ARTD 3195/7196, Special Topics: The Art of African Textiles and Personal Adornment
Lecture and Discussion Course, Fall 2019

Boylan Hall, Room 5313, Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:15 – 3:30
Instructor: Dr. Christopher Richards
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Instagram: bcmuseumed
OER website: https://libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/africantextiles/home
Office: Boylan Hall, 5107, Office hours: M/W, 12:30 – 2:00PM

Course Description:
Designed as a survey of African textiles, personal adornment and fashion, students will engage
with a variety of historical and contemporary dress practices, exploring how forms of dress are
one of the most potent and malleable forms of African artistic expression. Beginning with
colonial misinterpretations of “undressed” African bodies, students will examine “Classical”
African textiles from across the continent, with an emphasis on their manufacture and
cultural/social significance. African fashion from the 20th century will be addressed, illustrating
the importance of revising and transforming historical textiles and dress practices. The
significance of African dress will be further emphasized by drawing connections to
contemporary art; artists including Yinka Shonibare and Mary Sibande will be explored, with an
emphasis on how textiles have influenced their imagery and practice.

Course Requirements:
1. Students are required to regularly attend class and participate in lectures and discussions.
2. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings before class and to discuss the subject
mater of the readings in class.
3. Students will visit one museum with the professor during class. This date will be
predetermined, so please make appropriate arrangements so that you can attend.
4. Students are responsible for writing a reflection paper (4 pages in length) and a research
paper (5 - 7 pages in length). Further details will be provided during the semester.
5. There will be three quizzes, a midterm, and a final which all students must complete in-class
(unless disability-related accommodations are applicable).
Course Materials:
Due to the specialized nature of this course, there is no required textbook. All readings for the course are available digitally, via the OER website:
https://libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/africantextiles/home

Course Outcomes:
1. To gain a more nuanced understanding of historical African dress practices, with an emphasis on challenging Western notions of the “dressed” body.
2. To better understand the cultural, social, and political significance of dress and adornment in a variety of African cultures and time periods.
3. To become familiar with iconic forms of African textiles and adornments and to better understand their method of manufacture.
4. To engage with the literature of the field and to intellectually question primary and secondary source materials.
5. To illustrate the importance of contemporary African fashion and demonstrate that it is a historically rooted and culturally informed phenomenon.
6. To attend a museum to view and discuss African forms of dress, with a particular emphasis on students’ ability to recognize and discuss elements of specific African dress forms.

Method of Evaluation:
Students will be assessed through three quizzes, two papers (one reflection paper and one research paper), a midterm exam and a final exam. Graduate students will be required to submit a longer research paper or an art project paired with a brief overview of the work (specifically for MFA students). LATE PAPERS/ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED (unless there are extenuating, documented circumstances)!
At least one opportunity for extra credit will be given during the duration of the course. The summary of your grade distribution is as follows:
Participation/Attendance - 10%
Quizzes (3) - 15%
Midterm - 20%
Final - 20%
Reflection paper - 15%
Research Paper - 20%
Grading Scale:

Attendance and Participation:
Regular attendance and participation are required. Four or more unexcused absences will be penalized by a lower final grade (one letter grade lower for each four absences, i.e. A to B, or B to C). Three unexcused tardies will equal one absence. Exams begin promptly at the start of class.

Classroom Etiquette
Come to class on time and prepared to participate in classroom discussion (which means having completed all reading assignments). Please turn your cell phone on silent before entering class and please DO NOT TEXT during lecture or group discussions (it is distracting and disrespectful). If you are using a computer to take notes, please DO NOT SURF THE INTERNET during class. Be respectful and attentive to your professor and classmates.

Academic Integrity:
The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for policy implementation can be found at www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

Center for Disability Services:
In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at (718) 951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.
**Consideration of Religious Observance:**
Students are allowed to be absent from school to observe religious holidays, however they are responsible for any and all material they may have missed. It is the individual student’s responsibility to ensure that they are provided with this material. Students should contact the professor directly in these instances.

Aug. 28: Review syllabus and overview of course

**Sept 2: Labor Day Holiday (Monday) – College closed**  
**LAST DAY TO ADD A COURSE**

Sept. 4: The Power of the “Dressed” and “Undressed” Body  
Bastian “The Naked and the Nude” in *Dirt, Undress and Difference*  
Comaroff “The Empire’s Old Clothes” in *Cross-Cultural Consumption*  
Hendrickson “Introduction” in *Clothing and Difference*, pp. 1-16.

Sept. 5 (**Thursday, Monday Schedule**): Classic African Dress – An Introduction  
Gillow, Selections from “African Textiles”  
Giuntini “West African Cloth: Techniques and Traditions”

Sept. 9: Classic African Dress – Mali, Bogolan/Bogolanfini  
Brett-Smith, “Leaves and Mud” in *The Silence of the Women*, pp. 47 – 72  
Rovine “Tourist Market Bogolan” and “Culture Through Clothing” in *Bogolan: Shaping Culture Through Cloth*

Sept. 11: Classic African Dress – Mali, Ghana Boy Tunics and Embroidery  
Rovine “Indigenous Fashion: Embroidery and Innovation in Mali”  

Sept. 16: Classic African Dress, Woven – Ghana, Kente cloth  
Ross Selections from “Wrapped in Pride”

**QUIZ 1 - MAP QUIZ**
Sylvanus “The Fabric of Africanity: Tracing the Global Threads of Authenticity”
Grosfilley Selections from “African Wax Print Textiles”

Film: Mama Benz and the Taste of Money

Sept. 25: Classical African Dress, Printed – Ghana, the kaba
Gott “Asante Hightimers and the Fashionable Display of Women’s Wealth in Contemporary Ghana” in Fashion Theory

