

# Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice

NYSED: 85053 CIP: 30.1401

The 50-credit, full- or part-time program in Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice prepares students for professional curatorial, conservation, education, and other scholarly careers that focus on historic clothing, accessories, textiles, and other related materials. Fashion and textiles are explored from a variety of perspectives, including traditional art historical methodologies, as well as innovative approaches, such as anthropology, material culture, and gender studies. The curriculum offers a vigorous, hands-on approach to the study of fiber-based objects through a close association with The Museum at FIT. Students may elect either a curatorial or a conservation emphasis, but all students are taught basic conservation skills, current collections management methods, and the proper exhibition techniques for costumes and textiles. To supplement their historical and analytical courses, students are required to complete at least one internship, write a master's qualifying paper based on original research, and take an active role in a yearlong course that culminates in a professional exhibition at The Museum at FIT. Students may customize the course of study by choosing their qualifying paper topic and their internship location. They may also select up to two independent study courses with an appropriate focus on their chosen specialization. In addition, students may transfer up to nine (9) credits in related coursework from other graduate institutions.

Graduates of the program find positions as museum curators, research specialists, collections managers and registrars, historic house directors, museum educators, independent exhibition curators, corporate curators, fashion and textile historians, costume and textile conservators, auction house department

specialists and researchers, vintage clothing and textile dealers, archivists, and consultants. Curriculum below is for the entering class of fall 2025.

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## COURSE OF STUDY

### Semester 1

FT 521	Fashion History through the Nineteenth Century	3
FT 522	History of Textiles through the Nineteenth Century	3
FT 541	Proseminar: Critical Writing, Research Techniques, and Documentation Methods	1
FT 551	Collection Management Skills	3
FT 561	Fiber and Fabric: Identification and Analysis	3

### Semester 2

FT 523	History of Twentieth Century Fashion	3
FT 524	Dress and Textiles in World Cultures	3
FT 552	Museum Theory and Practices	3
FT 562	Conservation Practices: Theory and Technique	3
FT 691	Internship: Preparation and Planning	1

### Semester 3

FT 653	Costume and Textile Mounting Skills	3
FT 654	Exhibition: Planning and Interpretation	3
FT 693	Internship: Completion and Assessment	1
FT 701	Qualifying Paper Seminar	2

Choose any one course from the following: 3

FT 625 Fashion Theory I: Art Historical and Social Theories of Fashion

FT 6 Advanced Conservation I

### Semester 4

FT 626	Modern Textiles: Designers, Makers, and Markets	3
FT 655	Exhibition: Practicum	3

Choose any two courses from the following: 6

FT 625 History of American Men's Wear

FT 6 Special Topics

FT 630 Advanced Theory: Symposium Seminar

FT 6 Advanced Curatorial: Historic Interiors

FT 6 Advanced Conservation II

**Total Credits** 50

### Additional Courses

FT 692 Independent Study (1-3 cr.), and  
MM 701 Maintenance of Matriculation (0 cr.)

## COMMON REQUIREMENTS

All degree programs require that students maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 every semester while enrolled in the program. A student is placed on probation if his or her semester GPA is below 3.0. A student is not subject to academic dismissal at the end of his or her first semester in a degree program. A student will be dismissed from the college after two consecutive semesters with a GPA below 3.0. A final GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation.

## ADVANCEMENT TO DEGREE CANDIDACY

### Eligibility to Attend Commencement Exercises

Candidates for the master's degree at FIT must have advanced to candidacy before being permitted to attend graduation ceremonies.

### Degree Requirements

#### General

For admittance to degree candidacy, students must have satisfied all outstanding prerequisites, completed a minimum of 47 approved course credits, achieved a final grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0, completed at least one official internship, and had their qualifying paper approved by the faculty Qualifying Paper Committee. Students must have advanced to degree candidacy before being permitted to attend graduation ceremonies.

#### Internship

The Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice program emphasizes practical, professional experience, and therefore each student is required to complete an approved internship. Although only one internship is required for graduation, students may choose to serve additional internships for networking opportunities and as aids to professional growth.

