

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. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will gain

1. ... the ability to analyze different fields of fashion and map out their constituting elements as well as their relations
2. ...valuable insights on consumers' preferences, projects, and desires relating to fashion
3. ...analytical abilities to explain what consumers "do" in the world of fashion
4. ...skills for developing consumer brand strategies, both in fashion and beyond
5. ... new perspectives on the culture and production of fashion

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

Monday 10 January

Course Introduction and Fashion in Consumer Culture

Oscar Ahlberg

Wednesday 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

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.

Monday 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.

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

Wednesday 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:

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

Jantzen, C., Østergaard, P., & Sucena Vieira, C.M. (2006). Becoming a 'woman to the backbone' - Lingerie consumption and the experience of feminine identity. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 6 (2), 177-202.

Parmentier, M-A. (2016). High heels. *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 19 (6), 511-519.

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

Zanette, M. C., & Pereira Zamith Brito, E. (2019). Fashionable subjects and complicity resistance: Power, subjectification, and bounded resistance in the context of plus-size consumers. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 22(4), 363-382.

Monday 24 January

Authenticity and Fashion

Guest lecture – Dr. Joel Hietanen, Uni of Helsinki and Dr. Antti Sihvonen, Uni of Jyväskylä. (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.

Forthcoming

Wednesday 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.

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.

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., Leipämaa-Leskinen, H., & Sihvonen, J. (2018). Restructuring secondhand fashion from the consumption perspective. In *Vintage luxury fashion* (pp. 11-27). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Monday 31 January

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

Oscar Ahlberg

Class readings:

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

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.

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

Seregina, A. & H. Weijo (2017). "Play at Any Cost: How Cosplayers Produce and Sustain Their Ludic Communal Consumption Experiences," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44 (1), 139–59.

Wednesday 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.

Monday 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.

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.

Recommended:

Deleuze, G. (2017). *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (pp. 35-39). Routledge.

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.

Monday 14 February

Group presentations & comments
(mandatory attendance, no readings)

Wednesday 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.