

**UWC2101J: WRITING AND CRITICAL THINKING—CLOTHING IDENTITIES**  
**UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS PROGRAMME, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE**  
**AY2017-18 SEMESTER 2**

Group 1: Tue/Fri 12-2 pm in USP Seminar Room 2  
Group 2: Tue/Fri 4-6 pm in USP Seminar Room 2

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This module, like others in the USP Writing and Critical Thinking domain, has the primary objective of helping you to become a better writer of academic essays. There are different kinds of academic essays, but some might suggest that what makes an essay “academic” or “scholarly,” regardless of its discipline, is that it analyzes evidence in a primary and original fashion, in order to put forth a motivated argument. That, at least, will be our working definition of an academic essay, though one goal in the module will of course be to understand that definition, which will require us to think about the meanings and even the nature of terms like “motive,” “thesis,” “analysis,” and “evidence.”

In order to learn to write academic or scholarly essays, we will focus—at least at the start of the module—on a delimited subject. Ours can be expressed by this question: what are the possible relationships between clothing and fashion, and identity? In order to craft academic arguments about this question, we will first need to read and think critically about materials that also deal with it. This is because a precondition of scholarly work is a familiarity with existing knowledge: thus, we will need to spend some time engaging with what other writers, with whom we are essentially entering into a dialogue, have already said about the topic.

In this class, writing is not just a way to represent or communicate the solutions that you formulate in your head; writing is instead a way of helping you come up with those solutions and arguments. Writing will be a way of thinking through the problems. In addition, this module will help you acquire some “technical” skills: not so much grammar, but the protocols of academic writing (citations, formatting, working with sources), as well as methods of conducting research. These are all important skills that should come in useful for the rest of your time at NUS, and perhaps beyond.

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## **UNIT 1: CLOTHES TALK**

**Topical Sub-Objectives:** Before we examine the various relationships between clothing/fashion and identity, we will consider the nature of clothes and the ways they can be said to “speak”—about identity, but also in general.

**Rhetorical Sub-Objectives:** How might we make a claim or an argument about a text (including different genres and kinds of texts)? What evidence is required for claims to be convincing—and conversely, when we start with a piece of evidence, what kinds of claims can follow? How do we properly set up or motivate a claim or argument?

### **Schedule:**

#### **Tue Jan 16**

No topical readings; introductions

#### **Fri Jan 19**

“Read” the Transit Workers Count Too t-shirt (two jpeg files: “TWC2 T-Shirt Front” and “TWC2 T-Shirt Back”)

**Tue Jan 23**

Barnard, Malcolm. "Fashion, Clothing and Meaning." In *Fashion as Communication*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002. 72-94 (excerpt).

Saussure, Ferdinand de. "Nature of the Linguistic Sign." In *Course in General Linguistics*. Ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye. Trans. Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966. 65-70 (excerpt).

**Fri Jan 26**

Finkelstein, Joanne. "The Self as Sign." In *The Fashioned Self*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. 177-193.

**Tue Jan 30**

Chandler, Daniel. "Signs and Things." In *Semiotics: The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2002. 55-69, 77-78 (excerpts).

**Fri Feb 2**

No topical readings; "elements of the essay" workshop

**Tue Feb 6 and Fri Feb 9**

No seminar meetings; paper 1 conferences

**UNIT 2: FASHION AND IDENTITY**

**Topical Sub-Objectives:** Many thinkers have suggested that fashion—that process and phenomenon whereby certain styles (of clothing) become temporarily popular—is tied to both individual and collective identity. In this unit, we will study and compare several such theories.

**Rhetorical Sub-Objectives:** How might we make claims or arguments about more complicated kinds of texts? How might we compare two texts, or put them into conversation?

**Schedule:****Tue Feb 13**

Simmel, Georg. "Fashion." 1904. Rpt. in *The American Journal of Sociology* 62.6 (May 1957): 541-546 (excerpt).

**Fri Feb 16**

No class (Chinese New Year)

**Tue Feb 20**

Sapir, Edward. "Fashion." 1931. Rpt. in *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality*. Ed. David G. Mandelbaum. Berkeley et al: University of California Press, 1983. 373-381.

**Fri Feb 23**

Blumer, Herbert. "Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection." *The Sociological Quarterly* 10.3 (Summer 1969): 275-291.

**Tue Feb 27 and Fri Mar 2**

No classes (Mid-term break)

**Tue Mar 6**

Davis, Fred. "Fashion and Social Identities" and "Identity Ambivalence, Fashion's Fuel." In *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 15-29.