Internships may be pursued during the academic year or during winter or summer breaks, and require a minimum commitment of 80 hours. Past sites for

internships have included The Museum at FIT; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Costume Institute; Christie's and Sotheby's auction houses; the Brooklyn Museum; the Museum of the City of New York; the textile conservation lab at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine; the Cooper Hewitt; Smithsonian Design Museum; the National Design Museum; the Jewish Museum; the National Museum of the American Indian; and the American Museum of Natural History.

Current lists of internship opportunities, descriptions, guidelines, and procedures are kept on file in the Office of Graduate Studies. Each student, in consultation with the faculty internship advisor, makes a formal application for a position, and if selected, reports directly to a staff member at the internship location, who then supervises and evaluates the student's work. Students are required to maintain an internship journal, and to write a report summarizing their experience.

Academic credit cannot be granted for any internship that has not been approved by the faculty advisor before the internship begins.

### Qualifying Paper

The qualifying paper may take the form of a scholarly research paper or article, an exhibition proposal or catalog, a conservation treatment proposal and report, a grant proposal, a collection survey, or an interpretive program utilizing a variety of formats, including electronic media.

Students should select a topic whose research and explication is completely manageable within a single year. When completed, a qualifying paper—including, but not limited to, text, footnotes, bibliography, and illustrations—should not exceed 30 to 50 pages in length.

It is the student's responsibility to propose a topic and to select an advisor from the graduate faculty. Written proposals must be submitted to and approved by both the advisor and the committee before the student may proceed. Students, with their advisors, are invited to attend the

committee's discussion of the proposal to defend and clarify points. Students are encouraged to complete proposals by the end of their third graduate semester. Detailed guidelines are available in the Office of Graduate Studies.

### **Time Requirement for Degree Completion**

See **Scholastic Standing**.

#### **FT 521 — Fashion History through the Nineteenth Century**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Surveys the history of fashionable dress in the West from the late Middle Ages through the nineteenth century, with the goal of surpassing the simple chronicle of changing styles to explore the meaning of fashion in the broadest possible context. Students will define fashion, its relation to the arts and function in society, and determining when its history begins, using an interdisciplinary approach that examines a range of scholarly resources, including literature of the field and primary sources. Lectures supplemented by extensive use of the costume collection at The Museum at FIT. A midterm presentation interpreting fashion in a work of art, a 10-15 page research paper, and an object-based final examination are required.

#### **FT 522 — History of Textiles through the Nineteenth Century**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Examines the history of textiles from antiquity through the nineteenth century, including woven silks, embroideries, lace, tapestries and printed and painted cottons. Significant developments in the style, technology and function of textiles from Asia, Europe, the Islamic world and the Americas are studied in the context of their artistic, cultural and economic importance in pre-industrial societies.

#### **FT 523 — History of Twentieth Century Fashion**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

A study of western fashion, from the Belle Epoque to hip-hop America. The formation and definition of "modern" fashion and the influences of modern art, internationalism, postmodernism, the world wars, designers, Hollywood and advertising will be considered. A term paper and presentation on 20th-century costume or accessory, with analysis of its historical or cultural influences, and development of a theory regarding its importance to 20th-century culture, is required. Students take an interdisciplinary approach and examine the full range of sources available through their readings and assignments. Lectures are supplemented by use of the costume collection at The Museum at FIT.

#### **FT 524 — Dress and Textiles in World Cultures**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Examines important manifestations of dress and its context in a selection of world cultures. The historical range spans two millennia, and the settings range from nomadic societies and rural communities to urban court and merchant groups. The impact made on dress by issues such as religious/symbolic beliefs, ideas of gender, and design and technology occupies a central position in the methodology suggested for this course. Aspects of material culture will be included, particularly when examining development of dress typologies, conditions for lifestyles, and textile production and its artifacts. Emphasis will be placed on examples typically encountered in the collections of museums and other cultural institutions.

