

Fashion and Textile Studies: History, Theory, Museum Practice

NYSED: 85053 HEGIS: 1099

The 48-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 costume 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 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 entering class of Fall 2015.

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COURSE OF STUDY

Pre-Semester

FT 541	Proseminar: Critical Writing, Research Techniques, and Documentation Methods	0
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Semester 1

FT 521	Fashion History through the Nineteenth Century	3
FT 522	History of Western Textiles	3
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

Semester 3

FT 653	Costume and Textile Mounting Skills	3
FT 654	Exhibition: Planning and Interpretation	3
Choose any two courses from the following three:		6
FT 625	History of American Men's Wear	3
FT 631	Special Topics	3
FT 663	Advanced Conservation I	3

Semester 4

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

choose any two courses from the following three:		6
FT 633	Advanced Theory: Professional Seminar	3
FT 634	Advanced Curatorial: Historic Interiors	3
FT 664	Advanced Conservation II	3
Total Credits		66

Additional Courses

FT 691 Internship (0 cr.), FT 701 Qualifying Paper (0 cr.), FT 702 Maintenance of Matriculation (0 cr.) , and FT 692 Independent Study (1-3 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 will be sent a warning notice for the first term that the 3.0 GPA is not achieved. A second term with a GPA below 3.0 will result in a limitation of registration credits or possible dismissal from the program. A final GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation. Each degree program also has specific requirements for graduation.

ADVANCEMENT TO DEGREE CANDIDACY

Requirements for Candidacy

See each program's specific degree requirements.

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.

Maintenance of Matriculation

To maintain matriculation, a degree candidate must register each semester following entry into a program for either (a) at least one approved course or (b) maintenance of matriculation. If a student does not maintain continuous matriculation, or does not complete all degree requirements in the time allowed, that student will be required to apply for readmission to the program following the procedures and requirements listed in the catalog of the readmission year. If readmission is granted, the student will also be required to pay all delinquent maintenance of matriculation fees prior to being awarded the degree.

Degree Requirements

General

For admittance to degree candidacy, students must have satisfied all outstanding prerequisites, completed a minimum of 48 approved course credits, achieved a final grade point average (GPA) of 3.0, completed at least one official internship, and had their qualifying paper proposal approved by their committee. Students must have advanced to degree candidacy before being permitted to attend graduation ceremonies. Students have one year after achieving degree candidacy to complete their qualifying paper.

Language Requirement

All students are required to have a reading knowledge of either French, Italian, German, or Spanish (though other foreign languages appropriate to a specific field of study will also be considered). This requirement must be met by the end of the second semester of study, or if studying part-time, by the time the student completes the equivalent of one full-time year of coursework. Students can satisfy this requirement by completing two years (four semesters) of college-level language study, or by passing a written examination administered by the School of Graduate Studies.

Students for whom English is a second language are exempt from the language requirement.

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 135 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, 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 an essay 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 30-40 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

Students matriculating full-time will have three years to complete all degree requirements, including the qualifying paper (two years of coursework, plus one year to write and complete the qualifying paper). Part-time students will have five years to complete all degree requirements (a maximum of four years of coursework, plus one year to write and complete the qualifying paper).

Pro-Seminar

Please note that Fashion and Textile Studies MA program requires students to attend a late summer intensive program. For specific information, please contact the program chairperson.

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 Western Textiles

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Examines the history of Western textiles from antiquity to the early twentieth century, including significant developments in the style, technology and function of such materials. Surviving evidence and representations of textiles in the arts and literature are used to examine their social and historical context and their central economic role in pre-industrial societies. Textiles as works of art and as constituents of dress will be presented as expressions of novelty and fashion. Their designs will be used to trace cultural continuities that span the societal strata, and the role technological advances play in their evolution will be examined. Pattern-woven silks, tapestry, embroidery, lace, and printed/painted fabrics are covered.

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

0 credits; 0 lecture hours

Introduces students to interdisciplinary research in fashion studies, with the goal of establishing solid research and writing skills and a foundation in theory and methodology. Students complete interrelated research and writing assignments, based on different types of primary and secondary sources and reflecting the application of various methodologies. This course also provides training for an understanding of the material nature of historic costume and textile objects, guidelines for reporting their physical condition, and methods of photo-documentation. Materials research studies will be discussed and a project based upon those resources will be assigned. All assignments are discussed and critiqued in class.

FT 551 — Collection Management Skills

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Covers all aspects of the physical handling practices and storage techniques necessary for the proper management of textile and costume collections. Assessment and planning, archival material choices, environmental control, lighting, custom-built supports and boxes, packing and shipping issues, risk evaluation, crisis control, and current collections management software systems used in institutions will be investigated. Collections assessment methods and an introduction to the use of electronic media in collections care will be covered.

FT 552 — Museum Theory and Practices

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Explores the role of museums and examines workplace issues particular to these institutions. Through class discussions and presentations by senior museum professionals (including administrators, curators, educators, and editors), students expand their knowledge of how museums function. Topics to be considered include the leadership role of museums in the history of style and taste; how museums collect, conserve, and interpret objects; public expectations of museums today; and trends that influence professional thinking and practice. Students also examine the use of modern technology in collections management and exhibition planning.

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 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

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

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 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: Professional Seminar

3 credits; 3 lecture hours

Research seminar focusing on a selected topic of interest within the field of fashion or textile studies. Subject and faculty may change from year to year. Topics present a significant academic challenge and require original research that leads to a substantial outcome, such as would be expected for inclusion in a professional academic conference or symposium. This advanced seminar calls upon students to use all they have learned thus far in the program to prepare a clear flowing, well-documented presentation that answers a vital question as yet unanswered in the field. An abstract of the presentation, including bibliography, will be prepared as if the student were answering a call for papers. Abstracts will be ranked by a panel of readers, including the instructor. The results and the typical judgment process will be discussed. There will be two rounds of presentations. The first will be a preliminary presentation on the chosen topic, given at the mid-term point, critiqued by fellow students and the instructor. Students will then have the opportunity to improve and revise, for a professional-level presentation at the end of the term. The final set of talks will have an audience of not only classmates but invited outside professionals as well, who will aid the instructor in the evaluation.

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

Focuses on the practical aspects of exhibit creation, and on the exhibition as a vehicle for the interpretation and presentation of objects. Research on the topic is undertaken and a preliminary selection of objects is made. Outside experts provide assistance with didactics, labels, brochure copy, and press releases and help with design issues. Lectures, assigned readings, case studies, class exercises and on-site observations of actual installations included.

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.

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

0 credits; 3 lecture hours

Students are expected to complete 135 internship hours at appropriate collections, historic sites, or museums, where they will work on projects and tasks related to their graduate training in Fashion and Textile Studies. All internships will be approved by the department chair, and will be satisfied according to department guidelines. No program credit is given for internships, but at least one is mandatory as a graduation requirement.

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 701 — Qualifying Paper

0 credits; 3 lecture hours

The qualifying paper may take the form of a scholarly research paper or article, an exhibition proposal or catalogue, a conservation treatment proposal and report, a grant proposal, a collection survey, or an interpretive program utilizing a variety of formats, including electronic media. Paper should not exceed 30-40 pages in length.

FT 702 — Maintenance of Matriculation

0 credits; 0 lecture hours

Students must maintain matriculation after completion of their coursework, until the qualifying paper has been approved.