**Fri Mar 9**

No topical readings; workshop on documenting sources

**Tue Mar 13 and Fri Mar 16**

No seminar meetings; paper 2 conferences

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## UNIT 3: CLOTHING AND IDENTITY

**Topical Sub-Objectives:** Unit 3 will broaden the focus from fashion to clothing, and consider the latter's relationship to identity. In particular, we will examine a number of related and even overlapping case studies: modest dress, religious veiling, and school uniforms.

**Rhetorical Sub-Objectives:** What are the functions of research? How do we work with multiple sources? How do we make larger claims—to generalize, or to move from detail to abstraction?

### **Schedule:**

#### **Tue Mar 20**

Arthur, Linda Boynton. "Clothing is a Window to the Soul': The Social Control of Women in a Holdeman Mennonite Community." *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 15 (1997): 11-30.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Clothing, Control, and Women's Agency: The Mitigation of Patriarchal Power." *Negotiating at the Margins: The Gendered Discourses of Power and Resistance*. Ed. Sue Fisher and Kathy Davis. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993. 66-84.

#### **Fri Mar 23**

Hoodfar, Homa. "The Veil in Their Minds and on Our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women." *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*. Ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997. 248-279.

#### **Tue Mar 27**

No topical readings; research workshop

#### **Fri Mar 30**

No class (Good Friday)

#### **Tue Apr 3**

Dussel, Inés. "Fashioning the Schooled Self Through Uniforms: A Foucauldian Approach to Contemporary School Policies." *Dangerous Coagulations? The Uses of Foucault in the Study of Education*. Ed. Bernadette M. Baker & Katherine E. Heyning. New York et al: Peter Lang, 2014. 85-116.

#### **Fri Apr 6**

Craik, Jennifer. "The Face of Fashion: Technical Bodies and Technologies of Self." In *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993. 1-16.

#### **Tue Apr 10**

No topical readings; first round of paper 3 presentations and workshops

#### **Fri Apr 13**

No topical readings; second round of paper 3 presentations and workshops

#### **Tue Apr 17 and Fri Apr 20**

No seminar meetings; paper 3 conferences

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## REQUIREMENTS

There are no examinations in this module, which is instead graded on 100% continuous assessment. CA consists of five components:

### **1. Attendance, Class Participation and Presentations (10%)**

**Attendance** of seminars is mandatory. If you have a good reason to miss a meeting—family emergencies, documented illnesses—please let know (in advance, if possible). Otherwise, your absences will be considered unexcused, and these will affect your grade.

Please come to the seminars having finished the assigned readings and writing exercises, and ready to be a **thoughtfully talkative participant**. Be active in your reading: instead of using a highlighter, it is better to use a pen or pencil to mark up, take notes on, or write comments about the texts we are reading (in the margins, or in a journal).

You will also be asked to do occasional **oral reports**, including a brief presentation about your final paper.

## **2. Written Work (15%)**

There will be various **pre-writing exercises** during the semester, which are designed to help you with the three papers. These exercises are scored not with the more traditional letter grades, but with ticks (and pluses and minuses).

You will also be asked to write a **peer review** of a classmate's paper, in order to help him or her to revise an essay draft.

## **3. Paper 1: 2-4-page close reading of one text (20%)**

## **4. Paper 2: 5-6-page analysis of one text, or a comparative analysis of two texts (TBD) (25%)**

## **5. Paper 3: 7-9-page research paper using multiple sources (30%)**

Each paper requires a first draft. Each draft will be the basis of peer reviews, or individual conferences with me; although drafts are not graded, you cannot pass an assignment if you do not hand in a draft. Drafts and final papers are due on the dates noted, and no late submissions are accepted.

Each draft and paper, of course, must be typed, double-spaced, titled, and have page numbers. There is no need for a cover page; instead, at the top left hand corner of your first page, please type the following information:

Your name  
Your matric number  
UWC2101N: Clothing Identities  
A/P Lo Mun Hou  
Assignment [e.g.: Paper 1 Draft]  
Assignment due date

Every paper you submit must be proofread, not just run through the spellchecker. Also remember that plagiarism (using other people's words, ideas, or organizational structures without acknowledgment) and multiple submissions (handing in a paper originally or simultaneously written for another class) are serious offenses and almost always result in a failing grade—not just for the assignment, but for the entire course—as well as the possibility of dismissal from the programme and even the university.

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## **RESOURCES**

All the readings for the module are available as pdfs from our IVLE workbin. There is also a writer's guide for this class, Gordon Harvey's *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students (3rd Edition)*, which is available for purchase from the NUS Coop at the Forum.