, consumption and activewear: Examining women consumers' relationship with the postfeminine ideal. *Journal of Consumer Culture*

Farinosi, M., (2022). Deconstructing the stigma of ageing: The rise of the mature female influencers. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*

Gurrieri, L. (2021). Patriarchal marketing and the symbolic annihilation of women. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 37(3-4), 364-370.

Gurrieri, L. & Drenten, J. (2019). The feminist politics of choice: lipstick as a marketplace icon. *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 24(3), 225-240.

Twigg, J. (2007). Clothing, age and the body: A critical review. *Ageing and Society*, 27(2), 285-305.

Volonté, P. (2019). The thin ideal and the practice of fashion. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 19(2), 252-270.

Tuesday 24 January

Authenticity and Fashion

Guest lecture - Dr. Joel Hietanen, Uni of Helsinki (mandatory attendance)

Class reading:

Hietanen, J., Murray, J. B., Sihvonen, A., & Tikkanen, H. (2020). Seduced by "fakes": Producing the excessive interplay of authentic/counterfeit from a Baudrillardian perspective. *Marketing Theory*, 20(1), 23–43.

Recommended:

Colucci, M., & Pedroni, M. (2022). Got to be real: An investigation into the co-fabrication of authenticity by fashion companies and digital influencers. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 22(4), 929–948.

Cotter, K. (2019). Playing the visibility game: How digital influencers and algorithms negotiate influence on Instagram. *New Media & Society*, 21(4), 895–913.

Hartmann, B. J., & Ostberg, J. (2013). Authenticating by re-enchantment: The discursive making of craft production. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(7–8), 882–911.

Joy, A., Zhu, Y., Peña, C., & Brouard, M. (2022). Digital future of luxury brands: Metaverse, digital fashion, and non-fungible tokens. *Strategic Change*, 31(3), 337–343.

McQuarrie, E. F., Miller, J., & Phillips, B. J. (2013). The Megaphone Effect: Taste and Audience in Fashion Blogging. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(1), 136–158.

Thursday 26 January

Buying, Using & Disposing of Fashion

Guest lecture – Dr. Linda Turunen, Aalto (mandatory attendance)

Class readings:

Cwerner, S.B. (2001). “Clothes at Rest: Elements for a Sociology of the Wardrobe”, *Fashion Theory*, 5(1), 79-92.

Mellander, E., & Petersson McIntyre, M. (2021). Fashionable detachments: Wardrobes, bodies and the desire to let go. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 24(4), 343–356.

Recommended:

Bardhi, F. & Eckhardt, G.M. (2017). “Liquid consumption”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44(3), 582-597.

Bye, E. & McKinney, E. (2007). “Sizing up the wardrobe—Why we keep clothes that do not fit”, *Fashion Theory*, 11(4), 483-498.

Gregson, N., & Beale, V. (2004). “Wardrobe matter: the sorting, displacement and circulation of women’s clothing”, *Geoforum*, 35(6), 689-700.

Turunen, L.L.M., Cervellon, M. C., & Carey, L. D. (2020). “Selling second-hand luxury: Empowerment and enactment of social roles”, *Journal of Business Research*, 116, 474-481.

Tuesday 31 January

Consumers as Groups: Demographics, Subcultures, and Consumption Communities in Fashion

Oscar Ahlberg

Class readings:

Kawamura, Y. (2018). *Sneakers: Fashion, Gender, and Subculture* (1st ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Scaraboto, D. & E. Fischer (2013). “Frustrated Fatshionistas: An Institutional Theory Perspective on Consumer Quests for Greater Choice in Mainstream Markets”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(6), 1234–57.

Recommended:

Rinallo, D. (2007). “Metro/fashion/tribes of men: Negotiating the boundaries of men’s legitimate consumption”, *Consumer tribes*, 76-92.

