In this course, we'll examine works of literature that are obsessed with fashion: its cult codes and systems of meaning; its artistic and aesthetic visions; its fetishistic power; its role in economics, politics, and social organization; and its subversive potential. Topics of study will include modernity and urbanism, capitalism and consumerism, colonialism, race and racialization, subculture, and gender and sexuality. As a ‘Texts and Contexts’ course, ‘The Fashion System’ will also focus on critical reading and writing, as students learn to think comparatively about works of literature.

Ola Maciejewska, LOIE FULLER: Research, Photo: Martin Argyroglo
Objectives of ‘Texts and Contexts’ courses: This introductory core course in English literature, which may include literature in translation, will teach the arts of literary interpretation by developing techniques of close reading, an appreciation of the relations among literary works and the contexts in which they are written and read, and an ability to write critically about the interplay between text and context.

Course goals:
1. To learn to read critically and think critically about texts with and alongside a variety of theoretical and historical contexts.
2. To learn to communicate that critical thinking in precise and cogent analytic writing.
3. To learn how to analyze the ideas, histories, and meanings of fashion.

Course policies
1. You must complete all assignments by the due date. Late work is problematic for everyone. If you require an extension on any assignment for any reason, you must contact me at least 24 hours in advance of the due date to receive consideration. If you do not, late work will be marked down ⅓ of a grade for every day late. No work that is more than one week late will be accepted under all but the most urgent circumstances.
2. I am committed to making this course accessible to all students, who come to class with a variety of needs and learning styles. If you aren’t finding the course accessible to you for any reason, please email me and we will work towards a solution.
3. This course depends on your rigorous research and original ideas. Plagiarism in all forms is unacceptable. Turning in any work that is not yours or quoting without appropriate attribution will mean a failing grade on the assignment and possible disciplinary repercussions. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism; see the Fordham Student Handbook for more details.
4. In the language of the Fordham university mission statement, the values of this course include a “commitment to research and education that assist in the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of justice, the protection of human rights, and respect for the environment.” Members of this class can expect an education that promotes “understanding of and reverence for ways of life other than their own,” and to continue their preparation “to live in and to contribute to an increasingly multicultural and multinational society.” As with all courses of study at Fordham, the aim of ours is to foster “life-long habits of careful observation, critical thinking, creativity, moral reflection, and articulate expression.”

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, please register with the Office of Disability Services for Students (ODS) in order to request academic accommodations for your courses. Please contact the main ODS office number at 718-817-0655 to arrange services. Accommodations are not retroactive, so you need to register with ODS prior to receiving your accommodations. Please see me after class or during office hours if you have questions or would like to submit your academic accommodation letter to me if you have previously registered for accommodations.

Assignments and grading

Discussion board: 20%
Each unit, you will respond to an instructor prompt (connecting our literary text to a historical or critical context) on the Blackboard discussion board with a paragraph of at least 200-300 words. You will be divided into three groups, and each group will be responsible for starting the discussion for each unit. For instance, Group 1 will respond to my prompt only for Unit 1 by the due date below. Groups 2 and 3 will respond both to my prompt and to at least one response from Group 1 by the later due date listed below.

You will be graded on each post out of 12 possible points according to the following criteria:
1) How substantively and thoroughly you addressed my prompt and (if you are in one of the peer response groups, how substantively you referred to at least one response from your peers);
2) How clearly, precisely, and specifically you referred to the texts as you did so;
3) The form of your writing: grammatically correct, clear diction and syntax, correct punctuation.

There will be 9 discussion boards, but you will be graded on 8; therefore, you are allowed to miss one without penalty, OR I will drop the lowest grade from your final score.

**Review assessments: 15%**
Twice during the course, you will submit a review assessment of multiple choice and short answer questions that assess whether you have read and understood the readings on the syllabus. 
NOTE: These questions will deal only with the primary readings, NOT the background sources.

**VoiceThread video responses: 5%**
Two times during the course, once before June 30 and once after, post a VoiceThread video comment about a Background material. These should be 5 minutes maximum, and can take whatever form you wish; the idea is for you to direct the group’s attention to something you found interesting in the background material that they may have missed. This is also an opportunity for you to introduce yourself to the group.

**Essays:**
*NOTE: See Blackboard for my full grading rubric for critical essays.*

**Paper 1 [personal essay, 2-3 pages]: 10%**
Your first paper is a personal essay that analyzes your connection to an assemblage of fashion (an article of your clothing, a brand, a store, an icon, etc.), using at least one of our course readings.

**Paper 2 [literary close reading, 4-5 pages]: 20%**
Your second paper is a close reading of *The Ladies’ Paradise* that takes one or two important passages and analyzes them closely to construct a critical argument about the book as a whole.

**Paper 3 [comparative essay, 5-6 pages]: 25%**
Your third paper compares/contrasts two literary readings on our syllabus around a key topic or idea, crafting your argument around close readings of individual passages in each work.

**Presentation: 5%**
This video presentation (5 minutes maximum), due in the last week of class, is a chance for you to aurally present the work you did for your final paper. You should talk about how you came to your topic, how you approached the work of constructing your argument, and what conclusions you ultimately drew. You will be graded on the clarity of your presentation and the precision and thoughtfulness with which you present your ideas.

**Books:**
Alex Gilvarry, *From the Memoirs of a Non-Enemy Combatant* (Penguin, 2011).
*All other readings will be available as PDFs in the CONTENT section of our Blackboard site.*