**FT 541 — Proseminar: Critical Writing, Research Techniques, and Documentation Methods**

1 credit; 1 lecture hour

In this course students encounter the resources available for fashion and textile studies at FIT, in New York City and online, and learn to use them through a series of interrelated research and writing assignments designed to build the skills of scholarly practice in a multidisciplinary field.

**FT 551 — Collection Management Skills**

3 credits; 2 lecture and 2 lab hours

Covers all aspects of the handling practices and storage techniques for the proper management of textile and costume collections. Assessment and planning, archival material choices, environmental control, lighting, making custom-built supports and boxes, packing and shipping, risk evaluation, crisis control, and current collections management software systems used in institutions will be investigated. Corequisite(s): FT 541.

**FT 552 — Museum Theory and Practices**

3 credits; 2 lecture and 2 lab hours

This course is a curatorial workshop where students create virtual exhibitions, conceive of a theme, select objects and write all accompanying texts. They engage in peer and professional critiques of their projects. Through readings and discussions they examine museums as cultural institutions, considering issues that influence curatorial practices. During the final weeks student teams create proposals for the following year's Fashion and Textile Studies exhibition at the Museum at FIT. Prerequisite(s): FT 541.

**FT 561 — Fiber and Fabric: Identification and Analysis**

3 credits; 2 lecture and 2 lab hours

Investigates the components and structures of textiles examining polymers, fibers, yarns, and weave structures. The chemical and physical nature of individual fiber types is studied at the polymer level; methods for fiber identification are introduced. Students will become familiar with the polarizing light microscope and photomicroscopy. Examination of all standard fabrics as generic structures and as specific/vernacular-technique materials. Particular emphasis on technical and analytical skills, and descriptive vocabularies for application in labs, cataloguing assignments and exams. The historic framework and interaction between the requirements of technology and design are also included. Students will be expected to perform professional identifications of fibers and textiles from the Fashion and Textiles Study Collection.

**FT 562 — Conservation Practices: Theory and Technique**

3 credits; 2 lecture and 2 lab hours

Provides both the scientific foundation and the basic technical skills useful in designing and carrying out preservation plans for collections management, and simple conservation treatments for historic textiles, costumes, and accessory materials. Building upon their prerequisite documentation and handling skills, students are taught to recognize signs of deterioration and design basic preventive conservation procedures. Includes documentation, vacuuming, realignment, rolling/folding, stitching (for both repair and mounting), wet and dry cleaning, dye-to-match techniques, and the identification and understanding of problematic materials. Using objects from the Graduate Studies collection, students are asked to perform and document simple treatments and handling procedures in a standardized and professional manner.

**FT 620 — Fashion Theory I: Art Historical and Social Theories of Fashion**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

This course introduces students to fashion theory and to related critical approaches to the study of textiles and dress. They read and discuss the foundational authors of fashion theory drawn from various disciplines, and through papers presented in class, explore ways to test and apply these theories in the analysis of historical and contemporary fashion.

Prerequisite(s): FT 541.

**FT 623 — Contemporary Fashion: Research and Criticism**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

In this course students research and study fashion from circa 1990 to the present, with the goal of writing insightful fashion criticism. Through readings, discussions, writing assignments based upon historical and visual research, and critiques, they characterize fashion on the world's runways and streets, and assess the environmental and social impacts of the fashion industry.

**FT 624 — History of Fashion Journalism and Visual Media**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

This course covers the history of fashion journalism, including illustration and photography, from its origins in the Renaissance to the contemporary fashion media, concentrating on the most influential writers, artists and photographers from the mid-nineteenth through the twentieth centuries.

**FT 625 — History of American Men's Wear**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Explores the history of men's clothing and fashion from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. Traces the development of the modern suit with reference to its European roots, the influence of world cultures and the impact of media on it, as well as its relationship to women's dress. Includes illustrated lectures of garments and sample books in the costume and textile collections of the Museum at FIT, the Costume Institute, and Special Collections of the Gladys Marcus Library.