Rahman, O., Wing-Sun, L. & Cheung, B.H.M. (2012). “‘Cosplay’: Imaginative self and performing identity”. *Fashion Theory*, 16(3), 317-341.

Newholm, T., & Hopkinson, G. C. (2009). I just tend to wear what I like: Contemporary consumption and the paradoxical construction of individuality. *Marketing Theory*, 9(4), 439–462.

Schouten, J.W. & McAlexander, J.H. (1995). “Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(1), 43-61.

Sandikci, O. & G. Ger (2010). “Veiling in Style: How Does a Stigmatized Practice Become Fashionable?”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(1), 15–36.

Thursday 2 February

Changing Spaces in Fashion

Oscar Ahlberg

Class readings:

Crewe, L. (2016). “Placing fashion: Art, space, display and the building of luxury fashion markets through retail design”, *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(4), 511-529.

Entwistle, J., & Rocamora, A. (2006). The field of fashion materialized: a study of London Fashion Week. *Sociology*, 40(4), 735-751.

Recommended:

Kawamura, Y. (2006). “Japanese teens as producers of street fashion”, *Current Sociology*, 54(5), 784-801.

Pinchera, V., & Rinallo, D. (2021). Marketplace icon: The fashion show. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 24(5), 479–491.

Tuesday 7 February

Fashion in a Digital Consumer Culture

Oscar Ahlberg

Class readings:

Cotter, K. (2019). "Playing the visibility game: How digital influencers and algorithms negotiate influence on Instagram", *New Media & Society*, 21(4), 895-913.

Joy, A., Zhu, Y., Peña, C., & Brouard, M. (2022). Digital future of luxury brands: Metaverse, digital fashion, and non-fungible tokens. *Strategic Change*, 31(3), 337-343.

Recommended:

McQuarrie, E.F., Miller, J. & Phillips, B.J. (2012). "The megaphone effect: Taste and audience in fashion blogging", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(1), 136-158.

Colucci, M., & Pedroni, M. (2022). Got to be real: An investigation into the co-fabrication of authenticity by fashion companies and digital influencers. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 22(4), 929-948.

Dolbec, P.Y. & Fischer, E. (2015). "Refashioning a field? Connected consumers and institutional dynamics in markets", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(6), 1447-1468.

Dolbec, P.Y. & Maciel, A. (2018). "In or Out? How Consumer Performances Lead to the Emergence of New Tastes", In *Taste, Consumption, and Markets*, Routledge.

Kretz, G. & de Valck, K. (2013). "Fashion blogging," in *The Routledge Companion to Digital Consumption* (pp. 80-89). Routledge

Thursday 9 February

Fashion at the end of the world

Oscar Ahlberg

Class readings:

Bradshaw, A., & Zwick, D. (2016). The Field of Business Sustainability and the Death Drive: A Radical Intervention. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 136(2), 267-279.

Henninger, C. E., Alevizou, P. J., & Oates, C. J. (2016). What is sustainable fashion? *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 20(4), 400-416.

Recommended:

Campbell, N., McHugh, G., & Ennis, P. (2019). Climate Change Is Not a Problem: Speculative Realism at the End of Organization. *Organization Studies*, 40(5), 725-744.

Niinimäki, K., Peters, G., Dahlbo, H., Perry, P., Rissanen, T., & Gwilt, A. (2020). The environmental price of fast fashion. *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment*, 1(4), 189-200.

Niinimäki, K. (2010). Eco-clothing, consumer identity and ideology. *Sustainable Development*, 18(3), 150–162.

Monday 14 February

Group presentations & comments
(mandatory attendance, no readings)

Thursday 16 February

Group presentations & comments
(mandatory attendance, no readings)

5. ETHICAL RULES

Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity:

<https://into.aalto.fi/display/ensaannot/Aalto+University+Code+of+Academic+Integrity+and+Handling+Violations+Thereof>

6. OTHER ISSUES

Attendance in all guest lectures and case presentation session is mandatory.