REFLECTION PAPER DUE

Sept 30 – Oct 1 (Mon/Tues): Rosh Hashanah - COLLEGE CLOSED (NO CLASSES)

Oct. 2: Classical Bodily Adornments, Senegalese Gold Jewelry
Johnson “History, Trade and Senegalese Entrepreneurs” in Good as Gold: Fashioning Senegalese Women

Oct. 7: Classic Bodily Adornments, Beaded – South African Beadwork,
Nettleton “19th-Century Beaded Histories” in Beadwork, Art and the Body
Smuts and Mahlangu “Looking Deeply…” in Beadwork, Art and the Body
QUIZ 2

Oct 8 – 9 (Tues/Wed): Yom Kippur - COLLEGE CLOSED (NO CLASSES)

Oct 14 (Mon): Indigenous Peoples’ Day – COLLEGE CLOSED (NO CLASSES)

Oct. 16: Classic Bodily Adornments, Hairstyles and Headdresses
Arnoldi “Crowing Glories” in Crowning Achievements
Kreamer “Spectacular Hats” in Crowning Achievements
Afolayan and Wass “Yoruba Headties”

Oct. 21: Classical Dress Challenged – Nigeria and Zambia
Bastian “Female ‘Alhaji’ and Entrepreneurial Fashions” in Clothing and Difference
Hansen “Dressing Dangerously” in Fashioning Africa
Oct. 23: Midterm Review

Oct. 28: MIDTERM

Oct. 30: VISIT TO BROOKLYN MUSEUM (TBD)

Nov. 4: Contemporary African Fashion, Intro
Rovine, “View Africa Through Fashion” in *Fashion Theory*
Jennings “Foreword” and “Introduction” in *New African Fashion*
Elands “Dutch Wax Classics” in *African-Print Fashion Now!*

**Nov. 5 – LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM COURSE WITH A “W” GRADE**

Nov. 6: Contemporary Fashion, early designers – Morocco, Tami Tazi
Jansen, “Moroccan Fashion as Tradition” in *Moroccan Fashion*
Jansen, “Three Generations of Moroccan Fashion Designers” in *Moroccan Fashion*

TOPIC AND INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH FOR RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Nov. 11: Contemporary Fashion, early designers – Ghana, Chez Julie
Richards “The Models for Africa” in *African Arts*
Meischer “Bringing Fabrics to Life” in *African-Print Fashion Now!*

Nov. 13: Contemporary Fashion, early designers – Mali, Chris Seydou
Rovine “Fashionable Traditions” in *Fashioning Africa*

**QUIZ 3**

Nov. 18: Contemporary Fashion, Senegal – Oumou Sy
Mustafa “Intersecting Creativities: Oumou Sy’s Costumes in the Dakar Landscape” in *Contemporary African Fashion*

Nov. 20: Contemporary Fashion, South Africa – MaXhosa by Laduma
Poole “Fashion Cities Africa – Johannesburg”
Richards “A New Chapter for Xhosa Beadwork” in *Beadwork, Art and the Body*
Nov. 25: Contemporary Fashion, Second-hand Clothing
Film, *The Secret Life of our Clothing*

**RESEARCH PAPER ROUGH DRAFT DUE**

Nov. 27: African Dress/Fashion and Contemporary Art – Yinka Shonibare
Hobbs, “Yinka Shonibare MBE: The Politics of Representation” in *Yinka Shonibare MBE*

Nov. 28 – 29: Thanksgiving Holiday, COLLEGE CLOSED (NO CLASSES)

Dec. 2: African Dress/Fashion and Contemporary Art – Malick Sidibe
Rabine “Fashionable Photography in Mid-Twentieth-Century Senegal” in *Fashion Theory*

Dec. 4: African Dress/Fashion and Contemporary Art – Mary Sibande
**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE**

[https://afropunk.com/2019/05/diors-appropriation-resort-collection-is-a-plagiarized-mess/](https://afropunk.com/2019/05/diors-appropriation-resort-collection-is-a-plagiarized-mess/)

Dec. 11: LAST DAY OF CLASS, Review for Final

Dec. 13: READING DAY/FINAL EXAMS

**FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, DECEMBER 16th, 1 – 3 PM!!**
Choose an article of clothing from your personal wardrobe that is particularly meaningful to you. Apply at least three of the following categories of analysis to a discussion of this garment and its meanings for you and your community as a whole (community can refer to your family, friends, individuals who share your same culture/heritage, individuals who share your same gender, etc.):

- Medium/technique
- History
- Economics
- Politics
- Gender relations
- Climate/environment
- Occupation/age/social role

Compare your article of clothing to at least two garments or textiles from readings and classroom discussions. You can highlight either similarities or differences, but consider what these comparisons reveal about different cultures.

Please make sure to include a photograph of your chosen article of clothing!

Guidelines:
Paper must be 4 pages, typed, double-spaced, with 1” margins. Make sure to proofread your paper before final submission (you will lose points for misspellings and grammatical errors).

Helpful Hints

Begin your paper with an introductory paragraph that offers an overview of the points you will make in your paper; this should include a clear thesis statement.

Divide your discussion into understandable paragraphs, which should each make a specific point. Paragraphs cannot be shorter than three sentences or longer than 3/4 of a page.

Avoid complex words, but do not write in an informal manner. Try to write formally, using words and phrases that are understandable.

Before you submit your paper, make sure to proofread it at least once. In order to catch any grammatical errors, you should read your paper out loud. If it sounds strange, then it probably needs to be rewritten.