**FT 626 — Modern Textiles: Designers, Makers, and Markets**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Investigates contextual relationships of textiles in terms of their creation, marketing, and reception. Includes structural and stylistic analysis, as well as biographical research. Historical and contemporary textiles are examined and a methodology of analysis and documentation that specifically includes interdisciplinary approaches is developed. The rapid, global, technological advances of the twentieth century are given particular attention as they pertain to traditional, industrial, and contemporary textile practices.

**FT 631 — Special Topics**

0 credits

An advanced, third-semester research seminar focusing on a topic of special interest or import to the field of fashion or textile studies. Requires original research leading to a meaningful outcome, such as publication in a professional-level magazine, journal. Use of the collections of The Museum at FIT and the Special Collections of the Gladys Marcus Library is strongly encouraged. The process of selecting an appropriate publication target will be discussed. Topics can range from focused studies of a specific historical periods, designers, fashion trends, regional areas, types of accessories, or specific influences, to themes including the history of fashion photography, the history of fashion theory, examinations of cultural and consumer studies, material culture, or related decorative arts. Term paper required.

**FT 631A — Special Topics: A Study of Surface Embellishments**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

**FT 631B — Special Topics: Contemporary Fashion; Research and Criticism**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

This course is a research and writing seminar focusing on contemporary fashion, defined as circa 1990 to the present, with the goals of studying it in historical perspective and writing insightful fashion criticism. Through readings and research participants will attempt to characterize fashion on the world's runways and streets, identifying key practitioners and subcultural styles and addressing important issues such as the environmental and social impact of the fashion industry. All of the research will be presented in class and assignments submitted on the course management system.

**FT 631C — Special Topics: Scientific Research and Readings in Conservation**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

**FT 631D — Overview of Modern Tapestries: Literature, Techniques, and Conservation methods**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

This course is a reading/research seminar. While the subject to be investigated will change from year to year, the goals of the course remain constant. An advanced seminar in the students' 4th term should present a significant challenge and require original research that leads to a meaningful outcome, such as would be expected for research needed for a professional level conservation journal or professional proceedings publication. Research skills for a conservation based investigation are different than that for an art historical study. This course will focus on the special research skills and conservation resources needed to compile appropriate references for publication of a paper or creation of an original poster concerned with modern tapestry. Areas of investigation will include but not be limited to such topics as a study of the chemistry of materials used, the physical breakdown pathway typical of tapestry woven art, a historical compilation of treatment choices, special techniques used in the creation of modern tapestry, and appropriate conservation methods. An annotated bibliography as well as several presentations will be expected.

### **FT 631E — Special Topics: History of Fashion Journalism and Visual Media**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

### **FT 632 — Advanced Curatorial: Acquisitions Theory and Practice**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Studies the role of the curator in the acquisition process and develops written and analytical skills used in the assessment and documentation of acquisitions and their use in exhibitions. Covers standard collecting processes, including identifying areas of weakness in a collection; working with a budget; identifying legitimate sources for purchases; collegial collaboration on purchases; the role of the conservator in researching objects for purchase; funding sources; and proposing, describing, and presenting an object to your department chief and/or director. Emphasizes visual analysis of objects and trains students to pick out key characteristics, identifiers, and flaws at a fast pace. Composition of catalog entries and written acquisition rationales covered. The end of the course focuses on developing exhibitions around specific collections.

### **FT 633 — Advanced Theory: Symposium Seminar**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Research seminar focusing on a selected topic of interest within the field of fashion or textile studies culminating in the annual Fashion and Textile Studies Symposium. Subject will change from year to year. Topics present a significant academic challenge and require original research and theoretical framework that leads to a substantial outcome, such as would be expected at a professional academic conference or symposium.  
Prerequisite(s): FT 541.

### **FT 634 — Advanced Curatorial: Historic Interiors**

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

In this course, students broaden their understanding of the key European and American decorative arts from the seventeenth through to the early twentieth century. They study decorative art objects and textiles found in American public collections. Material culture, geography, and trade are addressed. Professional museum interpretation and care of objects within historic interiors is covered.

### **FT 653 — Costume and Textile Mounting Skills**

3 credits; 2 lecture and 2 lab hours

Examines the issues and provides practical experience in the preparation and mounting of dress items, accessories, and flat textiles for exhibition. Skills include sketching, historical research, analysis of apparel structure, draping techniques, customizing of mannequins to accommodate historic style and size variations, and specialized supports. Construction of special strainers, tubular supports, press-mounts, and a variety of stitch-supported hanging techniques covered. All assignments include use of standard professional documentation and photography. Includes general introduction to garment construction through lectures and use of both the Fashion and Textiles Study Collection and The Museum at FIT.

### **FT 654 — Exhibition: Planning and Interpretation**

3 credits; 1 lecture and 4 lab hours

In this course students plan an exhibition at the Museum at FIT and gain a deeper understanding of curatorial practice and the responsibilities of exhibition design and public outreach in a museum setting. Working in teams, they refine the thesis of the exhibition and execute each stage of the process.  
Prerequisite(s): FT 541 and FT 552.

**FT 655 — Exhibition: Practicum**

3 credits; 1 lecture and 4 lab hours

Using the exhibition theme selected in FT 654, students make the final selection of objects, prepare the narrative materials, create a publicity plan, design and participate in the installation, and evaluate the educational program. Outside experts are invited to assist the students as appropriate. This course is taken on a Pass/Fail basis.

**FT 663 — Advanced Conservation I**

3 credits; 2 lecture and 2 lab hours

Required for conservation-emphasis students; open to qualified curatorial students with instructor permission. Provides practical experience in advanced conservation treatments, including adhesive treatments and advanced support treatments, permanent press-mounts, surface consolidations, re-warping and re-weaving. Visits to museum conservation labs allows in-depth contact with specific conservation disciplines, specifically upholstery, ethnographic objects, tapestry, and rugs. Students will select an appropriate object and begin work on a conservation-related qualifying paper.

**FT 664 — Advanced Conservation II**

3 credits; 2 lecture and 2 lab hours

Required for conservation-emphasis students; open to qualified curatorial students with instructor permission. Provides practical experience in advanced conservation treatments, including adhesive and advanced support treatments, surface consolidations, overlay and underlay procedures, and re-warping and re-weaving. In addition to several treatment experiments, students will continue work on the required qualifying paper, performing a treatment on the object selected in FT 663. The treatment must include analysis, condition assessment, treatment pre-testing, treatment proposal, photo documentation, time and cost estimates, completed treatment and final assessment. Professional reporting and documentation, as well as historical-context research and full structural analysis, are required. All documentation will be assembled in a portfolio.

**FT 691 — Internship: Preparation and Planning**

1 credit; 1 lecture hour

The Fashion and Textile Studies internship is a supervised field experience in a museum, archive, conservation center, library or other suitable organization. This course prepares students to secure positions and guides the application process.

Prerequisite(s): FT 541 and FT 551 and FT 561 and FT 521 and FT 522.

**FT 692 — Independent Study**

1-3 credit; 1 lecture hour

Under the guidance of a faculty member, students undertake advanced work, pursue an individual project, or combine both of these activities toward a subject of their choosing. By completing an independent study, a student can begin to specialize in a selected area of interest. Proposals for independent study must be submitted in a timely fashion, and must adhere to the guidelines set by the School of Graduate Studies.

**FT 693 — Internship: Completion and Assessment**

1 credit; 1 lecture hour

The Fashion and Textile Studies internship is a supervised field experience in a museum, archive, conservation center, library or other suitable organization. This course guides the documentation, completion and assessment of the internship experience.

Prerequisite(s): FT 691.

**FT 701 — Qualifying Paper Seminar**

2 credits; 2 lecture hours

A research seminar and writing workshop, this course requires students in the MA program in Fashion and Textile Studies to formulate an appropriate topic for their qualifying paper, secure an advisor, and write their qualifying paper proposal.